

Indochina Monographs

The RVNAF

by
Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen



U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Preface

The development of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces reflected and paralleled the history of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war. By the time the last U.S. combat troops departed, this process had taken nearly two decades of advisory effort and billions of U.S. military aid dollars. But what the U.S. had achieved was well worth all of its efforts and expenditures. For, despite constraints and problems, the RVNAF finally emerged as a strong combat force which even its main adversary, the North Vietnamese Army, held in respect and never underestimated.

To analyze this developmental effort, this monograph focuses on four major aspects: personnel, training, support and motivation. For each of these areas, this work endeavors not only to describe the evolutionary process but also to discuss pertinent problems and evaluate efforts made to overcome them. In addition, certain issues of particular interest such as desertions, treatment of prisoners of war, relationships with the people, corruption, and political influence have also been addressed to the extent that they affected the conduct of the war and the RVNAF.

In the preparation of this monograph, I have drawn primarily on my personal experience as the last Chief of Staff of the Joint General Staff, RVNAF. I trust that my long career, which encompassed such diverse assignments as combat, training, personnel administration, and logistics, would help impart some insight into the subjects and problems under consideration.

Several of my former colleagues have contributed to the completion of this work to whom I am particularly indebted. My first debt of gratitude goes to General Cao Van Vien, Chairman of the Joint General Staff, under whom I had served for many years. His valuable guidance, as always, has a great impact on my work. To Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, Commanding General of I Corps, and Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, Commander of the 3d ARVN Infantry Division, I am grateful for their thoughtful and unbiased comments. I am also indebted to Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho and Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, Assistant Chiefs of Staff J-3 and J-2, JGS respectively, who have assisted me with their expertise and constructive suggestions.

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
19 December 1978

Dong Van Khuyen
Lt. General, ARVN

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Formative Years: A French Legacy

A French colony for almost a century, Vietnam emerged as an independent nation under the Viet Minh regime shortly after the end of World War II. The disarmament of Japanese occupation troops in Indochina, by Nationalist Chinese forces north of the 16th parallel and by British forces in the south, brought about developments which affected the course of this nation for the next decade.

In the north, nationalist parties, some with their own armies, came back from exile and established themselves under the aegis of Nationalist Chinese forces, openly defying the political supremacy of the Viet Minh. Anxious to keep them under control, Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Minh leader and President of the newly created Democratic Republic of Vietnam, invited their leaders to join in a coalition cabinet. But animosity between the nationalists and the Viet Minh continued unabated. In the south, British troops landed with a French Expeditionary Force in tow. With British connivance, French forces soon wrested back control from a weak Viet Minh administration which fought back with machetes and wooden sticks. This was the beginning of a protracted war of resistance, which rallied most of the Vietnamese people, ever so ardent to hang on to their newly recovered national independence, under the Viet Minh leadership.

The embryonic Viet Minh army, which was formed during the maquis days under Japanese occupation, was evidently no match for the French Expeditionary Corps. After occupying most of former Cochinchina, the French pressed Ho Chi Minh for a military presence in the north. To avoid a head-on collision with French forces, Ho Chi Minh agreed to

let them establish a foothold in Hanoi and Haiphong. In spite of negotiations, tension continued to rise through skirmishes between French and Viet Minh troops and finally erupted in open warfare on 19 December 1946. The thin coating of Ho Chi Minh's coalition government for resistance against the French did not sufficiently conceal the Communist nature of the Viet Minh. It began to wear out after 1951. Serious divisions between nationalist parties and the Viet Minh eventually developed into enmity which, further aggravated by bloody purges carried out by the Viet Minh, gradually drove the nationalists to abandon the ranks of resistance fighters and seek shelter in French-controlled areas and wait for more opportune times to join in the national salvation effort. Religions, especially the Roman Catholic Church, no longer saw the Viet Minh as champion of the national cause but as an atheistic Communist organization with which they could not co-exist.

France in the meantime was bogged down in its neo-colonialist policy. Her effort to build an autonomous government in Cochinchina in mid-1946 failed to attract genuine nationalists who were either fence sitting or still active in the resistance movement. Both military plans and negotiations with Ho Chi Minh did not produce the desired results. France therefore resigned herself to playing a new political card in the person of ex-emperor Bao Dai who was living in exile. Conceived in 1948, this political solution did not officially materialize until 8 March 1949, date of an agreement signed by French President Auriol and ex-emperor Bao Dai whereby France officially recognized Vietnam as an independent, undivided state. However, it was not until May 1950 that the French national assembly gave official approval for Vietnam to have its own army.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Defense came into being on 2 July 1949 as a component of the Bao Dai government. This same year, a French military mission (*Mission Militaire Francaise*) was established as a counterpart to the Vietnamese government with the stated purposes of assisting and advising the Vietnamese National Army on the basis of equality and respect for Vietnam's independence and sovereignty. In

reality, this was an apparatus designed to command and control the Vietnamese National Army. Personnel of this mission were assigned throughout the hierarchy of the Vietnamese National Army, not in an advisory capacity but truly to command and coordinate. Local guard units formed by the French in previous years with locally recruited natives under a predominantly French command structure were transferred to the Vietnamese National Army to become the "National Guard." A number of infantry battalions, designated BVN (*Bataillons Vietnamiens*) were activated with Vietnamese recruits and French officers and NCOs from the French military mission or Vietnamese officers and NCOs transferred from the French army. Both national guard units and the BVN battalions were placed under operational control of the regional French army commanders. Personnel administration, pay, clothing, equipment, etc., were all handled by directorates such as the Personnel Directorate, Administration and Finance Directorate, and Ordnance Directorate of the Ministry of Defense. But personnel of these directorates also came from the French army. Regional military schools and academies were established to train Vietnamese volunteers for officer and NCO duties but they, too, were under command and control of French officers and NCOs. In late 1951, the Thu Duc and Nam Dinh reserve officer schools and a number of local training centers were established to meet mobilization needs. Young men 20 to 30 years old with a baccalaureate degree were mobilized for reserve officer training and subsequent assignment to Vietnamese agencies and units where they were to serve beside French cadres. Young men 20 years of age and without a baccalaureate degree were inducted into training centers to receive reserve enlisted training.

The General Staff of the Vietnam National Army was not established until May 1952. Nguyen Van Hinh, a lieutenant-colonel in the French Air Force and son of then Premier Nguyen Van Tam, was chief of the military staff of Chief of State Bao Dai when he was promoted to major-general to become Chief of the General Staff. His executive officer was a French captain, and his chief of staff a Vietnamese field-grade officer with French citizenship. Other key positions from deputy chief of staff to division and section heads were filled by French majors and captains.

The Vietnamese military region commands were established in July 1952. The territory was divided into four military regions along administrative boundaries: the 1st Military Region for South Vietnam, 2d Military Region for Central Vietnam, 3d Military Region for North Vietnam and 4th Military Region for the Central Highlands. Each military region had a Vietnamese command which paralleled a regional French army command. The Vietnamese military region command was responsible for organization, administration, supply, and training; operational control and deployment of combat units remained in the hands of the regional French army commander. As at the General Staff, only the MR commander and his chief of staff were Vietnamese field-grade officers. Other staff positions were filled by French field-grade or company-grade officers. At the time the MR commands were activated, the 4th Military Region did not even have a Vietnamese command. Responsibility for this region was retained by the commander and staff of the French Army Highlands Regional Command. Also in 1952, the national guard organization was deactivated and its components absorbed into BVN infantry battalions. At the same time, nearly 60,000 auxiliary troops were transferred from the French army to be organized into companies.

In 1953, to relieve French units engaged in pacification and territorial security operations and enable the French to reorganize these units into additional mobile battle groups, light infantry battalions (TDKQ) were activated with less strength and a lighter armament than the BVN battalions. To assist French strike forces, a number of BVN battalions were organized into mobile groups (GM) to participate in search-and-destroy operations initiated by regional French army commands. Also in 1953, the French-Vietnamese Supreme Council agreed on a program to transfer territorial and operational control to the Vietnamese government according to the following principles: (1) the transfer will take place step by step with due consideration given to the military situation and development of the Vietnamese armed forces, particularly the new light infantry battalions; (2) the units stationed in areas scheduled for transfer must first be Vietnamized; (3) the Vietnamese military region commander will take over control of operations

in the transferred area. To meet the needs of an expanded national army provided for under this early Vietnamization program, the Vietnamese national government proclaimed a general mobilization in April 1953, calling and recalling to active duty all young men 20 to 33 years old. The first transfer of territorial command took place in the 1st Military Region in June 1953. The Vietnamese territory was then divided into military regions, sub-regions (French *subdivisions*), sectors (or provinces) and subsectors (or districts).

The Geneva Accords signed on 20 July 1954 between France and the Ho Chi Minh government ended the war and partitioned the State of Vietnam into communist North Vietnam and nationalist South Vietnam with the Ben Hai River as the demarcation line. Prior to the cease-fire, the Vietnam National Army consisted of 205,500 men (167,700 regulars and 37,800 auxiliary troops) with the following force structure: the army had six mobile group headquarters, one airborne group headquarters, 82 BVN battalions, 81 light infantry battalions, five airborne battalions, six imperial guard battalions, nine 105-mm and 155-mm artillery battalions, ten reconnaissance squadrons, four engineer battalions and six transportation battalions; the air force had only one liaison detachment and two observation and combat support detachments; the navy had only three assault squadrons. Agencies and units of the Vietnam National Army in North Vietnam, along with French forces, were redeployed in South Vietnam after 1954.

In preparation for the transfer of territories still under French control and the occupation of areas previously controlled by the Viet Minh, the Vietnamese government issued a decree organizing the territory south of the 17th Parallel into three military regions.

Military Region 2, consisted of two sub-regions: the Hue Sub-Region, also known as Northern Sub-Region, made up of the two sectors (provinces) of Quang Tri and Thua Thien; the Tourane (Da Nang) Sub-Region, also known as Southern Sub-Region, made up of the two sectors of Quang Nam and Quang Ngai.

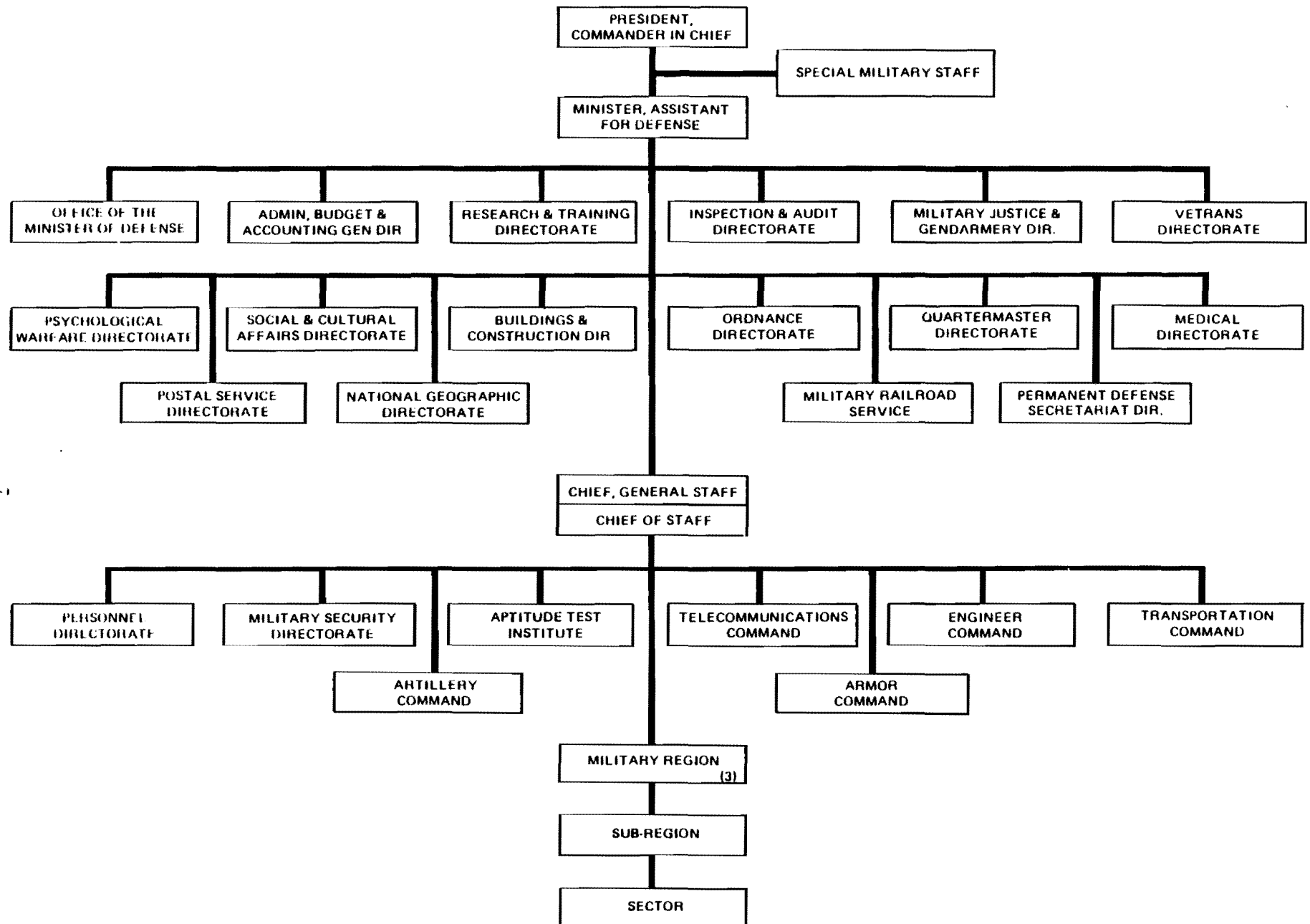
Military Region 4, consisted of two sub-regions: the Highlands Sub-Region contained four sectors (provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot

and Dong Nai Thuong); the Coastal Sub-Region running from Quang Ngai to the southern border of Phan Thiet Province and was formed from the five sectors of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Nha Trang, Phan Rang and Phan Thiet.

Military Region 1, consisted of six sub-regions and the two independent sectors of Phu Quoc and Con Son: the Can Tho Sub-Region had four sectors, Can Tho, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc and Ha Tien; the Soc Trang Sub-Region had the three sectors of Soc Trang, Bac Lieu and Rach Gia; Vinh Long Sub-Region contained the three sectors of Vinh Long, Tra Vinh and Sa Dec; the My Tho Sub-Region was made up of the four sectors of My Tho, Tan An, Go Cong and Ben Tre; the Eastern Sub-Region consisted of the three sectors of Bien Hoa, Thu Dau Mot and Ba Ria, and; the Saigon-Cholon Sub-Region was formed from the three sectors of Tay Ninh, Cholon and Gia Dinh.

The restoration of Vietnamese sovereignty over territories previously occupied by French forces stretched from August 1954 to April 1955 and was then considered complete except for French positions along QL-15 from Saigon to Vung Tau, the Vung Tau military base and Tan Son Nhut air base. These locations were transferred to Vietnamese control after 28 April 1956, following the deactivation of the French High Command in Indochina. Operations to secure the areas previously under Viet Minh control were initiated between 31 August 1954 and 17 May 1955 according to predetermined plans. Staff positions previously held by French officers were gradually turned over to Vietnamese officers. The Vietnamese defense organization was also reinforced to assume support activities such as postal service, mapping and railroad operations, transferred by French forces. (*Chart 1*)

Chart 1 – RVN Defense Structure, 1955



Reorganization Under U.S. Military Advisory Assistance

Following the Geneva Accords of 1954, France gradually restored national sovereignty to the Vietnamese government. On 26 October 1955, South Vietnam became a republic under the leadership of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The United States began to provide direct military aid to the RVNAF. The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was established to improve RVNAF capabilities through planning, development and administration of forces. U.S. advisory teams were successively assigned to central agencies and staffs (Defense Ministry, JGS, corps and service branch commands) as well as local agencies and units (military schools, training centers, divisions and military regions).

The term "advisor" sounded very suspicious to the Vietnamese cadre. However, following directives and guidance from the JGS explaining the mission and role of U.S. advisory teams, especially the emphasis on their having "no command authority", confidence in the advisors and the United States developed and flourished. This confidence was supported by the U.S. advisors' conciliatory approach and the new, practical suggestions and advice that they contributed for the benefit of the agencies and units to which they were assigned. Equipment was standardized, uniforms and headgear followed U.S. patterns, insignia of rank were worn on the collar U.S. style and training was conducted according to U.S. methods with U.S. manuals and aids. Qualified officers were selected for training in service schools in the United States while military schooling in France was discontinued. Funds for the operation and maintenance of the Vietnamese army came from U.S. aid. Consequently, the Vietnamese army came to be totally dependent on the U.S. ability to provide aid each year and on the U.S. concept of common defense. The voice of the U.S. advisor and, more generally, of the MAAG mission had a significant impact on Vietnamese officialdom and was usually regarded as a decisive factor.

Following the Geneva Accords of 1954, the Joint General Staff of the Vietnam National Armed Forces continued to carry out existing

force structure development plans in order to consolidate the territorial security structure inherited from the French and build a regular army by upgrading the BVN, light infantry battalions, and mobile groups to regimental and divisional size within the confines of a 200,000-man force. The project was interrupted midway because the peacetime personnel ceiling of the Vietnamese armed forces had yet to be approved by the U.S. government. MAAG made it known that the projected strength for the Vietnamese armed forces in FY 56 was only 100,000 men and subsequently advised the Vietnamese Defense Ministry to reduce its manpower to avoid financial difficulties.

At the historical meeting of 11 December 1954 between Ho Thong Minh, Vietnamese Defense Minister, and General John W. O'Daniel, Chief MAAG, at the Vietnamese Defense Ministry, the Vietnamese side requested that the pre-armistice ceiling of 200,000 men be maintained because a reduction in force would weaken the nationalist position in the elections provided for by the Geneva Accords. The U.S. side argued that U.S. military aid for FY 56 might be limited to 200 million dollars based on a proposed strength of 100,000 men; plans for this strength were already being reviewed in the U.S. It was also suggested that the Vietnamese army already had the backing of SEATO forces.

The U.S. government finally approved a force structure of 150,000 men for FY 56 in July 1955. Both sides then agreed to build this force within the following guidelines: the army would consist of ten infantry divisions four of which would be conventional (later renamed field divisions, each with 8,600 men), and the remaining six territorial (later renamed light divisions, each with 5,245 men respectively); one airborne group of five battalions; 13 regional regiments; 11 field artillery battalions (ten equipped with 105-mm howitzers and one with 155-mm howitzers); four armored cavalry regiments; ten divisional signal companies and 16 light transportation companies. The air force would have 1,150 men and the navy 4,250.

From 1957 to 1959, under MAAG guidance, the Vietnamese army was revamped to give it the ability to cope with aggression from North Vietnam. Beginning in October 1957, MAAG and the JGS conducted tests

aimed at finding an appropriate standard division-level organization. After two years of research and tests, a standard division-level organization with a strength of 10,450 men was finally approved. In September 1959 the Army of the Republic of Vietnam was reorganized into seven infantry divisions and three corps headquarters. Each infantry division had three regiments (three battalions each), one 105-mm artillery battalion, one mortar battalion (4.2 in.), one engineer battalion and a number of support companies. In addition to divisional artillery, there were eight independent artillery battalions (105-mm and 155-mm howitzers). There were no changes in airborne and armor troops.

In addition to the three corps headquarters activated for tactical control purposes, the RVNAF already had three military region headquarters established during the second half of 1954 to take charge of territorial security formerly assumed by the French Army regional commands. MAAG's recommendations for structural changes in the field were easily approved by the JGS but changes at the central level encountered more difficulties. Central organizations retained some purely Vietnamese features. The Joint General Staff continued to be both an inter-services staff and an army staff. The Chief, JGS, was also Army Chief of Staff. Logistics directorates, though internally reorganized and specialized along the lines of the U.S. Army's technical branches, were still subordinated to the Defense Ministry instead of the JGS which regarded these directorates merely as support coordinators. On the other hand, engineer, signal and transportation were classified as corps such as armored and artillery, and had their own commands under the JGS.

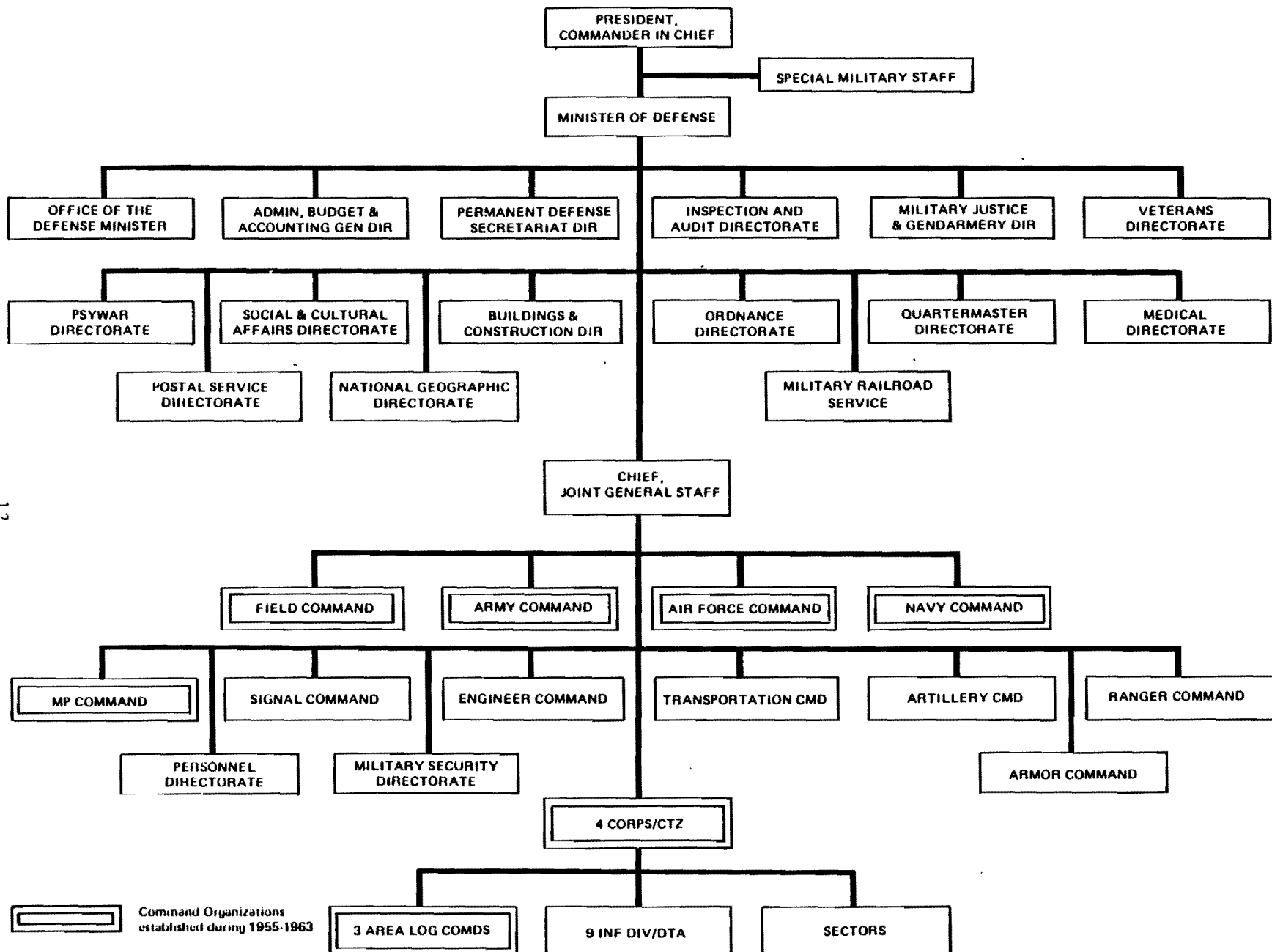
Beginning in 1959, the Communists waged a war of subversion in South Vietnam by terrorizing, assassinating and abducting members of the government's rural administrative infrastructure; inciting and coercing the populace into demonstrating against the administration; and sabotaging public facilities and lines of communications leading to urban centers. The frequency and intensity of these acts increased with each day as the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam began to flow

south. On 26 January 1960, a Vietnamese regimental command post in Tay Ninh was attacked and overrun by Communist forces and many weapons and large quantities of ammunition were lost. In the face of this situation, the U.S. allowed the RVNAF to increase their strength from 150,000 men to 170,000. This was again increased to 200,000 in FY 62 and 225,000 in FY 63 to make more combat units available and reinforce administrative and support capabilities. In terms of combat units, these successive force structure increases represented 86 Ranger companies, 30 infantry battalions, ten regimental headquarters, two divisional headquarters and one corps command. South Vietnam was reorganized into four corps tactical zones and the corps commands assumed responsibility for these tactical zones in the place of MR commands which were deactivated. As regards administration and support, a significant development was the creation of the Army Command Headquarters and three logistical commands to support the four corps tactical zones. (*Chart 2*) The U.S. advisory system was reinforced and expanded to cover sectors and combat battalions (infantry, Ranger, airborne, marine, armored and artillery) as well as direct support units. Training programs were amended to become consistent with unconventional warfare and to reflect U.S. Army Aviation (helicopter) and USAF support. The joint efforts of the U.S. military mission (MAAG and later MACV) and the Vietnamese armed forces produced encouraging results which led many people to believe that Communist insurgency could be defeated in a few years. Unfortunately, the unstable political situation in 1963 led to the military coup of 1 November 1963 which toppled the Ngo Dinh Diem government and ended the first republic.

Growth and Maturity

Political instability during 1964 drove the Republic of Vietnam to the brink of disaster. The 1 November 1963 coup opened the way for a number of generals and their followers to walk the thorny road of politics. Mutual purges, though causing no bloodshed, deprived the armed forces of a number of highly qualified and experienced personnel,

Chart 2 – RVN Defense Structure, 1963



stirred confusion, and affected the morale of the rank and file. The pacification program came to a standstill due to neglect and lack of guidance from the central level. The countryside came under increasing enemy control which seriously affected recruitment and mobilization efforts. The North Vietnamese Communists seized this opportunity to intensify their infiltration of units and equipment. Estimated communist strength which stood at 30,000 men in November 1963 jumped to 212,000 by July 1965. Both NVA and VC troops were now armed with sophisticated AK-47s. They launched a division-size attack on Binh Gia Village near Saigon and held their positions for four days against the RVNAF instead of using the old hit-and-run tactics. Two Vietnamese infantry battalions were annihilated during this battle. The direct participation of U.S. forces in mid-1965 pulled the RVN away from the brink of collapse. It also restored confidence to the RVNAF. The presence of U.S. forces was to serve two purposes: (1) to check NVA infiltration and destroy VC/NVA main forces in South Vietnam, (2) to buy time for the GVN to achieve political stability, develop a central administration capable of controlling the entire nation and improve the RVNAF, giving them the ability to cope with the VC in pacification efforts.

Politically, leadership of the nation following the 1 November 1963 coup was entrusted to a military revolutionary council headed by Lt. General Duong Van Minh. The counter-coup of 30 January 1964 by a group of young generals ended the three-month old regime of General Duong Van Minh. The military revolutionary council was replaced by an armed forces council headed by Lt. General Nguyen Khanh, who was also Chief of State and Premier. Under pressure, General Khanh soon turned over two positions to two veteran politicians: Phan Khac Suu became Chief of State and Tran Van Huong, Premier. Shortly thereafter, because of political dissension between Suu and Huong and disturbances initiated by students, political parties and religious groups, the armed forces council appointed another seasoned politician, Phan Huy Quat, to replace Tran Van Huong. On 6 May 1965 the armed forces council dissolved itself after expressing the desire to return to purely military duties and concentrate efforts on the war. However,

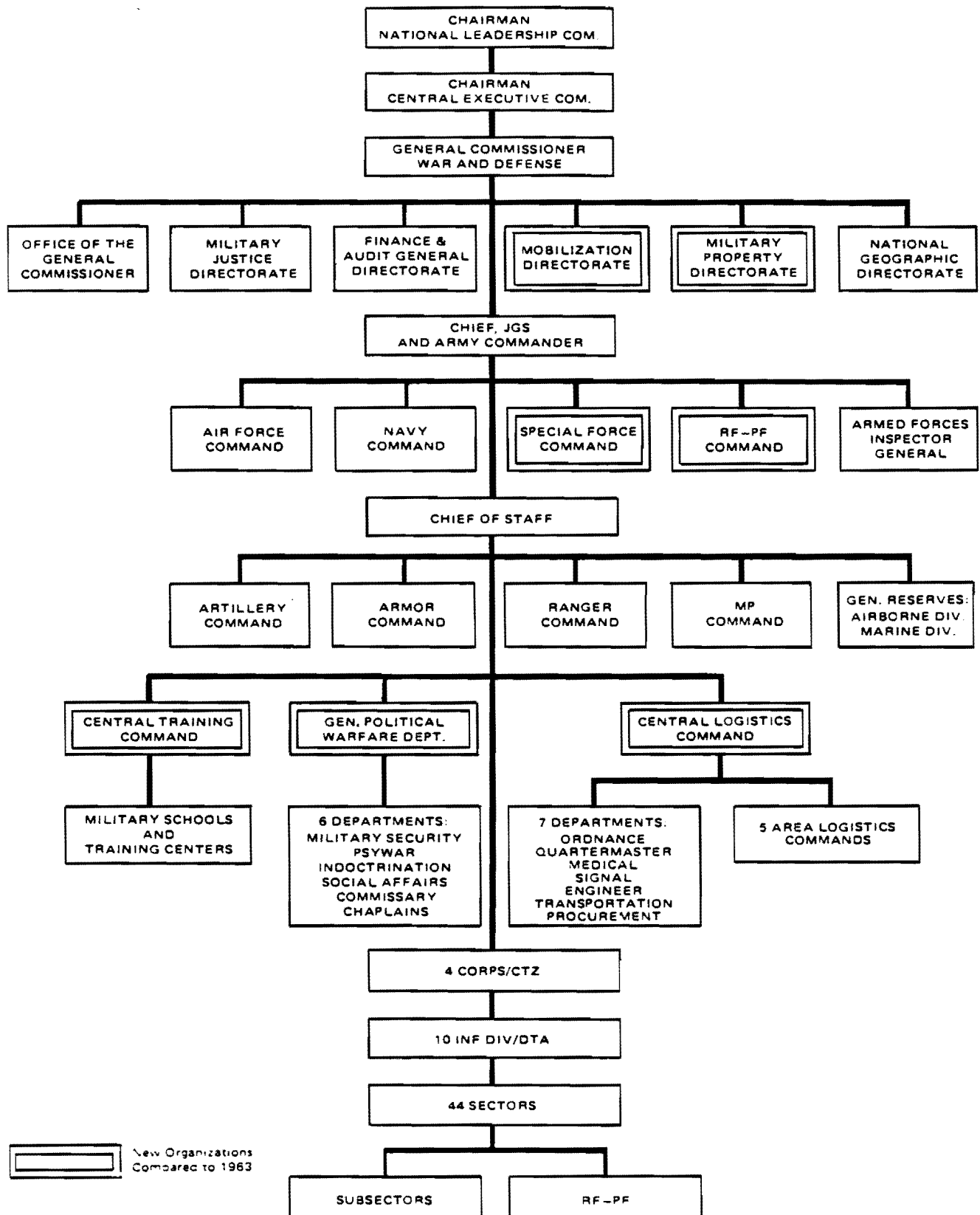
because of irreconcilable differences, Suu and Quat later returned leadership of the state to the armed forces. The armed forces council was therefore reactivated with a broader participation by all general officers, holding major command positions and key political roles. Lt. General Nguyen Van Thieu was elected council chairman, and also chief of state. Air force Major General Nguyen Cao Ky was appointed chairman of the Central Executive Committee, or Prime Minister. Under the armed forces council, the supreme leadership organ of the state, was the National Leadership Committee which functioned on the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibilities.¹ In mid-April 1966, a committee made up of ten military and ten civilian members was appointed to draft legislation for the election of a constituent assembly.

As a result, a constituent assembly was elected on 11 September 1966. Six months later, the new constitution of the Second Republic was promulgated on 1 April 1967. General elections soon followed in September 1967 and Lt. General Nguyen Van Thieu was elected President with Major General Nguyen Cao Ky as Vice President. The political situation of South Vietnam began to stabilize.

Militarily, the new government's first priority was to consolidate the national defense structure from national to local levels. Military officers replaced civilian province chiefs while retaining their responsibilities as sector commanders. Corps/CTZ commanders also held the positions of government delegates. Support agencies previously subordinated to the Defense Ministry were placed under the JGS. Technical services such as ordnance, quartermaster, medical, signal, engineer and transportation were reorganized and placed under the control of the Central Logistics Command. The psychological warfare, chaplain, social welfare and military security directorates also came under the General Political Warfare Department. (*Chart 3*)

¹The National Leadership Committee consisted of ten members: Lt. General Nguyen Van Thieu, Chairman and Chief of State; Major General Nguyen Cao Ky, Vice Chairman and Prime Minister; Lt. General Nguyen Duc Thong, Secretary; Lt. General Nguyen Huu Co, Minister of War and Development; General Cao Van Vien, Chief, JGS; four corps commanders and the CMD commander.

Chart 3 – RVN Defense Structure, 1965



The Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps became part of the RVNAF under the new designation of Regional and Popular Forces. The RVNAF infantry then consisted of three forces: regular, regional and popular. At the time of their integration into the RVNAF, the RF/PF totaled 322,187 men organized into approximately 1,000 separate RF companies and 4,000 PF platoons. Consequently, the RVNAF force structure jumped from 244,749 in FY 64 to 597,245 in FY 65 to include 275,058 regulars, 137,187 RF and 185,000 PF. Under MACV guidance and U.S. DOD approval, the RVNAF force structure was further expanded between FY 65 and FY 68 to reach the following composition: Infantry - 126 battalions, 32 regimental headquarters and ten divisional commands; Airborne - nine battalions, three brigade headquarters and one divisional command; Marines - six battalions and two brigade headquarters; Rangers - 20 battalions; Artillery - 24 battalions of 105-mm howitzers (including battalions organic to the ten infantry divisions, the airborne division and the marines) and six battalions of 155-mm howitzers organic to corps; Armor - 11 squadrons equipped with M-113 armored personnel carriers and M-41 tanks; Regional Forces - 1,050 companies; Popular Forces - 4,560 platoons; Air Force - five squadrons of fighter-bombers (A-1/A-37/F-5), five squadrons of H-34 helicopters, three squadrons of C-47 transports and four squadrons of O-1/U-17 observation aircraft. During this period U.S. advisory teams were deployed at sub-sector/district level to advise and assist sub-sector commanders in the areas of operations, training and territorial security.

Rural security was substantially improved as a result of search-and-destroy operations conducted by U.S. and Free World Military Assistance (ROK/Australia/New Zealand/Thailand) forces and the efforts of the RVNAF in improving training, administration and pacification support operations. The population living in GVN-controlled areas increased from 40% in 1965 to 67.2% by the end of 1967 as Communist main forces were driven back into their base areas along the border.

Improvement and Modernization Under Vietnamization

To redress their weakening posture, the Communists resorted to the strategy of all-out offensive. Taking advantage of the 1968 Tet truce and exploiting the populace's preparations to celebrate the new year, the Communists secretly infiltrated personnel and arms into towns and cities. In coordination with major units rushed in from border base areas these elements launched an attack against Saigon, five other cities, 36 provincial capitals, and 64 district towns. Despite the surprise, they failed to occupy any key command facility and also failed in their efforts to stage a general uprising to seize power, all this against their expectations. The Communist Tet general offensive actually caused the armed forces and people of South Vietnam to strengthen their determination and become more closely united. The number of youths volunteering to serve in the armed forces increased remarkably. The draft age was lowered to 19, then 18, and finally general mobilization was decreed on 19 June 1968. Induction and training centers were all flooded with recruits. The government then launched an accelerated pacification program aimed at reoccupying and consolidating those hamlets lost or destroyed during the enemy's offensive and to expand the GVN territorial control. As a result of serious losses, North Vietnam agreed to come to Paris for peace talks. The President of the United States ordered a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam and announced his decision not to seek re-election. U.S. forces began to phase out of the RVN while the war was still in progress and no peace settlement was in sight. The RVNAF were hurriedly modernized and expanded to take over tactical and support operations thus far assumed by U.S. forces. This improvement process focused on the RF/PF which were to take over pacification responsibilities in order to release ARVN infantry divisions for mobile tactical operations. Mobile advisory training teams (MATT) and Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams (MALT) fanned out to give in-place training and guidance to RF companies and PF platoons. The modernization program covered primarily armament, communications and transportation.

The RVNAF began to receive equipment being used by U.S. forces in the Vietnam theater. The expansion program was designed to balance logistic support, firepower and mobility with the needs of the combat infantryman, an area previously given low priority because of the availability of U.S. support. Special consideration was also given to the need to support rural pacification efforts. Consequently, the increases in force structure between FY 69 and FY 73 provided for one-half of the additional strength to go to the RF/PF. The RF were expanded from 1,050 companies in FY 68 to 1,810 in FY 73 while the PF grew from 4,560 platoons to 8,166 during the same period. The buildup in regular army combat forces was extremely modest in comparison with the U.S. forces that they were intended to replace. (*Table 1*) The infantry received an additional nine battalions, three regimental commands and one divisional command. The marines were expanded by three battalions, one brigade command and one divisional command. The Rangers increased their forces by 33 border defense battalions and 17 group commands. Combat support elements also saw a significant increase: the Armored Corps grew from 11 squadrons in FY 68 to 21 in FY 73 including three new M-48 tank squadrons; artillery units grew from 30 battalions in FY 68 to 64 in FY 73 including four 175-mm field gun battalions but excluding 176 territorial artillery sections (105-mm howitzers). The VNAF was expanded from five fighter squadrons to 11 equipped with A-1, A-37, F-37, F-5A and F-5E aircraft; from five H-34 helicopter squadrons to 21 squadrons consisting of 17 UH-1 and 4 CH-47 squadrons; and from three C-47 transport squadrons to five squadrons consisting of three C-7 and two C-130A squadrons. (*Table 2*)

Through joint U.S.-RVNAF efforts, the program designed to improve the combat effectiveness of the RVNAF, modernize their equipment and expand their force structure progressed annually according to plans. Rural pacification efforts also made steady progress. By the end of 1971, 90% of the civilian population lived in areas under GVN control. The RVNAF demonstrated their new capabilities by initiating cross-border operations against Communist sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia in 1970-1971. Of utmost significance, the RVNAF held fast in the face of the NVA general offensive during 1972 and again showed their resolve

**Table 1 - Summary of ARVN and VNMC Force Structure
(Improvement and Modernization Program)**

MAJOR ELEMENTS	END OF JUNE					
	68	69	70	71	72	73
INFANTRY					(1)	
Inf. Bn	126	133	133	133	105	105
Inf. Regt Hq	32	33	33	33	35	35
Inf. Div Hq	10	10	10	10	11	11
ABN						
Abn Bn	9	9	9	9	9	9
Abn Bde Hq	3	3	3	3	3	3
Abn Div Hq	1	1	1	1	1	1
MARINE						
Bn	6	6	9	9	9	9
Bde Hq	2	2	3	3	3	3
Div Hq			1	1	1	1
RANGER						
Bn	20	20	20	20	21	21
Border Def Bn				37	33	33
Ranger Group Hq				7	17	17
ARTY						
105-mm Bn	24	35	43	43	44	44
155-mm Bn	6	12	15	15	15	15
175-mm Bn					2	4
ADA Bn					1	4
105-mm Sect				100	176	176
ARM CAV						
Cav Sqdn (Sep.)	11	16	7	7	7	7
Cav Sqdn (Div)			10	10	11	11
Med Tank Bn					1	3
Arm Bde Hq		2	2	3	4	4

MAJOR ELEMENTS	END OF JUNE					
	68	69	70	71	72	73
ENGR.						
Cbt Engr. Bn (Div)	10	10	10	10	11	12
Cbt Engr. Bn (Sep)	13	13	12	12	12	12
Cbt Engr. Gp Hq	4	4	4	4	4	4
Engr. Bn, Const.	8	10	13	17	17	17
Engr. Const. Gp Hq	2	2	3	4	4	4
TRANS CO						
Lt Trk	21	30	31	31	32	30
Med Trk	4	5	7	7	8	10
Med Boat Gp	1	5	5	5	5	5
Hvy Boat Gp			1	1	1	1
RF.						
Co	1050	1407	1645	1703	1669	1810
Gp Hq			232	268	254	0
Bn Hq			31	47	61	360
Sector Tac CP					14	45
Boat Co	23	23	23	24	20	20
Wpn Plat (Sep)		44	43	38	24	0
Mech Plat	47	50	50	50	50	50
PF.						
Rifle Plat	4560	4861	6969	7560	7872	8186
MANEUVER BN (2)	173	185	189	189	164	166
ARTY BN (3)	30	47	58	58	61	64

(1) No reduction in total rifle companies. Converted from 4 Bns of three rifle Cos per Bn to three Bns of 4 Cos per Bn.

(2) Includes Div. Cav. Sqdns and Marine Corps Bns.

(3) Does not include ADA.

Table 2 — Summary of VNAF Force Structure

Major Elements	E N D O F J U N E						
	68	69	70	71	72	73	74
Fighter Squadron (A-1, F-5, A-37)	5	6	6	9	9	11	16
Helicopter Squadron							
H-34	5	3	1	1			
UH-1		2	4	12	16	16	17
CH-47				1	2	3	4
Gunship Squadron							
AC-47			1	1	1	1	1
AC-119					1	1	2
Training Squadron (T-41)			1	1	1	1	1
Transport Squadron							
C-47	3	3	2	2	2	1	
C-119				1	2	1	
C-123					3	3	
C-7						3	3
C-130A							2
Liaison Squadron	4	4	5	7	7	8	10
Reconnaissance Squadron (EC/RC-47, -46, RF-5)	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Special Mission Squadron		1	1	1	1	1	1

during the counter-attacks to reoccupy lost territories with substantial U.S. support in terms of military aid, air and naval firepower, and tactical transportation. The RVNAF were now able to take over the combat responsibilities of U.S. infantry units allowing them to safely disengage from the war. By cease-fire day there were only 23,516 U.S. troops and 30,449 FWMAF troops left in Vietnam. RVNAF strength by this time had reached the 1.1 million mark. (Table 3)

Cease-Fire and Collapse

After the cease-fire, the U.S. Defense Attache Office (DAO) was established to work with the JGS in managing annual military aid programs. War materiels damaged, worn out, lost or expended were to be replaced but only on a one-for-one basis. The RVNAF returned to a defensive posture to protect territories secured prior to the cease-fire, ready to counteract Communist attempts to grab land and population. Simultaneously, they continued to carry out programs designed to improve the efficiency of their cadre and to economize in clothing, equipment, ammunition and fuel. The Communists did not genuinely want peace and they took advantage of the cease-fire to move more men and supplies into the South to compensate for the huge losses sustained in 1972 and build up their stockpiles established along improved infiltration routes in South Vietnam and on the other side of the border. Communist violations of the Paris Agreement increased in frequency and intensity. During 1973, many district towns and border outposts were overrun by Communist forces in an attempt to expand territorial control. In early 1974 open warfare resumed. Major Communist units launched attacks in the lowlands south of Da Nang, in areas of Kien Tuong Province near the Cambodian border, and elsewhere. The RVNAF fought back from a self-defense posture weakened by their concern to conserve dwindling supplies. War materiels and ammunition lost or expended were no longer replaced on a one-for-one basis as provided for by the Paris Agreement because U.S. military aid had been cut back. The RVNAF were directed to fight a "poor man's

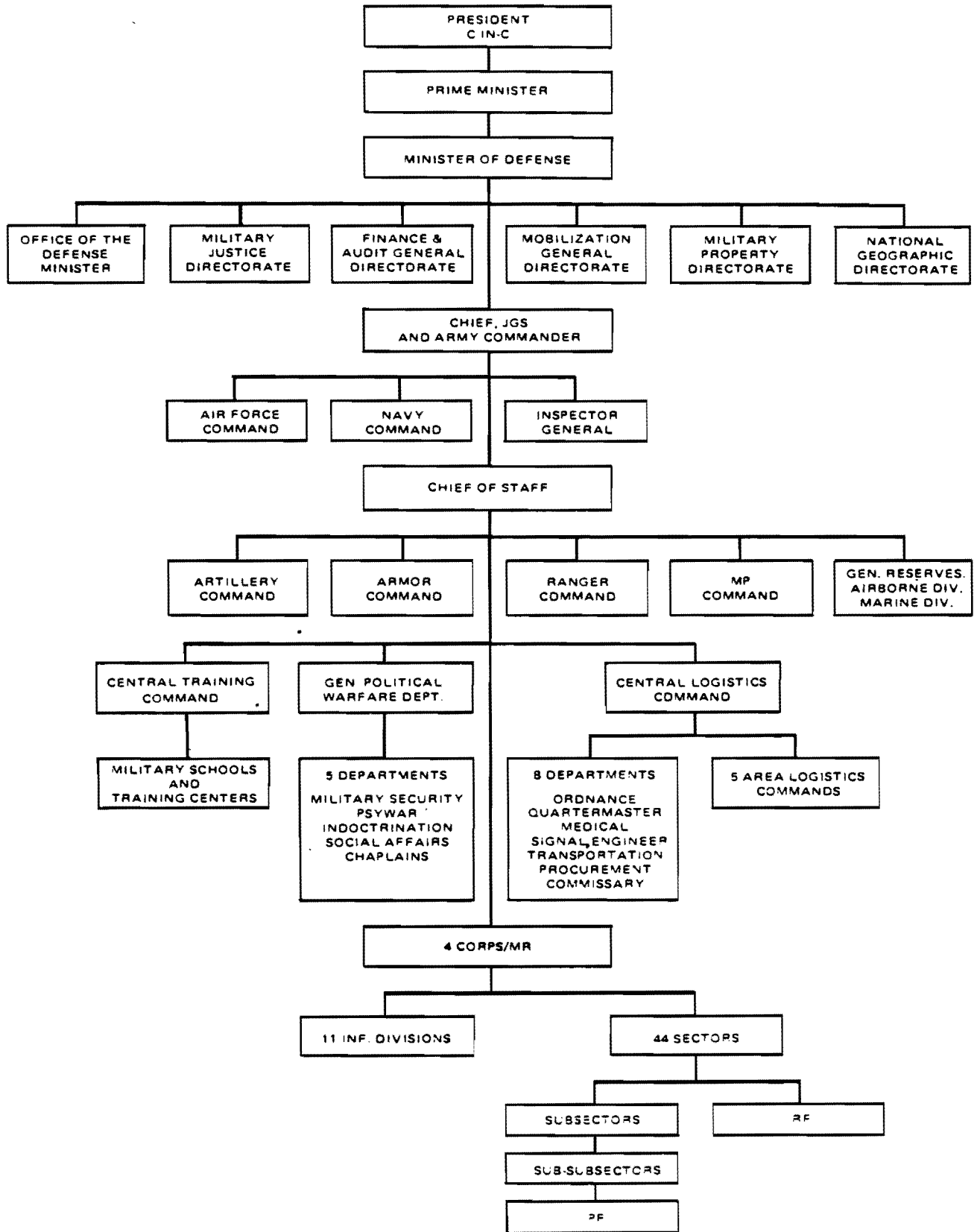
Table 3 – Summary of RVNAF Strength Increases

COMPONENT	END OF JUNE						FY-73 APPROVED
	1965	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	
REGULAR FORCES	275,058						
ARVN	NA	359,959	392,686	418,833	411,693	456,620	450,367
VNAF	NA	17,240	24,527	38,541	50,925	50,160	61,453
VNN	NA	16,952	24,635	38,153	40,808	43,505	40,931
VNMC	NA	10,922	9,314	12,471	13,422	17,681	14,245
REGIONAL FORCES	137,187	197,917	249,553	275,785	298,744	294,571	312,151
POPULAR FORCES	185,000	164,284	175,118	234,598	247,537	234,681	220,853
TOTALS	597,245	765,274	875,833	1,018,383	1,060,129	1,097,218	1,110,000

war" but U.S. tactical influence still weighed heavily on all three services and could not be discarded overnight, particularly at a time of mounting enemy pressure. In early 1975 the Communists took another step forward and committed major forces supported by armor and artillery to overrun the provincial capital of Phuoc Long. This was an extremely blatant and serious violation of the Paris Agreement. Neither the U.S. nor the Free World took any concrete action to punish the Communist aggressors. Additional military aid to strengthen the RVNAF was still not finalized. Congressional delegations surveying the situation in South Vietnam only reinforced the consensus that chances of additional aid were very slim. On 10 March, Ban Me Thuot became the second provincial capital to fall into the hands of the Communists. Then, the two provinces of Kontum and Pleiku were hurriedly abandoned on 16 March, on orders of President Nguyen Van Thieu, causing extreme confusion among the population and the troops. The disastrous retreat from Pleiku and Kontum to the coastline of MR-2 caused the disintegration of two-thirds of II Corps regular forces. The panic-stricken civilians of MR-1 fled en masse to Da Nang on their way to seeking refuge further south. This affected the combat spirit of MR-1 forces. The 1st Infantry Division, one of the combat-hardened units of the South Vietnamese army, disintegrated during its retreat from Hue to Da Nang on 25 March. The 2d Infantry Division in Quang Ngai suffered the same fate. The seaborne evacuation of Da Nang was the death blow to the remainder of I Corps regular forces and to the VNMC Division, one of the two general reserve units of the JGS. Within a mere two weeks, nearly 50% of the RVNAF regular forces had been lost without a fight. Exploiting its momentum, the NVA directed its thrust further south and encircled the capital with 14 divisions. On 28 April the capital defense perimeter manned by III Corps was breached and on 29 April vanguard elements of Communist forces pushed into several precincts of the capital. Then, on 30 April, the RVNAF laid down their arms as ordered by the new President, General Duong Van Minh.

The question often asked after South Vietnam's collapse was why a strong military force such as the RVNAF disintegrated so rapidly? After 20 years of U.S. advisory assistance and military aid the RVNAF had indeed developed into a modern military giant and the RVN defense structure was also firmly established. (*Chart 4*) My evaluation of the RVNAF strengths and weaknesses in terms of manpower, training, support and morale perhaps will help provide an answer to this question.

Chart 4 – RVN Defense Structure, 1975



PART ONE

PERSONNEL

CHAPTER II

Personnel Administration

Requirements

Personnel requirements for the Vietnamese armed forces were estimated yearly by J-1, JGS based on the following considerations: new organizations, fillers and replacements. These requirements for new organizations were assessed on the basis of the force structure increase (FSI) prepared yearly by JGS and the U.S. military mission (MAAG or MACV) and approved by the U.S. Department of Defense. Requirements for fillers were obtained by comparing authorized and actual strengths of the various units and agencies as approved in the existing force structure. Requirements for replacements were based on average losses incurred during previous years through desertion and combat (MIA, KIA and unsalvageable WIA) as well as losses resulting from annual discharge involving completion of military service, retirement, disciplinary action and disability. All three requirements were then divided into officer, NCO and EM categories.

There were two major obstacles confronting the JGS in its assessment and estimate of annual requirements. The first concerned our assessment of authorized strengths by grades which was based on the TOE of each unit or agency as approved in the force structure. But reviewing and approving a TOE was a time-consuming process involving several stages of work and extensive coordination between the advisors of the related service or branch and their Vietnamese counterparts, as well as between the JGS and MAAG or MACV. The availability of TOEs therefore usually lagged behind, well after orders for the activation of the unit or agency concerned had been issued. The joint MACV-JGS review committee was very active and succeeded in reducing processing time as well as the

number of units or agencies without a TOE or whose TOE had not been updated. The TOE problem however continued to be an impediment because of the structural changes dictated by the evolving political and military situations. The second obstacle resulted from inaccurate reports. Data on total strength and by grades as well as information concerning losses were usually unreliable since they were compiled by hand at the local level and again recapitulated by hand at the central level. This shortcoming was gradually corrected, beginning in 1966, with the application of accounting procedures following the adoption of report Form QD 22 and the use of computerized equipment in personnel administration.

The requirements for new organizations, fillers and replacements were submitted by the JGS to the Vietnamese Defense Ministry for approval as part of its annual budget estimate and for developing a policy to meet these requirements. The procurement of personnel to meet these requirements was made through recruitment and conscription, one supporting the other. The Ministry of Defense coordinated the JGS recruitment efforts with the Mobilization Directorate's conscription responsibilities.

Recruitment

During the period 1949 to 1951 recruitment was entrusted to the recruitment office in each military region which had the responsibility to obtain personnel to satisfy their respective regional requirements. These offices assumed procedural responsibilities for both recruitment and induction. In 1951, when the government of the State of Vietnam adopted the policy of partial mobilization, these offices were redesignated local recruitment services and given responsibility for both recruitment and conscription in coordination with the induction centers. In 1964, after the Mobilization Directorate of the Defense Ministry was established, these services became local mobilization services under the Directorate with the sole responsibilities of managing local manpower resources and enforcing mobilization orders. Recruitment responsibilities were transferred to the JGS.

The recruitment effort was designed to provide recruits volunteering for service in the army, navy and air force; cadets for the air force and naval academies and the Da Lat National Military Academy; cadets for the

political warfare academy; and recruits as well as cadres for the women's auxiliary corps and the RF and PF.

A recruitment plan which provided separate quotas for new organizations, fillers and replacements and a time frame for execution was disseminated by J-1, JGS to infantry units (divisions and separate regiments); air force and navy commands; armor, artillery, Ranger, airborne and marine headquarters; and the heads of logistic, administrative and financial services for implementation. The recipients either organized the recruitment effort in Saigon or directed that similar action be taken locally by subordinate units or agencies. Delegation of authority for recruiting was sometimes even given to individual companies. Personnel in charge of recruitment, regardless of service and location were authorized to operate throughout the country. Recruitment results were recapitulated and reported monthly to J-1, JGS with appropriate recommendations. Deadlines might be extended and quotas amended in case recruitment objectives could not be met within the allotted time frame.

A unit which had been authorized to conduct a recruitment drive was responsible for processing each recruit in coordination with the regional mobilization service which issued service numbers and with the nearest training center where the recruit would be sent for basic training.

Recruitment of cadets for career officer training was undertaken by the Da Lat National Military Academy, the Political Warfare Academy and VNAF and VNN commands within their respective authorities.

This division of recruitment responsibilities produced satisfactory results but also caused numerous problems in personnel administration. In many instances, servicemen were not assigned service numbers, did not have military records, or their military records were incomplete causing delays in administrative processing and pay. It also created disputes over manpower resources between the combat infantry and the various service branches and corps, causing derogatory rumors to spread within the armed forces, particularly regarding the bribing of officials for enlistment in non-combat services. To correct the shortcomings, the recruitment system was revamped in 1966, in order to unify and standardize recruitment and conscription procedures and to reduce the number of recruitment agencies. The induction centers in the four CTZs were reorganized into recruitment

and induction centers to replace the central and local recruitment sections of the various services. Each center had a number of mobile recruitment teams or stationary offices established in provinces with large populations to conduct recruitment activities in accordance with JGS plans.

The RVNAF recruitment system thus consisted of four recruitment and induction centers and one interpreter/translator recruitment office which were directly subordinate to J1, JGS; recruitment sections of infantry, airborne and marine divisions; and recruitment sections of the Rangers, VNAI and VNN. The recruitment sections of the Women's Auxiliary Corps and of sector RF/PF were under the control of their respective commanders but their activities were technically supervised by J1, JGS. All recruits, except those for VNAF, VNN and RF/PF, were sent to recruitment and induction centers for administrative processing and from there to training centers (RF/PF recruits were processed by the sector AG section). Personnel recruited by the divisions, separate regiments and the Rangers were reassigned to their recruiting units upon completion of training. Personnel recruited by the recruitment and induction centers were assigned by J1, JGS according to national requirements.

The advantages of this reorganization were twofold. First, recruits' military records were properly established and sent to the training centers along with the recruits. These records were also timely forwarded to an automated data processing center to be used in updating realized strengths and cross-checking with trainee strength figures reported by the training centers. Second, the new system minimized the chance for corruption.

However, the recruitment offices organic to the recruitment and induction centers could not produce the same results as the organic recruitment sections of the various service branches. A primary reason was that they were unable at the time to answer questions usually raised by the prospective recruits such as: Where would they be assigned after training? Details concerning training? What unit and where located? Finally, in order to satisfy all manpower needs, the JGS authorized the recruitment sections of the armor, artillery, engineer (combat) and signal (field) corps to resume their operations, but at the same time it also limited recruitment activities of administrative and logistic services to the screening of physically unfit recruits at recruitment and induction centers and of class 2 personnel (unfit for combat duty) rejected by the infantry, airborne and marine divisions and by Ranger units.

To motivate youths to volunteer, the JGS authorized publicity by the various recruitment offices and sections. In addition, the following incentives were applied to attract volunteers: (1) they enjoyed all rights and benefits of a recruit (private) from the day they signed the enlistment papers at the recruitment section or office; (2) they received transportation expenses for their return trip home if they were found physically unfit; (3) they received an enlistment cash bonus varying with the duration of their commitment which ranged from a minimum of two years to a maximum of five years. The cash bonus was paid as a lump sum on their first payday.¹ Youths enlisting in the RVNAF had to be Vietnamese citizens with good conduct records and of legal age, at least 18 but not yet 32 years old. No youth in the draft or mobilization age group (20-26) was accepted as volunteers. In 1968, when general mobilization was decreed, the volunteer age group was extended to a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 38 and the draft or mobilization age restrictions were dropped. However, youths under 18 years of age required written consent from their parents or guardians.

Initially, an original enlistment file consisted of a written application, an individual pre-induction card issued by the Draft Board and a copy of any criminal record. In 1965, to cope with Communist disruptive activities designed to seize all identification papers belonging to Vietnamese citizens and to facilitate the recruitment process in light of considerable delays on the part of the courts in issuing copies of criminal records, enlistment files were simplified to require only an application and a copy of birth certificate or an identification card or any other document issued by an administrative agency bearing the applicant's date of birth. Security clearance was obtained at a later date by the unit of assignment from the Military Security Service.

Conscription

Based on annual force requirements and related recruitment plans, the JGS worked with the Defense Ministry to establish quarterly procurement

¹Details concerning this cash bonus are recorded in Chapter VIII, Pay and Allowances, of this monograph.

programs for draftees, reserve officers and NCOs. Following the review of these programs and the male resources in each age group, the Mobilization Directorate of the Defense Ministry issued communiques specifying the age groups to be called for compulsory military service, beginning each year with age 20. If this age group was not sufficient to meet requirements, the next age group was called.

The first mobilization order was issued in July 1951 calling Reserve Officers Class No. 1 and 60,000 draftees in four increments of 15,000 each (6,000 for North Vietnam, 3,000 for Central Vietnam and 6,000 for South Vietnam) and spaced at two-month intervals. The first increment reported on 16 October 1951. Upon completion of training, the draftees were temporarily sent home while the reserve officers were assigned to units and agencies of the National Army of Vietnam to work with French officers. Subsequently, in 1953, to meet the force requirements of a normal expansion plan and a supplementary plan calling for 100,000 men to organize 54 commando battalions (later redesignated light infantry battalions) and 14 artillery batteries designed to relieve French forces committed in pacification operations, general mobilization was declared in April calling and recalling to active duty all youths 20 to 33 years of age. This general mobilization was conducted in four increments of 10,000 men each taking effect on 1 July, 1 August, 1 September and 1 October 1953 respectively in accordance with approved plans to organize the new units. By the end of the year, however, only one-half of the quotas had been filled and conscription continued until cease-fire day, 20 July 1954. General mobilization was subsequently discontinued because of reduced manpower requirements. Partial mobilization of eligible youths for officer training was resumed, however, but it affected only those in the 20 - 22 age group. Two increments of 500 reserve officers were called each year to serve a two-year legal term. In June 1955, a national policy of compulsory military service was proclaimed based on the concept of building a strong reserve force for deployment in times of need. The military service policy differed from mobilization in that it affected only

youths from 20 to 22 years of age. Compulsory military service being then regarded as a sacred mission, the government launched publicity campaigns in great pomp to promote it. Ceremonies were held to send youths off to induction and to welcome them at induction or training centers. There were three increments called each year with 5,000 to 10,000 men in each increment. The duration of service was 12 months, four in training and eight at the unit. During the term of their military service, the draftees had a separate pay schedule which left them with VN \$120 a month after meals and other deductions. In 1959, because of the need to reinforce security in hamlets and villages, the duration of service was increased to 18 months. The pay schedule was also changed: during the first 12 months, draftees continued to receive the VN \$120 monthly "pocket money", but enjoyed the same pay schedule as regular army enlisted men for the remaining six months. In 1961, military service was extended to 24 months and the draftees received regular army pay from the time they reported for duty.

Individual induction orders were prepared by regional recruitment agencies and delivered to the last known addresses of the individuals concerned through the local administration. Unserved induction orders were returned to recruitment agencies. The number of unserved orders increased with each day because of insecurity in the countryside, lack of zeal and dedication on the part of local administrative and military officials, or failure on the part of the youths concerned to report address changes to local recruitment agencies. The provincial draft boards annual registration and classification of 18-year-old youths for the purpose of issuing pre-induction papers became nearly ineffective because of the deteriorating security in the countryside. Individual files on youths reaching draft age could not be compiled for this reason. The problem was also compounded by a lack of control and stimulus on the part of the central government. By 1964, there was an estimated 200,000 cases of draft-dodging by youths known to be in the draft age.

To provide improved and efficient administration of national manpower resources the Mobilization Directorate was created during the second half of 1964 under the Defense Ministry. Local recruitment agencies were

renamed local mobilization services. The primary mission of the Mobilization Directorate at the time was to provide inter-ministerial coordination in stimulating, controlling and supervising the enforcement of induction orders.

In April 1964, to provide sufficient resources to meet the armed forces' needs, the Vietnamese government issued a new decree governing the military obligations of male citizens which stipulated that all male youths 20 to 25 years of age were required to carry out their obligation in the armed forces or in civil defense. Based on this decree and to avoid the problems previously encountered in serving individual notices, the Defense Ministry applied collective call-up to individual age groups of EM and NCO resources. The communique of 20 November 1964 specified that all male citizens 20 to 25 years old, whether in a legal or illegal draft status, had to report for induction within a month of the date of the communique. It also announced that this was the last chance and that police operations would be launched simultaneously and severe penalties would be given to youths of these age groups who did not comply. To improve the effectiveness of the armed forces, the legal term of military service was also increased to three years for enlisted men and four years for NCOs and officers. Those NCOs and officers who had completed two years of service by 1964 saw their terms extended by one year and two years respectively. The RVNAF were thus able to retain a number of experienced cadres who were badly needed in the face of mounting combat requirements. This collective call-up measure coupled with stepped-up recruitment activities caused in fact a notable excess in realized strength in late 1964.

By late 1965, however, strength shortages occurred again. The number of recruits, draftees, forced inductees and re-enlistees was insufficient to meet the needs to organize new units and replace losses suffered through desertion or completion of military service. The government was compelled to extend the draft age from 26 in 1965 to 33 in 1967. Despite this effort, the RVNAF continued to suffer from a shortage of manpower and their planned expansion during FY 67 could not be implemented. As the war escalated with each day, the need for combat-experienced cadres and men became more pressing. While U.S./FWMAF casualties continued to

increase, a number of Vietnamese youths were enjoying the good life in the cities. This was an intolerable situation. The policy of systematic discharge upon completion of military obligations also caused the armed forces to lose a substantial number of invaluable, experienced cadres and men.

Plans to declare general mobilization in order to concentrate the nation's efforts on building the armed forces and other projects designed to extend the terms of military service with the objective of retaining combat-experienced cadres and men were frequently mentioned but could not be carried out because of our unstable political situation. The opportunity came during 1968 after the Communist general offensive pressured the people and the Congress of the United States for a withdrawal of U.S. forces. Popular consent and the stable domestic political situation prompted the Vietnamese government to lower the draft age to 19 in April 1968 and to 18 a month later. Following this momentum, general mobilization was declared on 19 June 1968. All male citizens 16 to 50 years of age were called to fulfill their military obligations. Males between 18 and 38 were inducted for service in the RVNAF. While 16 and 17 year olds and men between the ages of 39 to 50 were incorporated into the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). Male citizens 18 to 38 years of age who were physically unfit to serve in the RVNAF and those who had received draft deferments also qualified for PSDF duties. At the same time, reserve components were recalled to active duty. Since South Vietnam did not have reserve units, this recall to active duty merely applied to individual veterans who had less than 12 years of active duty and were still in the reserve age groups. As a result, 1,055 reserve officers were recalled by the end of 1968 to strengthen the ranks of cadres then suffering from serious shortages. All discharges were suspended, except for reasons of disability. The term of military service was no longer specified, which implied that it was extended indefinitely as long as the war continued.

While implementing the General Mobilization Law, the Defense Ministry successively issued communiques through the press, radio and television on 27 June, 30 July and 2 August 1968, calling up all males between 34 and 37. At the same time, it applied stringent criteria in reviewing

cases of deferment or exemption previously allowed for reasons of family, education, health, public service, occupation or religion. The objective was to induct a maximum number of youth into military service and to enforce justice and equality for all male citizens. The General Mobilization Law caused the number of volunteers to increase significantly. From April to 30 September 1968, the RVNAF strength increased by 98,577 to include 70,519 volunteers and 28,058 draftees.

In January 1969, the Defense Ministry issued a collective call-up of youths born in 1951 (18 years old) requiring them to report between March and December. First to report were those who did not know their exact birthdate. A six-month deferment was granted to those in the last year of secondary education's first cycle or in the first year of secondary education's second cycle in order to allow them to complete their 1968-1969 school year. The procurement of draftees during the first and second quarters of 1969 was very satisfactory. It gave cause for optimism toward our force structure expansion which was planned within the framework of Vietnamization. (*Table 4*)

Quotas for NCOs were not filled as planned because of the short supply of youths who had completed the first cycle of the secondary education degree. To cope with the shortage in these resources, the JGS applied the following measures to procure NCOs: (1) education criteria applied to NCOs were lowered to require only secondary school attendance instead of a secondary education's first cycle degree; (2) education criteria applied to reserve officers were changed to require a full baccalaureate degree instead of just part 1 of the same degree. Youths without a full baccalaureate degree were re-classified as reserve NCO resources.²

²South Vietnam's education system had three levels: primary (or elementary), secondary, and higher education. To pass from one level to the next, students had to take an examination and if successful, were granted a diploma. Primary education was five years. The secondary education had two cycles: the first cycle was four years and the second three years. Students of the second cycle had to take two eliminatory examinations, one at the end of the second year which awarded the diploma of Baccalaureate First Part, and the other at the end of the last year which culminated in the diploma of Baccalaureate Second Part, also called Full Baccalaureate diploma. This system was simplified in 1974 and required only an examination at the end of twelve years of primary and secondary education (6 + 6).

Table 4 — Draftee Procurement Status, 1969

QUOTAS	1st Quarter 1969				2nd Quarter 1969			
	OFF	NCO	EM	TOTAL	OFF	NCO	EM	TOTAL
JCS-prescribed	2,400	3,192	8,785	14,377	1,500	3,200	13,883	18,583
Inducted	3,201	1,269	16,943	21,413	1,611	772	17,563	19,946

However, strong opposition from students and parents forced the JGS to drop the reclassification measure. The JGS resorted instead to a training qualification solution and, in 1970, adopted the concept of a reserve officer preparatory course. Along with this concept, the JGS also upgraded graduation procedures and criteria to reduce the number of reserve officers and increase reserve NCO resources. Youths from reserve officer resources were first sent to the Quang Trung Training Center where they took a reserve officer preparatory course. Those who failed to meet the achievement criteria for graduation were sent to the NCO School to be trained as reserve NCOs. This measure, however, failed to augment the reserve NCO resources significantly because only less than 1% of the officer candidates were rejected during the preparatory course.

In 1973, after the Paris Agreement went into effect, many studies were undertaken to de-escalate mobilization by lowering draft age limits and specifying a legal term of military service. To make manpower resources available for economic development, the President decided to reduce the RVNAF force structure level from 1,100,000 to 1,000,000. The RVNAF began implementing a gradual reduction in force in June 1973. By July 1974, there were slightly less than 1,000,000 men in the armed forces. But peace did not materialize and heavy fighting soon resumed, which prompted the President to cancel his decision to maintain the force structure level at 1,000,000 men.

To expand the armed forces to a level of 1,100,000 and replace losses estimated over the next 12 months, the JGS determined the requirement for an additional 290,000 men to include 100,000 to fill the authorized level, 140,000 to replace losses incurred through desertion, and 50,000 to replace other losses. By this time, however, manpower resources in the 19 to 38 age groups were nearly depleted. The primary source of manpower each year was the 18-year-old male population. The Mobilization Directorate estimated this group to number about 200,000, which gave the RVNAF an effective pool of 150,000 to draw from. However, statistics of previous years related to each age group showed that only an estimated 90,000 were drawn into the armed forces through conscription and recruitment. The Defense Ministry therefore recommended that 17-year-olds be called up to meet manpower needs. The domestic political situation of the time probably

did not favor such a drastic measure for, by the time of South Vietnam's collapse, the GVN had still not approved the Defense Ministry's recommendation.

Utilization of Manpower

By virtue of Decree No. 29, 1952, male Vietnamese citizens were classified into three types: Standby 1, male citizens 20 to 30 years of age; Standby 2, male citizens 31 to 39 years of age; and Standby 3, male citizens 40 to 50 years of age. In times of national crises, Standby 1 resources would be mobilized as first priority, if found physically fit, to be followed by Standby 2 resources. Youths with a baccalaureate or higher degree were classified as officer resources. Those with a primary education diploma were classified as NCO resources and those who had not reached this level as EM resources. In 1955, during the period of interim peace, the government enforced a military service policy whereby young men who had reached age 20 and determined physically fit were inducted for a term of one year. Those who held a baccalaureate part 1 diploma were trained to become officers and those with a secondary education's first cycle degree were trained to become NCOs.

From 1964, when the government began to enforce partial mobilization for a legal term of three years for EM and NCOs and four years for officers, until general mobilization was decreed for an indefinite length of service, deferments and exemptions were allowed for such reasons as health, education, religion, occupation, and familial burden.

Health Exemptions or Deferments. Crippled youths were permanently exempted by decision of a medical board. Physically unfit youths were deferred from military service until they became physically qualified based on certain prescribed criteria.

Educational Deferments. In order to prevent disruption of academic pursuit and make talents available to the nation, youths of draft age in their last year of secondary education's first cycle who

worked toward their baccalaureate part 1 or baccalaureate part 2 degrees were deferred from military service until after the final examinations. Youths attending college or studying overseas were also deferred from military service until after completion of their studies. Applications for deferment were reviewed annually by the Mobilization Directorate based on certification furnished by the schools and the Education Ministry.

Religious Deferments. Youths of draft age who were members of the clergy and had certification from their respective hierarchies were deferred from military service until such time that they abandoned their religious endeavors. Applications were reviewed annually by the mobilization Directorate based on certification furnished by the religious groups concerned.

Occupational Deferments. To make resources available to sectors other than national defense, draft deferments were granted on a year-to-year basis to youths holding vital positions in the administration, private and public enterprises and religious or political groups based on requests submitted by their employers. An inter-ministerial committee headed by the Office Administrator of the Defense Ministry reviewed the requests on the basis of individual merits and granted deferments for renewable one-year terms.

Deferments for Familial Obligations. These deferments were granted on a renewable basis to youths who met one or more of the following conditions: the applicant had 6 or more minor children; the applicant's parents were deceased and he had to support minor brother and/or sisters; the applicant's parents were more than 60 years old and he was the only son; all the applicant's brothers were in the service. Applications were reviewed annually based on certification furnished by local governments.

Deferments to Ralliers. Enemy personnel who rallied under the Chieu Hoi program were granted drafted deferments for six months from the day they were issued clearance papers.

Deferments to Overseas Vietnamese Resettling in Vietnam. Draft deferments were granted for 6 months from the day of repatriation and might be renewed for a period of up to 1 year if readjustment had not been fully completed.

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities were also entitled to draft exemptions and deferments on the same grounds as other Vietnamese. In addition, they enjoyed special privileges not accorded other citizens. For example, they only needed a diploma for the first cycle of secondary education to be classified among officer resources; they were authorized to enlist in RF, PF and ARVN units stationed in their home provinces even though they might be of draft age; if drafted, they were assigned to regional units in their home areas upon completion of basic training. The selection of members of ethnic minorities for NCO or officer training was also simplified to require only qualification and background considerations as educational requirements were waived. Only those highlanders known collectively as "Montagnards" and the Cham people living in the provinces of Khanh Hoa and Ninh Thuan were considered ethnic minorities entitled to these special privileges. Montagnard personnel were organized into PF platoons or RF companies and battalions operating in the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, Phu Bon, Darlac, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc and Lam Dong which made up the Central Highlands. The Montagnards proved to be kind, sincere and docile people but were often unreliable as fighting soldiers. Province chiefs were instructed to exercise caution in the utilization of montagnard troops after the birth of the FULRO movement and especially following the 1964 armed rebellion fomented by this group in Ban Me Thuot.

Chinese and Cambodian Vietnamese, estimated to number over 1,000,000 and 400,000 respectively, were not classified as ethnic minorities for draft purposes although requests to that effect

had been presented by Cambodian community leaders in the Mekong Delta. Chinese-Vietnamese benefitted from the war but contributed little to it. Fearing combat duties, they usually evaded military service by devious means. In 1966, the Defense Ministry facilitated their entry in military service by authorizing their enlistment in technical and logistical branches. This policy helped the technical services procure specialists but also reinforced accusations of corruption and injustice within the military. It was therefore discontinued after a few months. By contrast, Cambodian-Vietnamese contributed significantly toward building the armed forces. They supplied young men not only for the territorial forces in the provinces of Vinh Binh, Ba Xuyen and Kien Giang but also for the regular army. They, too, were gentle, sincere, and loyal people but, in sharp contrast to the montagnards, they were also very good fighters. They provided the RVNAF with extremely well-qualified NCOs and officers including company and battalion commanders.

The Induction Process

From 1949 to 1964, induction processing was performed by two agencies: recruitment offices for volunteers and military region induction centers for draftees. In 1964, when recruitment services were renamed mobilization services and placed under the Mobilization Directorate, the processing of volunteers was entrusted to those units or agencies authorized to conduct recruitment activities in coordination with regional mobilization services. In 1966, when the mobilization and recruitment system was consolidated, all draftees, draft-dodgers caught in police operations, re-enlistees and volunteers were processed at four recruitment and induction centers whose organization had been standardized to improve operations and control. (Table 5)

Each center consisted of six separate areas of reception, billeting, physical examination, administration, supply, and visits. The billeting

Table 5 – Locations and Capacities of Recruitment and Induction Centers

CENTER	LOCATION	CAPACITY		POPULATION IN AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (1970)
		Accommodation	Daily Processing	
1st - R&I CENTER	Da Nang, MR-1	2,000	150-300	Quang Tri: 301,959; Thua Thien: 452,920; Hue: 156,449; Quang Nam: 637,350; Da Nang: 313,881; Quang Tin: 390,346; Quang Ngai: 687,763
2nd - R&I CENTER	Nha Trang, MR-2	1,500	100-200	Binh Dinh: 862,936; Phu Yen: 330,706; Khanh Hoa: 367,523; Cam Ranh: 66,011; Ninh Thuan: 79,357; Binh Thuan: 267,268; Kontum: 104,235; Pleiku: 194,239; Phu Bon: 53,794; Darlac: 213,523 Quang Duc: 28,644; Tuyen Duc: 102,940; Dalat: 83,651; Lam Dong: 66,724
3rd - R&I CENTER	Gia Dinh, MR-3	6,000	600-1,000	Binh Tuy: 59,122; Long Khanh: 147,159; Phuoc Tuy: 103,583; Vung Tau: 69,034; Con Son: 2,508; Phuoc Long: 50,028; Binh Long: 72,919; Binh Duong: 238,302; Tay Ninh: 319,576; Hau Nghia: 212,873; Long An: 331,865; Bien Hoa: 421,197; Gia Dinh: 1,088,986; Saigon: 1,670,524
4th - R&I CENTER	Can Tho, MR-4	4,000	200-400	Dinh Tuong: 582,405; Go Cong: 173,748; Kien Hoa: 574,748; Kien Tuong: 39,582; Kien Phong: 334,097; Sadec: 285,495; Vinh Binh: 383,899; Vinh Long: 488,049; Phong Dinh: 430,426; Chuong Thien: 248,729; Ba Xuyen: 352,781; Bac Lieu: 260,431; An Xuyen: 233,105; An Giang: 496,564; Chau Doc: 393,049; Kien Giang

area was in turn divided into three sub-areas: quarters for physically qualified personnel, quarters for personnel awaiting physical examination and quarters for physically unqualified personnel requiring re-examination. The physical examination area was divided into three sub-areas specializing in the preparation of medical records, chest X-rays and general examination respectively. The administration area consisted of a military records sub-area and a photo/ID card sub-area.

The processing of inducted personnel was conducted in accordance with a carefully prepared plan. Youths sent in from various places were first assembled in the reception area where biographical data cards were distributed after roll calls and appropriate checking of individual identification. The men, divided into small teams, filled out these cards under the guidance of the center's cadres. Form QD-1A was used for officers and form QD-1 5A for NCOs and EM. This was usually a difficult step, particularly for those draft dodgers caught in police operations who did not carry a single piece of identification which might help verify the information provided in the biographical cards such as name, date of birth, occupation, parents' names and residence. Many false statements were thus exposed upon desertion, death or following an accident. The biographical cards having been completed, the men were divided into officer, NCO and EM groups. Each group was in turn divided into teams and led by NCOs or officers of the center to the billeting area to await physical examination. The biographical cards along with all personal identification papers were then forwarded to the administration area for the preparation of food rations and personnel records.

In the physical examination area, the men were processed through chest radiography, bodily measurements and physical examination. Radiography was a critical stage because it depended on the condition and capability of the equipment. Since each center had only one machine, a breakdown would cause backlogging in the center. In emergency cases, the Medical Department had to call for mobile X-ray units of the Health Ministry and dispatch standby maintenance personnel to the affected center. Following physical examination, the men were divided into three categories: physically fit, physically unfit, or those requiring re-examination.

The men found physically fit were billeted separately in appropriate quarters and received an initial equipment allowance of two sets of uniforms, one belt, two undershirts, two shorts, one cap, one pair of canvas jungle shoes, one mess kit, one canteen, and one duffel bag. Plastic ID cards, dog tags and blood classification were the responsibilities of training centers and schools. In 1970, these duties were reassigned to the recruitment and induction centers while the training centers and schools were only responsible for replacing missing or lost items and serving as backup units in times of congestion at the recruitment and induction centers.

Based on J1, JGS assignment plans, the recruitment and induction centers moved the recruits to pre-determined training centers by their own means or with support from the appropriate area logistics command. The recruits were usually assigned to training centers located within the same military region. If inter-region travel was involved, priority was given to the use of military air transport. The recruits reported to the training centers with their personal, medical and equipment records. Their biographical cards were forwarded to the Personnel ADP Center for processing, then filed at the Personnel Records Center, both under the control of the Adjutant General, JGS.

Those who had abnormalities in ear, eye, nose, throat, or nervous system were re-examined by specialized physicians. They were billeted in a separate area at the recruitment and induction center and were taken to the nearest medical facility to be re-examined by specialists. Where there were large contingents of men to be re-examined, as was the case with the 3d Recruitment and Induction Center in Saigon, medical specialists called twice a week and spent a whole day at the center to re-examine the men. Final results were not available until 7 to 10 days later. Those men determined to be physically qualified for military duty were permitted to continue their induction processing. Those found unfit for military duty were transferred to the "physically unqualified" area.

The physically unqualified were categorized "temporary" or "permanent." Those temporarily unqualified (for three months or less) were given permission to leave the center but they had to report back on the assigned dates on a voluntary basis. The medical records of those found unqualified

for more than three months as well as those determined to be permanently unqualified were forwarded to the Central Draft Exemption Center in Saigon for the 3d RI Center or to regional draft exemption annexes for the other three RI centers. These draft exemption agencies then submitted these cases for review by a Draft Exemption Board convened by the Central Draft Exemption Center. Members of the board were appointed on a rotating basis by the Medical Department and selected from among military physicians serving in medical facilities in the region. Their term on the board was three or six months. The board was chaired by a field-grade medical officer.

When the board met, the men who had been found physically unfit at the recruitment and induction centers were transported to the draft exemption center to appear before the board. Depending upon medical findings, they were either granted short-term draft deferments (6, 9 or 12 months) or were permanently exempted from military service. Those granted limited deferments were required to report voluntarily to the draft exemption centers at the end of the deferment term for re-examination. If then found physically qualified, they were sent to the recruitment and induction centers for processing.

On the average, inductees spent three or four days at a recruitment and induction center if they were physically qualified, 10 to 15 days if they had to be re-examined and 30 days or more if they had to appear before the draft exemption board.

The difficulties most frequently encountered by the recruitment and induction centers, particularly the 3d Center in Gia Dinh and the 4th Center in Can Tho, were many. Youths reporting daily for induction usually fluctuated in numbers ranging from scores to thousands, particularly during campaigns launched to track down draft dodgers and during the last two or three days before the reporting deadline. These excessive fluctuations caused overcrowding, shortages in mess, billeting and sanitary facilities, and a downgrading of attention and care for the men. Then, because of the high ratio of physically unfit youths which ranged from 20 to 30%, and the bureaucratically complex deferment-exemption procedures, these young men had to spend an excessive time at the induction centers, causing overcrowding, backlogging and numerous complaints.

The J1, JGS and the Medical Department exerted considerable efforts to improve and expedite the induction process but the problem could not be solved at the roots because of prevailing social conditions. Despite the rigorous complexity of medical examination procedures, there were rumors that physicians who conducted the examinations had been bribed to defer or exempt individuals, physically strong as bulls, while, on the other hand, many combat units complained of the deaf, mute and mentally deranged personnel in their ranks who had been examined by the same physicians. As a result of these complaints, the JGS directed that these men report to military hospitals to be re-examined. A few months later, the same personnel were returned to their units because no abnormalities had been found. However, based on daily observation, the units once again disagreed with the medical findings and filed further complaints. This was definitely a vicious circle, a deplorable phenomenon of wartime society in which everyone tried to save his own skin. Perhaps the doctors were right because in many instances, those who wanted to be discharged did not hesitate to pose themselves as deaf, mute, or mentally deranged, the very types of disability that no one, including physicians, could always detect with certitude.

Classification

"Using a man is like using wood" the Vietnamese say when they refer to the art of using people. All woods, whether rare, common, hard or soft are useful. So are men. Each has his own strength and weakness, some are intelligent, some naive, some highly educated, others illiterate, some skilled and some not, but they are all useful. Therefore, the first, essential action to take in attempting to fit the right man in the right place is classification. Classification determines talents, vocations and state of health.

The first classification method applied in the RVNAF was psychological testing. In late 1947 the French army established a psychotechnical center (*Centre Psychotechnique des FAEF*) to test new recruits of French Union forces for eventual assignments to specialized branches of service. In early 1953, the Vietnamese National Army prevailed on the services of

this center to screen and orient inductees earmarked for training as NCOs or specialists.

Screening and vocational orientation through psychological tests were applied for the first time in 1954, to Da Lat's Regular Army Officers Class 10 and Thu Duc's Reserve Officers Class 4. Officer candidates and cadets were selected for specialized training based on the results of the tests given by this psychotechnical center. In 1955 the center was transferred to Vietnamese control and renamed Armed Forces Psychological Testing Institute. In addition to its headquarters in Saigon, the institute had local annexes in Da Nang, Nha Trang, Saigon and Can Tho. A number of Vietnamese officers were selected through competitive examination to attend the Sorbonne School in Paris for a period of three years to learn applied psychology and aptitude testing methodology. In 1966, under the U.S. military aid program, the institute received additional testing equipment and improved its testing methods. The central institute tested Thu Duc reserve officer candidates and Da Lat career army officer cadets while the local annexes tested the students at the Nha Trang NCO School and enlisted men at national training centers. Each annex had the capability to test 50 to 100 men a day, except Annex No. 3 in Saigon which handled 150 to 300 men daily.

The purpose of psychological tests was to determine aptitude for specialized branches of service or skills. This type of testing was considered relatively scientific and reliable in the preliminary classification of military personnel. Yet many military authorities did not have much faith in the efficiency of the Psychological Testing Institute and there was also criticism directed at its activities much of which was unfounded and lacking in impartiality.

In 1966, this classification method was supplemented by the establishment of a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) system, which was borrowed from the U.S. Army and adapted to RVNAF standards. Each branch of service, occupation or position in the RVNAF was assigned an MOS number of three digits, the first one designating the service corps or branch and the last two digits, occupation or position. There were two types of MOS: a permanent MOS for graduates of military or civilian courses and a temporary MOS for personnel satisfactorily holding an occupation or a position over

a period of six months. Those personnel assigned a temporary MOS were required to take an appropriate training course to retain their specialty. All MOS, temporary or permanent, were assigned by the parent unit and recorded in personnel files. From 1966, MOS numbers were included in transfer or assignment orders as reminders for appropriate authorities to assign personnel to the right place, and also to facilitate control because a soldier's MOS number always accompanied his service number.

After two years of application, the MOS system proved ineffective and particularly unrealistic as far as the RVNAF were concerned. Many job descriptions translated from U.S. documents simply did not apply to the RVNAF at the time, while others were not necessary. In order to correct these shortcomings and make the MOS system an acceptable and realistic one, a review committee was established in 1968. It was composed of representatives of the specialized branches of ARVN, VNAF and VNN and chaired by the AG, JGS. After three months of work, the committee was able to formulate standard MOS classification procedures for the RVNAF which replaced the procedures initially introduced in 1966. These new procedures were better adapted to Vietnamese needs. From then on, this committee met once a year to review and update procedures in keeping with development trends in the three services.

In addition to being classified by ability, occupation or position, the serviceman was also classified by physical condition through medical examination. Originally there were two types of personnel: combat and support. Only those classified as combat personnel were accepted into the armed forces. In 1953, with the expansion of the armed forces and of staff and support facilities, support personnel were brought into the armed forces to serve in fixed installations. In 1967, with increasing combat casualties and ever-expanding needs of the armed forces and to facilitate personnel administration, military personnel were divided into three categories: Category 1, physically qualified to serve in any capacity from combat to staff and support positions; Category 2, physically handicapped, qualified only for administrative, support, logistic or staff positions; and Category 3, disabled personnel awaiting military discharge. Classification through psychological testing, by MOS and by physical condition helped the RVNAF achieve significant progress in the areas of assignment and transfer.

Assignment, Transfer and Rotation

Assignments were originally made in a collective manner. The J1, JGS had the authority to assign new infantry officers, NCOs and enlisted draftees while service, corps and branch commanders assigned new officers, NCOs and enlisted volunteers in their respective commands. Upon graduation, new officers and NCOs were given their choice of assignment during an open meeting held by the school, based on their graduation grades and the number of allocations in the assignment table prepared by J1, JGS and the service, corps and branch commanders. Draftees were assigned by original training squads, platoons or companies and according to their native regions. Assignments to other regions were warranted only by special circumstances as in the case of II Corps where local manpower resources were often too meager to fill personnel requirements. For those new officers, NCOs and draftees who had special family obligations (five or more dependent children; only son; provider for the entire family; parents over 60 years of age; all brothers in the service), assignments were decided by the AG, JGS based on petitions filed prior to training admittance. Upon reporting to the agency or unit of assignment, these personnel were either individual assigned to positions consistent with their MOS or assigned in bloc to subordinate units to receive further assignments.

As a rule, officers, NCOs and EM graduating from in-country military schools were usually sent back to their parent unit or agency. Graduates of the command and general staff course and advanced service branch courses received their assignment orders from the AG, JGS if they were infantry officers and from service branch commanders if they belonged to one of the service branches. If the parent units or agencies wanted those graduates reassigned to them, they had to submit requests one month before graduation. Most of these requests were approved. Officers and NCOs returning from overseas training were reassigned by the AG, JGS or service branch commanders primarily to military and service schools to serve as instructors.

Officers, NCOs and EM hospitalized for more than a month because of illness or combat wounds were transferred to the hospitals as excess

strength. Upon recovery, these personnel were returned to their parent unit or agency if classified Type 1 or Type 2 or transferred to the Central Replacement Unit or to local replacement units to be processed for discharge if classified Type 3. Type 2 personnel reassigned to infantry, airborne and marine divisions and Ranger groups were given light duties in staff, training, administrative or support positions. If such positions could not be found, these units reported back to the AG, JGS for eventual reassignment of the personnel concerned to central or local administrative, staff or support units and agencies or to national training centers and service schools. Within the RVNAF hierarchy, authority for assignment of subordinate personnel followed command lines.

Within a unit or agency, the authority was given to the unit or agency commander. A division or corps commander, for example, had the authority to assign personnel within their respective commands. But only the Chief, JGS could decide on transfers from one corps area to another or to the central level. All assignments and transfers affecting personnel of the specialized service branches or combat arms other than the infantry had to be approved or recommended by the chief of the service branch or combat arm involved. The commanders of VNAF and VNN were responsible for assignments within their respective services. All transfers out of a service were handled by the JGS. Transfers out of the armed forces had to be approved by the Defense Ministry.

Authority to select and appoint personnel to key positions in the RVNAF down to division commanders and service branch chiefs changed with the times. During the First Republic, this authority to select and assign personnel to key positions in the armed forces almost totally rested in the hands of the President and the Defense Minister. At that time, the Chief, JGS had practically no authority over assignments. Even staff division chiefs at the JGS were appointed by the Defense Minister or the President. This excessive concentration of authority was ridiculed by officers of that period as the "Three D's" system, meaning in Vietnamese "Dang, Dao and Du". Dang (party) meant a political party or organization sponsored by the government such as the Can Lao Party, the National Revolutionary Movement or Women's Solidarity Movement. In order to

receive a high-appointment, an officer or his wife had to be a member of one of these parties or organizations. Dao (religion) was none other than the Roman Catholic Church. The candidate for a high position had to be a member of this Church or endorsed by it. Du (damn) was a vulgar slang used by natives of Central Vietnam which indicated the President's preference for men of his own native region.

After the November 1963 revolution, the "Three D's" system was replaced by two factors, "Su" and "Tuong" a generalization intended as a joke. Su (Buddhist monk) represented the superior bonzes of the Buddhist Institute for Propagation of the Dharma who exerted great influence over the government and the armed forces. Tuong (general) meant those generals who took credit for the success of the coup d'etat. RVNAF personnel then believed that important positions were given to those affiliated with one of these two groups. Not until 1965, under the National Leadership Committee, was authority for appointments and promotions in the RVNAF officially defined. Decree No. 205 signed on 12 December 1965 by the Chairman of the National Leadership Committee delegated this authority among the various levels of command.

By this decree, the Chairman of the National Leadership Committee reserved for himself the authority to appoint the Chief, JGS; the Deputy Chief, JGS; the Chief of Staff, JGS; the Commanders of Corps/CTZs; the IG; the Commander, VNAF; the Commander, VNN; and the Commander, CMD. The National Leadership Committee Member in charge of National Defense (Defense Minister) appointed the heads of CLC, CTC and GPWD; the chiefs of staff of Corps/CTZs; the directors general and directors of the various directorates subordinate to the Defense Ministry. Next in line, the Chief, JGS appointed the commanders of service branches and combat arms; the deputies of the CLC, CTC, and GPWD; the department heads and their deputies; the division commanders; the sector commanders; and the commanders of separate units.³ In the field, corps/CTZ commanders

³Province chiefs concurrently serving as sector commanders were appointed by the Chairman of the NLC and district chiefs serving as sub-sector commanders were appointed by the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee (Prime Minister).

appointed deputy commanders and chiefs of staff of infantry divisions; sub-sector commanders; and the commanders of basic level units such as infantry and Ranger battalions and armored squadrons.

For all appointments affecting personnel of the combat arms and service branches, recommendation by or consultation with the related commanders was mandatory. Infantry appointments, however, were carried out upon recommendation by corps/CTZ or division/DTA commanders.

As for the appointment or transfer of general officers this was the sole authority of the Chairman, NLC; so was his prerogative in appointing province chiefs. This special rule was deemed appropriate in 1965 when there were but a small number of general officers in the RVNAF. However, over the years that followed, the RVNAF force structure expanded rapidly, creating more positions for general officers and increasing promotions to that grade substantially. In time, especially as of 1967 when General Thieu became President, this special rule virtually deprived the Defense Minister and the Chief, JGS of the authority to make key appointments since most of these (heads of CLC, CTC, GPWD; directors general; heads of combat arms; division commanders) involved general officers and almost all sector commanders were also province chiefs. Decree No. 205 was therefore left undisturbed because it conveniently concentrated appointment power in the President where it mattered the most. The Chief, JGS eventually saw his authority limited to appointing regimental and group commanders of colonel rank, which was not consistent with the responsibilities of his position. Corps commanders still enjoyed some authority in recommending province chiefs/sector commanders and district chiefs/subsector commanders although they did not make the actual appointments (by the President and Prime Minister, respectively).

Because of this excessive concentration of powers in the hands of the President, a number of subordinate personnel resorted to influence buying and ignored their immediate commanders, causing extensive obstruction to the efficient working of the military hierarchy. This shortcoming became quite obvious in 1970 when the RVNAF reached their peak strength of 1.1 million but there were no attempts to amend

obsolescent Decree 205, probably because of political dictates or preoccupation with the conduct of the war.

In personnel administration, several shortcomings were noted in 1966. Cadres remained in one unit or agency over an excessively long period of time, some of them staying in one place since graduating from military schools. Apparently, there was insufficient rotation of personnel. Some seemed to be confined to extended assignments in combat units while others remained desk-bound. Some were perennially stationed in remote locations where the cost of living was excessively high while others spent their entire military career in big towns and cities. Some personnel were confined to one assignment just because of their outstanding performance and were never given an opportunity to receive advanced training while others, less effective, had become "school specialists" moving from one course to another. Another shortcoming was that officers fresh out of school and without combat experience were retained at military schools or assigned to training centers to be instructors or training unit commanders. Others were assigned to administrative duties. These failures in personnel management could be attributed to poor leadership on the part of responsible authorities at all levels and to the lack of maturity on the part of the AG branch.

In order to raise personnel morale and restore justice within the armed forces, the JGS implemented two innovative programs in the area of personnel administration: systematic rotation and career management.

Rotation was first applied in the RVNAF in 1966 to establish impartiality and maximize cadre efficiency. There were four rotation systems: rotation by position in command, staff or training; rotation by unit, from a combat unit to a support unit, an administrative agency or a school and vice versa; rotation by zone such as the delta, jungle, coastal lowlands or highlands; rotation from one CTZ to another or to the central level. Minimum tours of duty were determined on the basis of two years in a combat unit (platoon, company or battalion), three years in a staff position or in an administrative/support command, and

four years in a school or training center. Upon completion of each tour of duty, the serviceman was entitled to request a transfer and commanders were also required to satisfy these requests.

Although rotation was deemed necessary and mandatory, it was affected by four factors which often made it impractical, causing results to fall short of expectations and creating discontent, particularly among personnel serving in the Central Highlands who usually came from other regions. First there was terrain and people. In counter-insurgency warfare, knowledge of the local terrain and people was the essential element of success. It could be obtained only through long exposure to the same environment. Second, there was the socio-economic factor. In several areas, housing was scarce, and schooling for military dependents inadequate, while military pay was usually too low in comparison with the cost of living. These hardship areas were apparently not appropriate for longer tours of duty. Then, there were also problems of education, background and family burdens. There was great disparity in backgrounds, both academic and military, among personnel of the armed forces, particularly among the cadres. Many officers in fact had not received sufficient training for their positions and ranks. Finally, the average serviceman had certain private obligations of his own, which could be a large dependent family or old parents. Respect for this traditional attachment to family had always been the hallmark of Vietnamese society.

Because of the above considerations, rotation was usually applied only within a division, a corps or a MR, or when so requested by the individual concerned, in order to minimize disruptions. Personnel of captain rank and above, who were accustomed to life in combat units, did not like to be transferred to schools or headquarters staffs where there were too many restrictions and too few opportunities for promotion. Generally, only the young officers fresh out of training aspired for school or staff positions but their requests could not be satisfied because they lacked experience and staff background. Officers with large families to support usually preferred long-term assignments in areas where their families had settled to a stable life. Transferring

them from one zone to another caused great disruptions in their lives and long-lasting, adverse effects on their productivity.

MR-2, especially the highlands of Darlac-Pleiku-Kontum, was the area most seriously plagued with difficulties. Because of spartan living conditions and virtual isolation, personnel transferred there suffered from the complex that they had fallen out of favor and were being exiled. Local commanders in turn were prejudiced against these men, convinced that to warrant such transfers, they had to be undisciplined, incompetent or undesirable elements. Once they had completed their two years, these men almost always requested transfer to MR-3 or MR-4. In some cases, unit commanders concurred with transfer requests. In other cases they invoked military requirements in recommending that the applicants be retained in their positions or to make it hard for all concerned, they demanded that replacements with similar academic and military backgrounds be assigned before approving the transfers. The JGS did its best to satisfy these requests when resources were available. But resources were meager while requests for transfer were numerous, which led the JGS to give priority for transfer only to those who had served four years or more in MR-2. On the other hand, there were quite a few servicemen who, over the years, had grown attached to the mountains and forests, the clean fresh air, and the simple, natural life and did not want to leave for any reason.

Despite all the difficulties encountered in its execution, the long-range rotation plan succeeded in building confidence and enthusiasm among the troops. To support this plan and reduce the military expertise disparities within the officer corps, a career management program for RVNAF officers was developed and put into effect in 1966.

Prior to that time, the RVNAF officer had no clear idea of the path he would travel upon leaving Da Lat or Thu Duc. Upon graduation, many officers were assigned to staff positions alien to everything they had learned. Others were made instructors in training centers or schools with no experience in combat or unit life. There were no regulations providing for continuing education. Many officers had made it to the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel with no formal training

other than the officer basic training course. Many others held high-level staff positions for which they had never been prepared through formal training. Still others spent their entire military career in only one assignment.

The career management program was designed to correct these discrepancies by supporting rotation plans, helping officers of the infantry -- the most vital component of the RVNAF -- to be more conscious of the career opportunities available to them so that they would strive harder for success and making unit commanders aware of the essential criteria required for selection and assignment of officer personnel so that they might be in a better position to contribute to the future of their subordinates. Rank, position, seniority in rank, formal training, and age were the five basic elements that guided the management of an officers's military career.

Under the career management program, infantry officers, graduating from the Da Lat National Military Academy with the rank of second lieutenant or from reserve officer courses at the Thu Duc Infantry School with the rank of aspirant, were all required to serve as platoon leaders in combat units on their first assignment. From there they moved on to become company executive officers or company commanders. During that time they could be selected for company commander training.

After serving a minimum of two years at platoon or company level, with a minimum rank of second lieutenant and a maximum rank of captain, they were transferred to take command of other units within a major unit, within a sector, or within a military region; or they could be assigned to schools to command training platoons or companies or to serve as instructors; or they could be selected to attend advanced infantry training in-country or abroad at Fort Benning, USA. Upon graduation, these officers were rotated to other units or locations to serve as battalion commanders or executive officers, sub-sector commanders or as staff officers of battalions, regiments, sectors or sub-sectors. Officers who were rotated to other platoon or company command positions and those who were reassigned to schools and training centers were rotated again or selected for advanced infantry training

like their other comrades-in-arms, after serving two years in their new assignments.

After two years in a battalion/sub-sector command position or three years in a staff position, these officers were rotated again to other command/staff/training positions or to other units or locations. Good officers with a minimum rank of major and a maximum rank of colonel were selected for command and general staff courses in Vietnam or in the United States. Upon graduation, they were to serve as regimental commanders or executive officers, sector commanders, or staff officers of regiments, divisions, sectors, or on the staff at a higher level headquarters.

In August 1967, the National Defense College was established to train senior leaders for the armed forces and the administration. Elite officers with a minimum rank of lieutenant colonel and a maximum rank of brigadier general were selected to attend this school. Upon graduation these officers were assigned to key positions at the national level or at corps and military regions. These courses also prepared them for nomination to general rank in the RVNAF. The age factor was also a subject of hot debate on many occasions, particularly in an effort to determine a minimum age for each grade, but enforcement was judged impractical given differences of opinions during surveys and because of the state of war.

The career management program generated confidence and enthusiasm in the officer ranks but its application encountered numerous difficulties, particularly during a period of the war when casualties were mounting and the armed forces were expanding at a fast rate. It seemed to require time and determination on the part of all concerned to overcome the obstacles. Above all it required a period to preserve continuity. Despite the difficulties, the RVNAF made a significant step toward training and assigning officer personnel under the career management program particularly since 1971 when the force structure expansion reached its peak. Gone were the days when aspirants and second lieutenants, who had just completed platoon leader training, were assigned to headquarters staffs. Now, to be promoted to the rank of major, a

captain was required to have graduated from intermediate command and staff or advanced infantry training. For promotion to lieutenant colonel or colonel, graduation from the advanced command and general staff course was mandatory. Most officer assignments or promotions were subsequently carried out in accordance with the basic criteria of the career management program. (Table 6)

Discharge

There were five types of discharge in the RVNAF: discharge upon completion of legal military obligations; discharge as regulated by career army statutes; discharge for health reasons; discharge for disciplinary reasons; and discharge because of reduction in force structure.

In principle, reserve personnel were automatically discharged upon completion of their legal military obligations. Under the Bao Dai government, from 1951 to 1954, automatic discharge was practically nonexistent. Drafted personnel were retained because of the requirements of the war. However, in 1955, under the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, draftees completing their terms of service were discharged automatically. In 1964, when the draft term was changed to three years for EM and NCOs and four years for officers under the Nguyen Khanh regime, draftees completing their term were no longer discharged automatically; they had to submit written requests. Those who did not submit requests for discharge were automatically re-enlisted. In 1968, under the Second Republic, the discharging of draftees was terminated by virtue of the General Mobilization Law promulgated on 19 June 1968.

The discharge of career army personnel was divided into four categories: discharge by length of service, age, health, or criminal conviction. Career army personnel with 15 years of service or more were entitled to discharge with prorated retirement benefits (15 years to under 25 years of service) or full retirement benefits (25 years of service or more). However, discharge was authorized only by decision of the government, depending upon military requirements.

Table 6 — Infantry Officer's Career Management Program

STEP	ADMISSION CRITERIA	SCHOOL	ASSIGNMENT
4	Lt. Colonel, Colonel, (2 years in grade) Brigadier General Previous service in high-level command/staff positions at step 3	National Defense College	Key positions at general officers level
3	Major (2 years in grade), Lt. Colonel, Colonel 2 years service as Battalion Commander, Battalion XO, Sub-Sector Commander or XO, Staff Officer at step 2	Advanced Command and General Staff	Regiment or Sector Commander, Staff Officer of Division, Corps or JGS
2	Captain (2 years in grade) Major 2 years as Company Commander or Battalion XO	Advanced Infantry, or Intermediate Command and Staff	Battalion Commander, Battalion XO, Staff Officer of Battalion, Regiment or Sector
1	Cadet/officer candidate	Basic Infantry	Infantry Platoon Leader, Company XO, Company Commander

Personnel reaching the statutory age for each grade were automatically discharged. But because ARVN was a young army, this type of discharge was practically nonexistent except in the case of a small number of personnel transferred from the French army. In 1968, because of the General Mobilization Law, this type of discharge was discontinued and personnel reaching the statutory age were automatically retained if physically fit.

Discharge for health reasons applied to sick or wounded personnel undergoing medical treatment in hospitals. After treatment, these patients reported to the hospital medical review boards for re-classification upon recommendation by the attending physicians. Prior to 1963, personnel classified as type 2 (physically unqualified for combat) and type 3 (disabled) were automatically discharged. From 1964, because of the need to expand the armed forces, type 2 personnel were temporarily retained to serve in sedentary positions.

Personnel convicted of crime or sentenced to jail for serious breach of discipline were automatically discharged. However, from 1964 on, these personnel were retained upon completing their sentences if still of draft age.

Twice over the years, there were collective discharges because of reduction in force. These discharges occurred in 1955 following the Geneva Accords and in 1973 following the Paris Agreement. In the wake of the 1954 Geneva Accords, the Vietnam National Army strength stood at approximately 200,000. In early December 1954, the U.S. government served notice that South Vietnam had to reduce its armed forces in accordance with peacetime ceilings and the reduction should be completed prior to 1 July 1955 if the Vietnamese government wanted to avoid major financial difficulties. At the time, the United States agreed only to a total force of 100,000 men which it believed to be adequate for peacetime purposes. The U.S. also wanted this force to be founded on the concept of fixed-term compulsory military service in order to provide the nation with a reserve force ready on call in times of need. The Vietnamese desired to maintain its armed forces at their existing level so that they could be reorganized and modernized without conflict with

the Geneva Accords. While negotiations were under way, the mandatory reduction in force began as scheduled on 1 January 1955. The reorganized army had to consolidate its command and control structure and technical services, so it needed as many officers and specialists as it could retain. Consequently, priority for discharge went to infantry EM and NCOs. The first to be discharged were the auxiliary forces whose strength was reported at 33,658. This was done in four increments. Each serviceman received a one-month severance pay upon release after being notified that he was being returned to civilian life now that peace had been achieved. Leaders of religious sects initially objected to the disbandment of their forces, but after arrangement finally agreed to turn in their weapons. The second discharge increment involved nearly 8,000 disabled personnel who had been retained in the service for humanitarian reasons. Their discharge gave rise to two cases of disturbances reported in Nha Trang and Hue under the form of rallies to present petitions seeking government help in finding jobs.

The third discharge increment affected undesirable elements recommended by unit commanders and service chiefs. Nearly 5,000 men in this category were discharged from service including a few dozen officers. This was in fact a disciplinary action taken at an opportune time to weed out the bad elements. The soldiers affected were extremely resentful of this measure because no legal process was involved and no opportunity was given them for legal counsel. It also appeared that some unit commanders had acted solely out of personal prejudices.

The last effort to reduce strength was actually a large-scale discharge plan affecting personnel in the following categories: overage; automatic extension of service; over two years of compulsory military service; volunteers and re-enlistees with more than two years of service agreeing to terminate their contracts and request discharge. The plans called for a first phase of discharge to take effect on 1 March 1955 involving 50,000 men but implementation was delayed considerably because military region commanders invoked tactical operations to request extensions or morale problems to ask for temporary delays of the discharge orders. The discharge of those personnel whose service

had been automatically extended, most of them NCOs, caused a serious disruption in their living. NCO pay was substantial then, and the material life of the NCO was quite comfortable. Therefore those who had made it to NCO rank did not want to be discharged unless they had more lucrative civilian skills. Upon discharge, these personnel did not receive retirement pay because this was a young army and very few men had 15 years of service to be eligible even for a partial pension. Moreover, the Vietnamese National Armed Forces had no statutes providing for veterans' benefits at that time. Dependent on foreign aid, they had no pension funds available. This precipitated discharge measure failed to provide those affected with a propitious return to civilian life. It led to strong reactions within the military. Discharged NCOs staged demonstrations in Nha Trang and Da Nang, refused to leave their units, forcing unit commanders to use military transportation to move them and their dependents out. Oblivious to the difficulties faced by the GVN, MAAG continued to press for accelerated action, insinuating that the 100,000-men force level might be reduced even further. The Vietnamese government sought a way out by forming the Civil Guard in April 1955 to absorb demobilized personnel. This force was not dependent on U.S. aid at that time. By June 1955, when a force structure of 150,000 men was finally approved by the United States, this mass demobilization had been completed. Nearly 60,000 men had been discharged over the first five months of 1955.

Looking back, everyone agreed that the mass discharge of 1955 was a regrettable action, both cruel and detrimental to the combat effectiveness of the RVNAF. At least 6,000 NCOs, the backbone of the armed forces, had been released during that period. The combat units of 1959-1960 became operationally ineffective primarily because they lacked qualified and experienced NCOs. The JGS later initiated a drive to recruit former NCOs but only a very few rejoined. Most had resettled to a stable civilian life or were discouraged by the way they had been handled.

In 1973, following the Paris Agreement, the RVNAF adopted a carefully prepared discharge plan. Drawing on the lesson of 1955, they went at it in a progressive manner. The first step, taken in early

1973, provided for the demobilization of overage reserve and regular army personnel whose service had been extended since 1968; it proceeded smoothly, without incident. The second step, taken in late 1973, provided for the discharge of type 2 personnel (physically unfit for combat) who had been retained because of war requirements and type 3 personnel (disabled) temporarily retained for humanitarian reasons again encountered no adverse reactions.

The third step, taken in 1974, involved the discharge of undesirable elements based on a review of disciplinary actions. It affected those who had been sentenced by a criminal court, convicted of desertion, or confined in a military jail. A JGS committee headed by the ACofS, Personnel, spent several months reviewing records and files. More than 4,000 company and field-grade officers were subsequently discharged during 1974. This action met with mild reactions by a few officers who appealed their cases and some criticism for what was regarded as ingratitude on the part of the government toward those who had served the country for so long.

The fourth step, also taken in 1974, provided for the demobilization of personnel with more than 25 years of service based on individual requests and subject to final decision of the Defense Minister. Since it did not affect many individuals, this measure encountered little opposition except from some senior colonels whose requests for extension were turned down.

In early 1975, because of the Phuoc Long incident, demobilization was temporarily suspended. Overall, during the two years that followed the cease-fire, more than 40,000 men were discharged as a part of the process of force reduction.

Strength Accounting

Accurate strength information is a most essential element in personnel administration. To know, accurately and timely, the strength of their units helps the commander make rational decisions in tactical operations, training and administration. Therefore, the JGS always

directed that each level of command ensure that every single man was accounted for and that each change affecting the status of an individual or the unit strength was properly recorded and reported.

Before 1965, strength accounting in the RVNAF was done manually. Each unit or agency responsible for strength report prepared monthly control rosters and forwarded them to the AG Division, JGS in a shuttle process. Administrative data was thus incomplete, inaccurate and outdated, causing considerable difficulties in planning, particularly during those years when the RVNAF were beginning to expand.

In 1966, personnel administration in the RVNAF entered an important phase with the improvement of the Electric Accounting Machine Center (EAMC) and the application of a personnel accounting and reporting method known as the "QD-22 system." QD-22 was the code number of a strength report form.

Turned over by the French Army when it left Vietnam, the EAMC was equipped with old, outdated machines which were seldom used in personnel administration. To meet the increasing personnel administration requirements occasioned by the rapid rate of force structure expansion, the JGS replaced the old electric machines with an IBM 360-20 electronic computer system in 1966. The center was then officially renamed ADP Center and given the responsibilities of receiving, recording, storing, updating, exploiting and providing all necessary personnel administration data. In 1971, because of the saturation of the 360-20 system, it was replaced by a larger 360-40 system and the center was renamed Personnel ADP Center. This center operated on a mutually supporting basis with the Logistics ADP Center established in 1969.

Form QD-22 was the basic source of information in the system. It consisted of four parts. Part 1 recorded details about the unit to include designation and location. Part 2 provided an analysis of the assigned strength by category: officers, NCOs, EM, civilians, conscripts and WACs. Part 3 analyzed the personnel situation by rank categories and in terms of losses, gains and present strength. Losses were analyzed by category: transfers, deaths, desertions, discharges and missing in action. The present strength was comprehensively analyzed by category:

assigned but not joined; in school, on leave; hospitalized; confined; absent without leave; present for duty; on operation; in support of operation; at the rear base. Part 4 was used to describe major changes since the last reporting period.

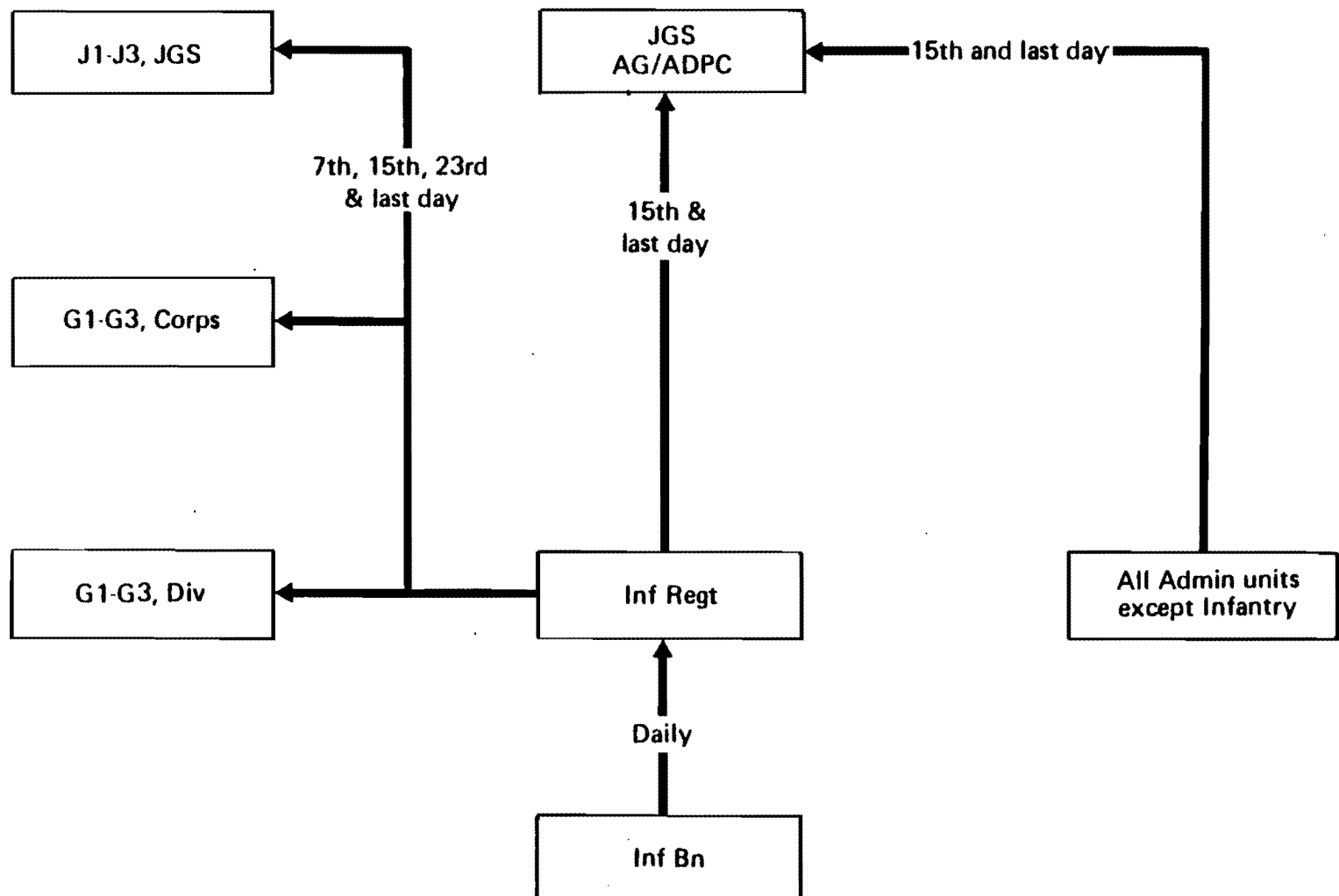
Form QD-22 was distributed to be used daily by all units and agencies with or without a TOE, whether or not they were authorized in the RVNAF force structure.

On the 15th and the last day of each month, all self-administered units forwarded a copy of this report to the ADP Center for control purposes. Infantry units used this form to report through channels on the 7th, 15th, 23d and last days of the month. (*Chart 5*)

The AG School conducted many courses to instruct responsible personnel of the regular army and the regional forces in this reporting procedure. In the initial application phase, many mobile teams from the ADP Center and the AG, JGS traveled to individual units to provide further training and guidance. Strict disciplinary measures were taken against responsible personnel who failed to report or meet reporting deadlines.

After many years of continued efforts, the RVNAF were able to develop a bank of valuable and reliable administrative data from which the ADP Center prepared print-outs for personnel officers at high-level headquarters. The print-outs were produced monthly, quarterly or as required. Strength print-outs were prepared by rank, service, major unit, losses, non-effective status, etc., and provided monthly to the G1 and G3 division of the various services and service branches, corps/CTZ and the JGS to be used in personnel administration. Name print-outs were of various types. The most important was the unit personnel name print-out which was sent to administrative units for verification against unit rosters. Discrepancies, if any, were corrected on the print-out with appropriate justification and the print-out was returned to ADP Center. In case of numerous discrepancies, support teams from the AG Division made an on-the-spot investigation of the problems and worked with the individual units toward correcting the discrepancies. Name print-outs were also made available to personnel inspection and audit teams, sent

Chart 5 – QD-22 Reporting Channels



out by the AG, JGS and the Directorate General of Finances and Auditing.

Other services provided by the Personnel ADP Center included:

(1) a name print-out of deserters reported during the month which was used to support the various law enforcement agencies; (2) a directory of deceased personnel listed in alphabetical order which provided information on date of death, cause of death, and place of burial and was used in grave administration; (3) a directory of KIA personnel bound in hard, red and gilded cover to be used at memorial sites for worship purposes; (4) a directory of officers; and (5) a roster of officers meeting eligibility criteria for important positions such as sector, regimental or division commanders was supplied to the AG, JGS to be used when appointments were being considered.

In addition to daily support activities, the Personnel ADP Center helped reestablish personnel registers for units such as the 22d Infantry Division, the RF/PF of Kontum Sector, the RF/PF of Binh Long Sector, the 3d Infantry Division, the RF/PF of Quang Tri Sector, all of which had suffered heavy casualties during 1972, as well as for units whose personnel records had been destroyed by natural disasters.

The Problem of Combat Unit Strength

Maintaining the operational strength of infantry, airborne, ranger and marine battalions at acceptable levels was a constant concern of the JGS. However, not until 1966 was there any serious effort made to improve the combat strength of these units. During the first half of 1966, the average assigned strength of infantry battalions was 581 or 91% of the authorized strength, the present-for-duty strength 472 or 74% and the present-for-combat strength only 437 or 68%. (Table 7)

A joint MACV-JGS committee was established to study the causes and devise corrective measures. This committee provided the following reasons why unit strength was so low for combat operations: (1) personnel left at battalion base camps for security and administrative activities were usually higher in number than planned; (2) the number of non-effective personnel was too high which included those on detached duty

Table 7 — Average Strengths of Infantry Battalions, 1966

MONTH	Assigned Strength		Present for Duty		Present for Combat	
	Average	% of Authorized Strength	Average	% of Authorized Strength	Average	% of Authorized Strength
January	638	100	511	80	481	75
February	596	93	492	77	462	72
March	581	91	462	72	410	64
April	572	90	460	72	423	66
May	554	87	453	71	422	66
June	547	86	456	71	422	66
Average	581	91%	472	74%	437	68%

outside the battalion, those assigned who had not joined the unit, personnel in school or on leave, personnel confined, MIA and deserters who had not been removed from battalion rosters; (3) the assigned strength of headquarters and support services at regimental, group, brigade and division level was usually higher than the assigned strength of battalions, not including personnel on detached duty; (4) personnel were shifted internally to special units not included in the authorized force structure as in the case of assault platoons, special reconnaissance companies ("Black Panthers"), etc.; (5) the assigned strength was usually lower than the authorized strength because assignments and replacements were not made available on a timely basis.

Then there was also the case of the JGS "Honor Guard" Battalion and the "Palace Guard" whose formation was not initially authorized in the RVNAF force structure. The Palace Guard was a regimental size unit composed basically of 1 bodyguard company, 2 infantry battalions, 1 armor detachment, and 1 signal company. Called the "Capital Security Group" during the 1965-68 period, this organization had the mission of guarding the Independence Palace, the Office of the Prime Minister, and various official guest houses in Saigon, Vung Tau, Dalat, Nha Trang, and Ban Me Thuot. Deriving its strength chiefly from ARVN personnel on long-term detached duty, this unit was not authorized in the ARVN force structure until 1968.

To improve this situation several corrective actions were taken. First, the detached-duty assignments of personnel organic to rifle companies were terminated and individuals concerned were returned to their parent units. Next unauthorized units were disbanded and their personnel reassigned to rifle companies. Concurrently, stricter personnel administration procedures were enforced. For example, personnel in hospitals or schools for more than one month were transferred out of their parent units and made part of the excess strength of the hospital or school concerned. Confined or MIA personnel were normally transferred out of their parent units, and reassigned to regional administrative units. Personnel assigned to a unit were required to report on the exact date specified in the transfer orders. The original unit

was held responsible for releasing transferred personnel on schedule. A "wanted" notice was sent out for AWOL personnel on the 16th day of their absence and they were removed from strength accounting immediately thereafter. Another corrective action was to minimize exposure to disease, such as dysentery, diarrhea, smallpox and malaria, by the strict enforcement of preventative medicine. Finally, priority for replacements was given to combat battalions and quotas for assigned strength, present-for-duty strength and present-for-combat strength were prescribed to assess the extent of the units' efforts. These quotas required that a battalion maintain an assigned strength of 90% of its authorized strength and a present-for-combat ratio of 70% or 450 men for a battalion with an authorized strength of 639 men. At the rifle company level, it was required that the number of personnel absent from the unit not exceed 10% of authorized strength and the number of operationally non-effective personnel be no more than 15% of the present-for-duty strength.

After repeated efforts by all levels actively applying the above measures, the number of infantry battalions conducting tactical operations with a strength of 450 men or more increased significantly, going from 36 battalions in April to 100 in November and stabilizing at 94 in December the same year. (*Table 8*)

During the following years, efforts were continued to maintain the combat strength of battalions at a high level but results obtained were mixed for several reasons. However, there was a definite improvement over the period prior to 1966. (*Table 9*)

There were four problems that the JGS vainly attempted to overcome: (1) the assigned strength at battalion level was always lower than the authorized strength; (2) the number of losses due to desertion remained high despite efforts to prevent it; (3) it was difficult to provide replacements for losses in time, particularly during high peaks of activity and military campaigns; and finally, the infantry, airborne and marine divisions and the rangers did not have replacement units, nor were they authorized to maintain a pool of replacements. The replacement pipeline provided for in the approved force structure was too small. The total number of personnel being hospitalized, for instance, was

Table 8 — Number of Battalions on Combat Operations
With Strength of 450 Men or More, 1966

MONTH	Number of Battalions With 450 Men or More	% of Existing Number of Battalions
April	36	30%
May	33	27%
June	35	29%
July	31	26%
August	33	27%
September	52	43%
October	78	65%
November	100	83%
December	94	78%

Table 9 — Ratios of Assigned Strength, Present-for-Duty Strength
and Present-for-Combat Strength Vs Authorized
Strength of Battalions

UNIT	31 December 1967			30 June 1968			30 September 1972		
	Assigned	Duty	Combat	Assigned	Duty	Combat	Assigned	Duty	Combat
Infantry Battalion	87%	80%	76%	88.9%	81.4%	73.5%	86.8%	73.6%	N/A
Airborne Battalion	76%	69%	58%	90.2%	75.4%	72%	101.1%	71.7%	N/A
Ranger Battalion	80%	71%	67%	86.5%	80.3%	71.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marine Battalion	98%	91%	83%	92.2%	80.3%	71.2%	89.5%	85.6%	N/A

never less than 20,000. Personnel undergoing training always numbered not less than 70,000, and those confined while awaiting trial not less than 10,000. Combat units therefore suffered their share of these personnel shortages. In 1974 and 1975, the JGS endeavored to reduce this non-effective strength as much as possible but was never able to keep it lower than 90,000 to 95,000 men.

Observations

The RVNAF encountered numerous difficulties in the administration of human resources throughout the war. Controls could not always be performed effectively because of changing security conditions in villages and hamlets, unreported address changes on the part of the population, particularly the youths, Communist pressure and wartime conditions, and Communist seizure of identification papers issued by the government to the civilian population. Statistics on manpower resources used by the Defense Ministry's Mobilization Directorate were derived from estimates rather than based on a population census; they were therefore unreliable.

Partial and progressive mobilization of age groups as applied from 1964 to 1968 was very much consistent with the special conditions of the Vietnam War. The decision to enforce general mobilization in June 1968 was very timely. Nevertheless, implementation was rather lax on the part of local administrative officials at the lower levels. Police operations, although not too successful in rounding up draft dodgers, did contribute to the success of recruitment efforts. Indeed, from 1965 on, when military pays and allowances became lower than civilian standards and civilian employment was readily accessible, the only factor driving youths of draft and mobilization age to enlist was the fear of being hunted by the law. Volunteering also gave them a chance to be assigned to the unit of their choice while the only alternative to it was to be arrested, stripped of all privileges and benefits and ultimately forced to serve.

The classification of manpower resources by academic levels to determine the appropriate type of training -- as officer, NCO or EM --

was very logical although this method seemed to favor the rich and the educated urban class. This was true under French rule when good educational opportunities were limited and available only in the big cities. However, beginning with the Diem administration, and in spite of the war, education facilities at the secondary level expanded considerably and were available in all provincial capitals and district towns. Education and diplomas were no longer inaccessible for most Vietnamese families. The officers of the RVNAF during the last few years of the war indeed came from all walks of life, from both wealthy and poor families.

The measure of draft deferments or exemptions applied by the Vietnamese government to eligible youths of draft or mobilization age were logical and consistent with Vietnamese society as well as with long-range national goals. Nevertheless, it was regrettable that those who implemented the policies committed so many mistakes and irregularities as to encourage corruption and cause discontent among the civilian population, especially those who were carrying out their military obligations.

Personnel administration in the RVNAF made considerable progress, particularly from 1966 on. Induction procedures were rapidly unified and standardized and adequate attention was given by all responsible levels to proper completion and timely updating of personnel records. The number of personnel without service numbers or personnel records was greatly reduced in comparison with 1965 and the preceding years.

Officers were made aware of the paths they were to travel in the course of their military career. Selections, assignments and rotations were all clearly defined. Most personnel were familiar with these procedures and most responsible officials endeavored to implement them. Nevertheless, certain shortcomings or deficiencies could not be totally avoided. Thus, adverse opinions continued to circulate among the military; although they seemed to give due respect to prescribed criteria, responsible authorities did not fully recognize the potentials of all qualified personnel, judging them not with an objective eye but with a certain predilection for those whom they knew, those who had served under them before or those who were friends or relatives of their close associates.

These criticism were directed mainly at the national leadership in the appointment of corps commanders, division commanders and province chiefs. Many exceptionally qualified personnel were thus relegated to oblivion merely because they did not have the opportunity to serve these leaders in earlier times or because they chose to ignore the devious methods commonly used to attract the leaders' attention.

Then, responsible authorities also seemed to be too submissive to outside influences. This criticism was directed at all levels, from national to local and from corps to regiments, with particular focus on corps, MR and province levels. Outside influences included the wives of high-level officials, Buddhist and Catholic leaders, general officers on active duty or retired, congressmen and politicians who all frequently interfered in the process of transfer and assignment by requesting special considerations for friends and relatives. These interferences annoyed honest commanders but the less honest ones knew how to turn favors into personal profits. Although the number of personnel benefiting from these favors was small, there were sufficient grounds for a large number of servicemen to feel disenchanted with the system.

Finally, there were commanders who took bribes in exchange for favors. It was fortunate for the RVNAF that these corrupt commanders were but a minority.

CHAPTER III

Awards and Promotions

Awards, commendations and decorations, and promotions are extremely effective forms of motivation in the military. Just and correct awards will stimulate the spirit of the troops. However, if awards are too hard to get, troops will complain about stinginess; if they are too easily obtainable, they reduce the competitive spirit. In the RVNAF, every effort was made to assure that we had a good awards program designed for personnel serving at every level and under all types of conditions.

Promotion, far from being a payment of a debt of gratitude, is designed to provide qualified personnel with the opportunity for increased responsibilities. Promotion for eliminatory purposes must be absolutely forbidden, for it not only wastes manpower resources but also generates discontent. Efforts must be made to promote only men of talent, character, and competence. Promoting the inept, the man without character, the sycophant, will cause rumblings among the troops and diminish unit efficiency. The RVNAF were constantly aware of this challenge and made considerable progress in developing a system based on professional ability.

RVNAF Awards and Decorations

There were four forms of awards in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces: recognition certificates, certificates of commendation, decorations, and unit citations.

Recognition certificates were the most common form, which might be awarded by commanders at all echelons to congratulate subordinate troops and units for having satisfactorily accomplished assigned duties.

A second form was the commendation certificate, which was awarded to personnel who had outstanding achievements in the performance of assigned duties. There were four levels of commendation certificates, for army, corps, division, and brigade awarded by the Chief, Joint General Staff, and commanders of major units.

Decorations were the most honored form of recognition for the individual and unit for superior achievements in combat and performance of military duties. The authority to award decorations ranged from the President to lower echelons down to regimental and sector commander, depending on the value of the decoration. Decree 174/SL/CT of 5 June 1964 established thirty decorations, the most notable of which were:

The National Order. This was the most exalted decoration, awarded by the President to military officers and civilian officials with at least fifteen years of service or valorous distinction on the battlefield. It had five levels ranging from fifth class (the lowest) to first class (highest). Consideration for this kind of award took place once a year around Tet, the lunar calendar New Year.

The Medal of Military Merit. This decoration was just as exalted as the National Order, but was only awarded to NCOs and enlisted men with at least fifteen years of service or exceptionally meritorious combat achievements.

The Gallantry Cross. This was probably the decoration most liked and coveted by military personnel since it generated so much competition among them. Awarded to recognize bravery in combat action, the decoration had four levels: the brigade level with a bronze star awarded by regimental and sector commanders; the division level with a silver star awarded by division commanders; the corps level with a gold star awarded by CTZ or MR commanders, and; the army level with a palm awarded by the Chief, JGS.

The procedure for awarding the Gallantry Cross was usually initiated through the channels of brigades, divisions, and corps immediately after the action had taken place. Based on experience, the JGS established an award quota every quarter for each military region, which in turn provided quotas for divisions and sectors. This quota system provided for

prompt action since it enabled authorities to immediately award the number of decorations available and to request for additional ones if required. Specifically for the army level award, in order to gain the impact of timely recognition, CTZ/MR commanders might cable their recommendations to the JGS. Upon approval, CTZ/MR commanders made the presentation to deserving persons. In ordinary cases, MR commanders submitted recommendations for the award to the JGS for approval and issuance of orders.

Wound Medal or Purple Heart. This award was granted to personnel who suffered wounds from enemy weapons while on duty. Award authority was delegated to the parent unit in accordance with casualty report Form QD-831 submitted by the subordinate unit.

The Staff Service Medal. This medal was awarded to personnel who distinguished themselves by outstanding dedication in their staff work. Composed of two levels, the first class for officers and the second class for personnel, the award was granted only once in the individual's entire military career. The granting authority rested with the Chief of Staff, JGS acting on the recommendation of the organization or unit concerned.

The Training Service Medal. This medal was awarded to personnel who performed outstanding service during training assignments at military schools and training centers, or contributed significantly to the military training of the RVNAF. It also had two levels, and was awarded only once during a military career like the Staff Service Medal. The granting authority was vested in the Commander, Central Training Command, JGS.

Technical Service Medal. This award was presented to outstanding personnel for devoted service in the RVNAF technical services, and for contribution to the development of these services. Like the Staff Service and Training Service Medals, the Technical Service Medal had two levels and was awarded only once during a military career. The granting authority rested with the Commander, Central Logistics Command.

In addition to decorations awarded by the RVNAF, Vietnamese Military personnel were authorized to accept civilian medals granted by the GVN or decorations from foreign countries. In the case of foreign decorations, however, recipients might wear them only when authorized by the President if they were general officers, and by the JGS in other cases.

The fourth form of awards was unit citations. The best example of this type of recognition was the fourragere. The RVNAF granted four types of fourragere to meritorious units. Each type was awarded in accordance with the number of times a unit was cited before the army. Gold fourrageres were awarded to units with two such citations, green fourrageres to those with four citations, red fourrageres for those with six citations, and the tricolor (gold, green, red) fourrageres to those with nine or more citations.

Of all RVNAF awards, the Staff Service Medal, the Training Service Medal, the Technical Service Medal, and the Gallantry Cross caused the most criticism. Criticism against the Staff Service, Training Service, and Technical Service Medals arose in 1966 from staff, training, and logistic personnel when new award procedures based on a point system were put into effect. They directed their heaviest attack on the levels at which the award was available, "for commissioned and noncommissioned officers only," and on the frequency of the award, "only once in the entire military career." During a military career, there were several occasions when an individual might serve on staffs, in military schools, or in logistics; and there were times when he would distinguish himself in those duties just as combat soldiers could repeatedly show their valor in the face of the enemy. A successful operation reflects not only acts of valor by combat soldiers but also sound, thorough staff planning, and timely logistic support. To insure fair treatment of staff, training, and service personnel and to provide leaders with additional incentives for motivation, many authorities, therefore, recommended the establishment of four classes, similar to the four classes of the Gallantry Cross, for each of the Staff Service, the Training Service and the Technical Service Medals; and that these decorations be awarded more than once according to achievements. Unfortunately, these sensible recommendations were never adopted for the RVNAF.

As for the Gallantry Cross, most criticism centered on award procedures and awarding authorities. Many indeed had granted this decoration as a reward to their own subordinates for their contributions in staff, administrative and support activities, or outside personnel for helping

their unit to accomplish its combat mission. There were even instances of the Gallantry Cross being awarded to military personnel for the rescue of victims of drowning, fire, and disaster who should have been recognized with a different, more appropriate decoration. Because the Gallantry Cross was awarded on the basis of combat achievements, such as the number of enemy soldiers killed or number of weapons seized in large battles and great victories, there was usually a neglect in rewarding deserving personnel in defeat or in small skirmishes such as those fought each day between the RF/PF and the Communist local forces, guerrillas, and underground infrastructure.

To minimize the deleterious effect of these complaints, and to foster the spirit of solidarity among units, a new award procedure was experimentally introduced during 1967 under the "New Horizon" program whereby award recommendations were openly debated in companies and battalions.¹

After every engagement, be it large or small, initiated by friendly or enemy troops, discussions were held from squad to battalion level for post-mortem analysis of actions, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses, and for determining individual acts of valor to be recommended for reward. Encouraged by the results of the experiment in the 44th Regiment, 23d Infantry Division in MR-2, and in the 11th Regiment, 7th Infantry Division in MR-4, the JGS decided to apply this open-forum approach to ensure that the most deserving personnel were considered for the Gallantry Cross beginning in 1968. Initially causing some puzzlement among commanders for its novelty, this procedure gradually improved the awarding of RVNAF decorations and reduced adverse complaints.

¹The "New Horizon" program, devised by the GPWD, JGS, was put in effect at a number of units with high desertion rates to reduce the problem by improving command and leadership.

Ranks and Grades

From their creation until 1955, the National Armed Forces of Vietnam had five grades and eighteen ranks. There were three ranks within the grade of general officers: brigadier general (2 stars), major general (3 stars), and lieutenant general (4 stars). Field grade officers had three ranks: major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. There were four company grade officers: aspirant, second lieutenant, first lieutenant, and captain. Non-commissioned officers had four ranks: sergeant, sergeant first class, warrant officer, warrant officer first class; and enlisted men also had four: private, private first class, corporal, corporal first class.

Rank insignia and the procedure for wearing them were those of the French Army at that time. Rank insignia were worn on both shoulders over a black or red field depending on the service or service branch.

In 1955, rank insignias and wearing procedures were totally changed. The insignias for general officers remained unchanged, i.e., the same five-pointed stars; but those for field grade officers were silver plum blossoms and for company grade officers, gold plum blossoms, replacing the French silver and gold stripes. Warrant officers wore a small silver disc, warrant officers first class a gold disc, and aspirants the same gold disc with the raised Greek letter alpha. Insignias for sergeants and below did not change, and remained the inverted V chevrons. Instead of being worn on the shoulder, these insignias were now worn on the collar on service uniforms, and on the shoulder pads on dress uniforms. Insignias of sergeant first class and below were worn on the left arm as before. The day the new insignias were made official was marked by a symbolic ceremony held on the parade ground of the JGS to set fire to old French insignia, which meant obliterating the vestiges of foreign rule and opening a new chapter in history.

In 1964, under General Nguyen Khanh's reign as Chief of State, the one-star brigadier general's rank was instituted within the RVNAF. A four-star general officer was now called General instead of Lt. General;

a three-star general officer, Lieutenant General instead of Major General, and; a two-star general Major General instead of Brigadier General. The one-star general rank was called "chuẩn tướng" in Vietnamese, a newly coined word which meant literally "preparatory" general.

In 1967 another change in rank insignias was introduced that affected field grade officers and warrant officers. To avoid confusion with insignias for company grade officers the gold color of which became silver with time, a gold bar was added to the field grade officers' insignias. At the same time, the old silver and gold discs for warrant officers and warrant officers first class respectively were replaced by the sergeant first class's chevrons underlined by one bar for warrant officers and by two bars for warrant officers first class.

Categories of rank within the Vietnamese armed forces underwent changes over time and according to needs. Under Bao Dai and during the First Republic, the RVNAF had four classes of military rank: permanent, brevet, temporary, and assimilated. Under Nguyen Khanh, the brevet rank was replaced by the command rank with the difference that the person concerned might wear the command rank insignia two or three ranks above his permanent or temporary rank depending on the authorization of the table of organization and equipment. For instance, a first lieutenant in command of an infantry battalion, whose authorized commander is a major, was automatically promoted to the command rank of major. Under the Second Republic, the command rank fell into disuse, and the temporary rank was replaced by the functional rank. The RVNAF had therefore only three kinds of ranks: permanent, functional, and assimilated. The permanent rank was the most important because the incumbent was entitled to all privileges established by statute, and the tenure of this rank counted toward seniority for the purposes of determining precedence. The assimilated rank was granted only to male citizens beyond draft age or those who were commandeered or volunteered for military service such as doctors, religious leaders, and professionals. Once in the service, they were nominated to ranks commensurate with their functions but aside from salaries and allowances, they enjoyed no command or other privileges.

Promotion Authority and Procedure

Under the First Republic, the authority to promote company grade officers rested with the Minister of Defense. The promotion of field grade and general officers was the sole prerogative of the President. The selection procedure was then so hermetic that only a few military personnel knew anything about it. The rumor circulated among military officers that the decisive factors were the three Ds, the Vietnamese initials for Party, Religion, and Region. An officer had to possess one of these three qualifications for promotion or a good position. A person had to belong to the Can Lao Nhan Vi (Personalist Labor) Party or the National Revolutionary Movement or the Women's Solidarity Movement, and be supported by them; he had to be a Roman Catholic and recommended by a priest or bishop; he had to originate from Central Vietnam, the original home of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Promotion was restricted, hard to obtain, and highly opportunistic; it often did not bear any relation to military needs. Promotion to the rank of general was often dictated by political requirements.

After the November 1, 1963 coup d'etat, a number of generals, field and company grade officers who were the proteges of junta generals received blanket, special, often double-rank promotions. Among this group were some who deserved this recognition, but others merely rode in on their mentors' coattails. The 1964 counter-coup saw another group of underlings of the coup leaders being promoted. It was total chaos. Rumor had it that in order to earn promotion one had to be within the orbit of generals; on the outside the situation was hopeless.

However, a development boosted the spirit of the military; it was the enactment of Decree Law 13/64, which, for the first time, established regulations for career military personnel. Such a legislative document had been long desired by military personnel, and repeatedly recommended; yet for some obscure reason it was stalled during the entire tenure of the First Republic. According to this Decree Law, there were two kinds promotion in the RVNAF, annual and special. Personnel with at least two years of rank seniority were eligible to compete for annual

promotions in one of three categories, the selective category composed of those with two but less than five years of rank seniority, the seniority category consisting of those with five to less than seven years of rank seniority, and the automatic promotion category for those with seven years of rank seniority and above.

Nevertheless for another year, no regulatory act or decision was made to enforce this new decree law. Not until the end of 1965 was Decree No. 205 promulgated which determined authorities within the RVNAF to grant promotions. In accordance with this decree, the President would promote general officers, the Prime Minister would promote permanent colonels, the Minister of Defense would promote permanent majors to functional colonels, the Chief of the Joint General Staff would promote company grade officers and functional majors, commanders of major units in the armed services and in the combat arms and services would promote non-commissioned officers, and finally commanders of autonomous units were authorized to promote enlisted men.

Compared to what had prevailed under the First Republic, this was an extensive decentralization. In January 1966 a revised procedure for evaluating officers' efficiency came into effect, paving the way for a new promotion system. An accurate efficiency rating helped select the right man for the right job and improved promotion fairness. Three areas were to be rated: sense of duty, conduct and personal character, general achievements and potential capabilities. A point system was used to score personal character, achievements, and potentialities instead of abstract labels such as excellent, good, average, or below average.

To insure impartiality and accuracy, the procedure called for two rating authorities. The rating officer was the immediate superior and the endorsing officer was the immediate supervisor of the rating officer. There were three kinds of rating: annual ratings for personnel who had been on duty for more than 90 days; periodic ratings for personnel who had been on duty less than 90 days but more than 50 days and; rating of academic achievement. In addition, a supervisor had the responsibility to rate his subordinates every time he or his subordinates

were transferred out of the unit. To insure timely ratings that might be used for selection, assignment, or promotion of personnel, the JGS required that annual rating sheets be submitted in accordance with the following schedule:

Rank	Rating Date	Date Submitted to AG, JGS
Field Grade Officers	1 April	1 May
Captains	1 May	1 June
1st Lieutenants	1 June	1 July
2d Lieutenants	1 July	1 August
Aspirants	1 August	1 September

Annual Officer Promotion

In conjunction with the new efficiency rating system and to restore confidence among the troops, General Cao Van Vien, the new Chief of the JGS, decided to enforce the new regulations as established by Decree Law 13 for the annual promotions in 1967. To create enthusiasm and optimism in the military services, a meeting was convened at the Adjutant General's Office, JGS for representatives of Corps/CTZ, divisions, combat arms and services, the air force, the navy, and regional forces to discuss promotion procedures in the RVNAF. The meeting lasted almost three days and centered on the two questions of promoting personnel with true merits, and of insuring justice in the promotion system. Promotion on a competitive basis, promotion qualifications, and evaluation procedures were also widely discussed. These qualifications included in-rank seniority, length of service, position, merits, commendations, decorations, punishments, convictions, military knowledge, military training, both in-country and abroad, academic background, efficiency rating scores, and commander's comments. Every qualification was brought up, analyzed, and carefully weighed. A case in point was the subject of decorations. Decorations were a factor for special promotion in the case of those who had fought well on the battlefield; some, however, were obtained through manipulation. Promoting individuals on the basis

of these ill-gotten honors had to be mockery of the system. Training certificates and diplomas posed another problem. Efficient individuals were often kept on duty the year round, and thus denied the opportunity to attend school for personal advancement. Then, there were the "professional" students. Consequently, military school diplomas alone were unreliable as a consideration for promotion. Nevertheless, the training of cadres through appropriate courses was a necessity because experience alone was judged inadequate to form a good cadre. As for rating sheets, they were regarded by some as being perfunctory, partial, punitive, biased, etc. Finally, the conferees agreed that the fair qualifications for promotions should be rank seniority, achievements including decorations, punishments, time of duty in combat units, present rank as compared with that authorized by TO&E, and efficiency rating scores.

For competitive purposes, the conferees recommended a point system. Each and every qualification was rated in terms of this system. It was also decided that a committee composed of members of J1, J3, the Central Training Command, AG, JGS make an in-depth study of the point system and assign values to each month of rank tenure, each rank above that authorized by the TO&E, each decoration, each month on duty with combat units, each day of confinement to quarters or jail. This point system was subsequently published for general distribution accompanied by a memorandum that prescribed promotion procedures for the information of every individual. To avoid oversight detrimental to individuals concerned, to avoid false statements, and to update personnel records, rating forms were distributed to parent units and organizations to be forwarded to qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers, who would fill them out, sign them, and return them to their parent units. Units would check the information on the forms, compare it with personnel files, rectify errors on the forms or in the files after a careful investigation of relevant administrative documents, record the average score of all rating sheets for the individual while holding the rank, assign point values to all the qualifications, certify the truth of all information, and return the forms to AG, JGS in accordance with a definite schedule:

Rank	Date for considering all merits and demerits	Date Submitted to JGS
Field grade officers	1 July	1 August
Captains	1 August	1 September
1st Lieutenants	1 September	1 October

The idea of discriminating between career and reserve officers, of having officers of each category competing for promotion with others in the same category, and of giving preference to career officers was heatedly debated then rejected for its shortcomings in a period of war.

As for eligibility, all conferees supported the two-year rank seniority requirement even though this would mean a heavier workload for personnel sections, given the large number of eligibles. However, to insure that promotion would be meaningful and well-deserved for good individuals, and to weed out the undesirable, the elderly, and the sick, members agreed on the following exclusions: personnel with 60 days of confinement to jail in the last two years, or with a 30-day term in jail during the last year; persons convicted, free on bond, under investigation, standing trial by a court-martial; rehabilitated deserters; individuals on long-term TDY or on absence without pay for over six months because of illness; under training in an academic institution in country or abroad; a score of below 50 points on the rating sheet for the current year; and finally those reaching or exceeding the age desired for the grade under consideration. In sum, any person falling into one of these categories would automatically be excluded from consideration.

The recommendations resulting from this special conference were approved by the Chief of the General Staff, and in July 1966 a new procedure for the annual promotion of officers and noncommissioned officers was promulgated which breathed fresh hope among the cadres of the RVNAF and made an effective contribution in the area of personnel management. Factors such as decorations, tours of duty with combat units, days in confinement or in jail, for example, which had been long neglected, now suddenly became relevant. A feverish search for and reproduction of pertinent administrative documents ensued. There were individuals who

did not even know of their records of punishment, or of decorations and awards received since they had never been notified. Updating personnel files became vital, a matter of concern for all personnel. Rating sheets received by the AG, JGS went through a double check. In the first step they were checked for accuracy of information by the AG's card file section against all administrative information and documents on file in personnel records. Any discrepancy was investigated, and personal interviews held before the error was corrected. In the second step an accuracy check was made of the scores computed by a scoring committee at the AG's Office, which consisted of officers from J1, J3, and the Central Training Command. Once verified, rating sheets were sent to the AG's computer center for processing. The printout identified candidates by branch, arm and service, and ranks by classes of automatic, seniority, or selective promotion, and ranked them according to their achieved scores. This information was forwarded to the promotion board.

The promotion board which considered annual promotions for officers had three components. One component was the council for promoting lieutenant colonels to full colonels which consisted of five general officers nominated on a rotation basis by the Chief of the JGS from the Army, Navy and Air Force. The council was responsible for reviewing the work of the AG, JGS, listening to the report of its secretary--the chief of the promotion section of AG, JGS--on decoration awards, discipline violations, the rating scores within the rank being considered, and deliberating and voting "approved" or "disapproved" for each case. The first round of voting was for lieutenant colonels with seven or more years in rank whose promotion was classed as "automatic." The second round of voting was for lieutenant colonels with five years but less than seven years in rank on the seniority list. The third round was for lieutenant colonels with two but less than five years in rank from the selective list. Finally the council established three lists which ranked the candidates according to the number of votes each received. Another council devoted its work to the promotion of majors to lieutenant colonels and of captains to majors. It consisted of a general officer chairman who was nominated by the Chief, JGS, and

representatives from Corps/CTZ, branches, arms and services, and commands. These representatives all had the rank of colonel or at least lieutenant colonel. Unlike the council for field grade officers, this council did not have the authority to vote decisions; it only had the responsibility to review the work of the AG, JGS on each rating form, question doubtful points, recommend completion or correction of noted irregularities, verify and certify after careful checking with the printout prepared by the computer center, recommend the minimum score for promotion to each rank, then submit the lists to the Chief, JGS. The council to promote captains had the same membership and responsibility as the second council but its representatives were of lower ranks; they were mostly chiefs of personnel divisions or sections.

The lists of promotion nominees, which resulted from the work of the three councils, were submitted to the Chief, JGS in December 1966 for review and forwarding to the Ministry of Defense and the Office of the Prime Minister. Upon approval of these lists by the Chief, JGS, the Minister of Defense, and the Prime Minister, for captains, major and lieutenant colonels, and full colonels respectively, annual promotions were made public in January 1967. Actual promotion took place subsequently every quarter and involved one-fourth of the eligibles on the approved roster. During the time a candidate was on the selected list for promotion, his name would be removed from the roll if he was jailed for thirty days or more; if under investigation, his promotion would be suspended until the investigation had been concluded.

Officers had the right to file claims or inquiries about their qualification scores with the AG, JGS three months after a new promotion list was released. All claims and inquiries would be answered by mail by the JGS. Any claim proving an error on the part of responsible authorities which resulted in the claimant not being selected would be corrected even if it required reconvening the promotion board. A supplementary promotion list would then be released which included the names of those whose scores had been corrected.

There were several lessons learned from the 1966 promotion procedure which were useful to the RVNAF during subsequent years.

First, the new procedure succeeded in clearing up most of the resentment that had developed among cadres; it restored confidence among the great majority of officers, especially first lieutenants, captains and majors. Second, the automatic promotion of officers with seven or more years in their ranks dispelled the oppressive cloak of suppression and neglect under which they suffered, but most people were of the opinion that such an action would produce a surplus of officers, especially lieutenant colonels and colonels, for whom there were no jobs because their abilities did not always measure up to their new ranks.

Then also, it was possible for the basic information on which the point system was founded to be erroneous because personnel files were defective and out-of-date, especially with regard to decorations, punishments, and time of service in combat units. There were indeed decorations awarded in the field that had never been officially confirmed, punishments imposed without proper notification being entered on the records, and court cases that had not been cleared causing harm to those who had been acquitted by military tribunals. It was also discovered that the procedure left out a sizable number of highly capable military personnel on loan to the civil service who subsequently requested to be allowed to compete for promotion with their colleagues in the military service so as not to lag behind in their advancement once they returned to the military. Finally, many believed that promotion qualifications should be liberalized.

Benefiting from these lessons, the JGS initiated certain procedural modifications and improvements during 1967 for the competitive annual promotion of 1968. More qualifications were added such as the time of service with combat support units in order to motivate officers in the Armor, Artillery, and Engineer Corps. Diplomas issued by military schools were also given more emphasis to encourage officers to undergo training in domestic and foreign schools. Academic degrees also contributed toward promotion qualification, which greatly encouraged officers to broaden their general education. As for eligibility, there were to be only two categories, those eligible based on seniority, with seven or more years in their ranks, and those eligible for selective

promotion, with two to less than seven years in their ranks. Restrictions were also kept to a minimum. Personnel on loan outside the military and rehabilitated deserters were authorized to be considered. Instead of being totally excluded as they were in 1966, deserters would be eligible for promotion after two years of service from the time of total rehabilitation.

In 1968, after general mobilization was decreed, a halt in all types of discharge except for health reasons was imposed. To be fair to personnel on duty beyond their age limit, the restriction on their age was removed to allow them to compete for promotion in 1969.

In 1969, when marked improvement had been made in the updating of personnel records, certain additions were implemented in order to increase qualifications required, thus insuring fairness and encouraging officers to improve their military knowledge; this was an effort, also, to keep experienced company grade officers in service. First, length of military service and length of time in present and previous positions were given qualification points. The objective of considering all preceding assignments was to minimize the disadvantage incurred by officers who were in school or hospitalized, had recently changed assignments, or left their positions for some other reason. Two other requirements were also implemented. One concerned military diplomas commensurate with ranks being held. Captains being considered for promotion to majors, and majors to lieutenant colonels were required to have at least attended an intermediate command and staff course, or infantry battalion commanders' course, or an advanced course in the combat arms and services. Lieutenant colonels aspiring to colonel rank were all required to have graduated from an advanced command and general staff course, whether in country or abroad. Another requirement involved academic degrees. The degree of Baccalaureate, first part was mandatory for captains aspiring to the rank of major.

These two new requirements resulted in considerable opposition when they were introduced in 1969, especially that involving military diplomas. Several recommendations and petitions for reconsideration were received by the JGS. Upon analysis of the problem the JGS realized that indeed

the requirement of military diplomas was detrimental to a large number of officers who were then holding key positions, but because of their competence and usefulness had been denied the benefit of attending schools. It appeared that instead of encouraging training, this requirement tended to be a hindrance. Yet abolishing this restriction would surely result in neglect of formal training. Consequently, JGS decided to suspend the requirement of military diplomas for the period from 1970 to 1973, during which time commanders were bound, by duty and responsibility, to send their subordinates to training courses designed for each individual's career. As for the Baccalaureate degree requirement which affected captains being considered for majors, it would involve only a tiny fraction of officers. Since most captains in this class were on duty in combat units and thus eligible for battlefield promotions, the JGS decided to retain this requirement.

The requirements and standards for promotion, which had been regarded as firmly established in 1970, were modified slightly in 1971. (Table 10) According to this change, officers with more than seven years in rank were no longer automatically promoted and had to compete with all eligible personnel; if unsuccessful, they were no longer eligible for consideration and were slated for discharge when the first opportunity arose.

In 1973, after the Paris agreement went into effect, the RVNAF reviewed its personnel requirements which resulted in additional modifications in the qualifications for promotion. The age exclusion was reinstated, eliminating from competition those personnel reaching or exceeding age limits, thus leaving room for younger individuals. With respect to the requirement of military diplomas, the transitional period of three years had expired. The majority of good cadres holding key positions had by now graduated from appropriate courses. However, an examination of a printout of lieutenant colonels and colonels furnished by the computer center for consideration by the promotion board revealed that some officers holding key positions had not attended these courses. To emphasize the importance of training at a time of reduced military action, the military diploma requirement was maintained, but applied in

**Table 10 – Summary of Promotion Qualifications
and Exclusions Over Time**

Factor	Year of Application					
	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1974
A. QUALIFICATIONS						
Rank Seniority	X	X	X	X	X	X
Length of military service				X	X	X
Position seniority				X	X	X
Time in immediately preceding position				X	X	X
Current rank against TO&E authorization	X	X	X	X	X	
Length of service in combat units	X	X	X	X	X	X
Length of service in combat support units		X	X	X	X	X
Military diplomas		X	X	X	X	X
Academic degrees		X	X	X	X	X
Decorations awarded while holding rank	X	X	X	X	X	X
Confinement to quarters or jail while holding rank	X	X	X	X	X	X
Efficiency rating score	X	X	X	X	X	X
B. EXCLUSIONS						
Conviction	X	X	X	X	X	X
Free on bail	X	X	X	X	X	X
Being prosecuted	X	X	X	X	X	X
Under investigation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sixty days of jail in last two years, or thirty consecutive days in jail in year of competition		X	X	X	X	X
Thirty consecutive days in jail while on eligible roll		X	X	X	X	X
Rehabilitated deserters	X	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Long term illness (over six months)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Attending academic institutions	X	X	X	X	X	X
On loan outside the military	X					
Reaching or exceeding age limit	X	X				X
Commensurate military diploma				X	(2)	(2)
Commensurate academic degrees				X		X
Efficiency score less than 50 points	X	X	X	X	X	X
Over seven years of rank seniority						X

(1) Under two years

(2) Competition permitted promoted on graduation

a flexible manner. Instead of being eliminated from the start, officers lacking this requirement could still be placed on the competitive list. They were then required to attend the mandatory courses, and were to be promoted if they graduated, or removed from the list if they did not. This decision resulted in a surge of registrations for courses, an enhancement in the value of courses, and a determination of students to receive the training, especially the advanced command and general staff course.

After eight years of modification and improvement, the system of personnel rating for promotion purposes had been standardized. Annual promotion procedures had achieved relative fairness, and greatly minimized complaints among cadres from company grade officers to lieutenant colonels. Nevertheless, the validity of this promotion system still depended heavily on the commanders' personal interest, their handling of human relations, their judgments, especially with regard to reward and punishment, and efficiency ratings. It had been estimated that if an officer had been transferred a few times and held several positions under different rating superiors, his efficiency rating would have been more accurate. Unfortunately, this did not happen for a sizable number of officers.

The promotion of general officers was the sole authority of the President. Promotions were announced once a year on Armed Forces Day, June 19, or on Lunar New Year's Day. To assist with this selection, the AG, JGS compiled a list of all full colonels with permanent rank and all generals which included the following information: permanent or functional rank; date of last promotion; positions, current and immediately preceding and length of time held; highest military education; awards and commendations; any disciplinary action; and average score of all rating sheets while holding the rank of colonel. General officers had no rating sheets although their performance of duty was carefully observed by the President. Decisions on promotion were made by the President during confidential meetings held at the Independence Palace and attended by the Vice President, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Chief of the JGS.

Promotion of NCOs and EM

The system of promoting NCOs and EM was also constantly improved since 1967, based on the procedures applied to officers. Time in grade requirements for competing was 6 months for privates to privates first class (automatic), 1 year for privates first class to corporals, and 2 years for all others.

A council for the promotion of NCOs was convened by each service, combat arm and service branch to consider the eligibility of their respective personnel. In the case of the infantry, the promotion council was convened by the JGS to include representatives of corps/MRs and central level organizations. The Chief of the AG Division, JGS was the designated chairman of this council. Because the authority to promote infantry NCOs was delegated to corps/CTZ (or MR) commanders, the list of eligibles was made in two steps. In the first step, based on the score on each carefully checked individual rating sheet and on promotion quotas for that year, the council drew up a list of all eligible candidates ranking them according to their scores. In the second step, the number of eligibles was broken into four equal groups each to be promoted at the beginning of a quarter. One month before each quarter, the AG, JGS produced a list of eligibles in each corps/MR, based on the master list, and sent it to each corps commander concerned for decisions.

The council for the promotion of EM had a more expanded membership and was convened every quarter by the official with promotion authority. Decisions for promotion were made known at the beginning of each quarter at the same time as those for NCOs and officers.

The procedure for the annual promotion of NCOs in use since 1967 was judged realistic, easy to control, and fair. All NCOs who had the right qualifications were allowed to compete regardless of their place of work, whether serving in combat units or in staff or supporting roles; they were no longer restricted because of their regions or units. Like the system for officers, the success of this procedure depended greatly on command interest, rewards and punishments, and efficiency ratings.

However, this procedure created additional problems for corps commanders. First, before making decisions for promotion, they had to

keep track of all eligible personnel for timely notification of transfer, death, missing in action, or desertion. Second, they had to balance ranks within units under their commands to avoid uneven distribution of personnel after each quarterly promotion. Given the sizeable enlisted strength assigned to each corps area, these problems were not easy to handle.

With regard to enlisted specialists, this promotion procedure also resulted in some loss of experienced personnel in the logistic support branches of the ARVN, VNAF and VNN. As the number of authorized rank slots in these branches rose with the expanding RVNAF force structure, the enlisted specialists, particularly privates and corporals, were gradually promoted to upper ranks out of line with their jobs and consequently got transferred. This not only depleted the ranks of experienced enlisted specialists, but also wasted the time and money that had been invested in their training. The greatest impact of this loss was acutely felt during the 1970-75 period, a time of extensive growth for the logistic support branches of all three services, especially in the areas of supply, maintenance, and rebuilding of sophisticated equipment.

Special Promotions

There were three kinds of special promotions: automatic promotions, promotion by virtue of position held, and battlefield promotions.

There were several categories of personnel who received automatic promotion if they were not involved in any serious breach of military discipline. After six months, private soldiers were promoted to private first class. Sergeants who had graduated from the NCO School were promoted to sergeant first class after three years in grade. Aspirant who had graduated from the Reserve Officers School became second lieutenants after 18 months and first lieutenants after 24 months of service as a second lieutenant. Second lieutenants who graduated from the National Military Academy automatically became first lieutenants after 12 months. In case of disciplinary action such as jail term or confinement, these promotions would be deferred by twice the number of days of punishment.

A second type of special promotion was available to officers who were occupying positions requiring a higher rank. This was intended to meet the requirements occasioned by the expansion of the armed forces under the Vietnamization program. This rank conferred by position was called functional rank.

Unit commanders were authorized to recommend their subordinates for promotion to a functional rank at any time in accordance with the following criteria: the position held was authorized by the TO&E; the permanent rank being held was below that authorized by the TO&E; individuals concerned had been in grade at least twelve months; current position had been held for at least six months; and no punishment or no more than eight days of confinement to quarters while holding the current rank.²

Given the small size of quarterly quotas allowed for functional promotion -- about 10% of the annual promotion -- there was always an excess of recommendations. Thus the JGS often consolidated all recommendations by chronological order for monthly consideration. First priority went to command positions. Second priority was for staff positions such as chiefs of staff, chiefs of divisions and sections. Officers not approved in the first phase, because of lack of quotas, would be carried over to the next phase as long as they served in the same function. For company grade officers and majors, decisions for promotion would be made by the Chief of JGS, and for colonels and lieutenant colonels by the Minister of Defense.

To minimize favoritism, officers who had been given functional promotions were required to serve in their position for at least one year after the date of promotion.

A third type of special promotion was called battlefield promotion which had been initiated in 1965. It had the purpose of uplifting the morale of personnel in combat units and encouraging individuals serving

²In 1972, rank seniority requirement was reduced to nine months for personnel in combat units. Further reduction in this time was allowed if the Gallantry Cross was awarded: by 45 days for a citation at the army level, 30 days for a corps-level citation, and 15 days for brigade or division level citation.

in staffs, schools, and support units to seek combat duty for faster advancement. It also provided an opportunity for individuals who had been rejected for disciplinary and other reasons, were still junior in their ranks, and for those who had competed but were not successful in the annual competitions. The criteria required were simple; they included seniority in permanent rank, length of time in position, and decorations or awards while in combat. After numerous changes, the length of time required for rank and position became firmly established in 1972. Seniority in permanent rank was nine months for field grade officers, six months for company grade officers and NCOs, and three months for corporals and corporals first class. Seniority in positions held was nine months for field grade officers, six months for company grade and warrant officers first class, three months for sergeants and warrant officers, and six months for corporals and corporals first class.

In addition to rank and position seniority, officers were required to have citations for combat gallantry in order to qualify for battlefield promotions. Candidates for the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel were required to have three citations, one at the army level. Candidates for ranks from aspirant to major were required to have two citations, one at corps level. Candidates for ranks of corporal to warrant officer first class were required to have one citation at any level.

Individuals receiving battlefield promotions during 1967 were all granted permanent rank, which was intended to stimulate combat spirit. However, after a time, it was discovered that most officers who had been recommended and promoted had only been in grade for less than one year; consequently their promotions were too accelerated. To maintain the value of permanent ranks, the JGS published Memorandum 2257/TTM/1/NV/QL which specified that permanent ranks were to be granted only to officers with the same seniority as required for annual promotions, i.e., two years. Officers with less than this required seniority could only be given functional ranks in battlefield promotion.

Battlefield promotions usually represented from 20 to 25 percent of the total annual RVNAF requirements. Almost all valid recommendations were

approved. To encourage combat achievements, the JGS and corps commanders constantly reminded combat unit and sector commanders to recommend deserving individuals after each large engagement. The JGS also reviewed periodically the requirements to make sure that the field promotion system was producing effective combat leadership.

Finally, to recognize the achievements of deceased service personnel, posthumous promotions were widely granted in the RVNAF beginning in 1967. Personnel of all ranks who were killed by the enemy, would receive, upon recommendation by their immediate superior, posthumous promotion to the next higher rank. The heirs of the deceased enjoyed all benefits authorized the posthumous rank.

Observations

In 1970, after nearly ten years of evolving with the situation and requirements, promotion procedures in the RVNAF could be considered as stabilized. Of the three categories of promotion -- annual, field and functional,--annual promotions were the most important, accounting for 70% of requirements. Qualifications for promotion were refined over the years and kept abreast of progress made in personnel management. Exclusions became more and more stringent so as to eliminate the undisciplined and the inept. Qualifications, efficiency scores, and procedures for consideration were disseminated for the information of all concerned. The sarcastic comments of "three D's," or a "general's henchman" gradually disappeared but gave way to others such as "too many, too easy, too fast," "rank inflation," "promotion of incompetent officers," "kicking upstairs," especially among the frustrated lieutenant colonels and colonels of permanent rank.

Indeed, after 1966, promotion in the RVNAF seemed too easy and too fast. The number of officers promoted annually amounted to hundreds of company and field grades, far more numerous than in previous years. A first lieutenant with an ordinary record of service and no violations requiring punishment, but having accomplished no great military feats would surely be promoted to captain after an average of two or three

years in rank. Similarly, captains and majors would be advanced to majors and lieutenant colonels after three or four years of rank seniority. This resulted from the rapid growth of the RVNAF since 1966. The following personnel totals, used in computing annual salary budgets, provide an indication of this rapid expansion:

	1965	1968	1969	1970
First Lieutenants	5877	8764	12405	17353
Captains	4501	4793	6842	10654
Majors	1029	1556	2447	3532
Lieutenant Colonels	238	443	789	1295

Perhaps because of the rapid rise of officers too young for their ranks (captains 20-23 years of age, full colonels under 30, and generals 32-35 years of age), the Ministry of Defense and the President, in an effort to curb the trend, abrogated the law on functional ranks in annual promotion. Functional ranks had been conceived merely as intermediate ranks, temporarily granted during the period 1959-63.

Perhaps, the overabundance of company and field grade officers, particularly in the staffs of divisions, corps, combat arms, and service branches as compared with the scarcity of field grade officers during the period before 1963 had prompted the comment of rank inflation. But the fact was their promotions had been carefully considered every year by the JGS based on rank quotas authorized by the force structure expansion, estimated losses, and currently available positions. Promotion quotas for each year were intentionally kept lower than those authorized to allow for unforeseen circumstances. In 1968 when general mobilization was proclaimed and discharges were suspended, and again in 1970 when the RVNAF force structure topped at 1,100,000 men, annual promotion quotas were established with greater caution so as to prevent an officer surplus while the war was going on and discharges were prohibited. There was in fact no surplus of officers in the RVNAF between 1966 and 1972 except for lieutenant generals and full colonels assigned to top level organizations such as the Central Logistics Command, the General Political Warfare

Department and JGS staff divisions. It was not clear why President Nguyen Van Thieu chose to promote ten lieutenant generals on Armed Forces Day of June 19, 1971 which resulted in a surplus in this grade level. It was believed that his action was politically motivated by the impending presidential election. In the case of full colonels, the JGS had tried to achieve a pyramidal distribution of personnel in setting up annual quotas, but never succeeded. There were full colonels serving as heads of central agencies and in positions authorized for brigadier or major generals who were never promoted by the President although they had served long and competently in these assignments. Therefore, this resulted in a profusion of full colonels holding key positions such as department heads, directors, deputy directors, bureau chiefs in command headquarters, division chiefs, assistant division chiefs, in JGS staff divisions.

As for officers who were promoted but received no assignment commensurate with their rank responsibility, there were but a few. Two reasons led to this situation, however. The first was promoting the wrong men. Three cases in point had to do with field promotions. There was the case of a RF major in the Mekong Delta. While a first lieutenant, he caught in an ambush the rebel general Pham Quang Vinh, alias Ba Cut, of the Hoa Hao sect, and was rewarded by President Diem with a two-rank promotion. In his new rank, the major proved incompetent as a battalion commander and as a staff officer; he was finally rejected everywhere. Then there was the case of a Cambodian-Vietnamese lieutenant colonel while still a major he was a very capable battalion commander. After a great victory in Quang Ngai by his ranger battalion, Major General Nguyen Cao Ky, then Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, awarded him the rank of lieutenant colonel during a field inspection. The newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel did not measure up to the responsibilities of a ranger group's commander, and failed a command and staff course. Finally there were the "heroes of Binh Long." President Thieu promoted by one grade every military man who participated in the successful defense of An Loc during the 1972 Spring Offensive. This mass promotion by presidential action had no precedent in modern Vietnamese military history since the elimination of French rule. It was done without regard to

whether the man had risked his life in combat or had not even fired his weapon. Such a move was an act of gratitude, not one designed to prepare the promoted for greater responsibilities.

Mistakes made in annual promotions which resulted in the elevation of incapable men were due to several factors. The fact that immediate superiors and next higher echelon commanders usually failed to practice impartiality and truthfulness when writing comments and assigning efficiency scores accounted perhaps for the biggest problem in our personnel management.

According to our procedures of competing for annual promotions, any officer who did not receive an average score of 50 points on his rating sheet was excluded from the eligibility list, and subjected to a transfer by the AG, JGS. If this officer failed again to achieve a score of 50 points after one year of duty at the new post, he would be transferred for the second time. If after this transfer he failed again to achieve 50 points, the AG, JGS would discharge him on grounds of incompetence. In spite of the regulations, an analysis of rating sheets revealed that almost all officers received scores ranging from 60 to 99 or even a perfect 100 points and that supervisors usually proved too generous in their evaluation even though they were not satisfied with their subordinates. The proportion of officers scoring less than 50 points was usually a very modest one percent or less.

The fact that during 1966-67 almost all officers with seven or more years of rank were nominated and promoted, except for those under trial by military courts, also contributed to the RVNAF surplus. This action conformed to the provisions of Decree Law 13/64, the objective of which was to resolve pernicious grievances by officers who had held their ranks since the days of the First Republic, to instill a new spirit in the armed forces at a time of heavy fighting, and to restore faith among military cadres. Among the officers who received their promotion this way there was undoubtedly a minimal number whose capabilities were no longer commensurate with their new ranks. In 1968 in order to abide by this law, while minimizing the possibility of promoting inept individuals who had no capability to assume higher positions,

annual promotion procedures prescribed that officers who held their ranks for seven years or longer would be promoted if they did not fall under any prescribed exclusion. In 1971, Decree Law 13/64 was amended to discontinue the automatic promotion of these officers. They were no longer eligible as candidates for promotion and were to be gradually discharged from the service.

The second reason an officer was not immediately used in his new rank after promotion was the way our senior commanders assigned their personnel. Most RVNAF commanders had the habit of using old cronies, those with ranks below TO&E authorization, whom they considered more pliable and easier to motivate than officers with full authorized ranks. Each increment of annual promotions was supposed to result in some changes in position assignments within the internal structure of divisions, corps/CTZ and other units, but commanders were usually reluctant to make the changes probably out of compassion, deference, or just habit. Even when an officer with appropriate rank was transferred to a unit that had a vacancy in his rank, he had to wait for some time before he would be given a suitable assignment because all positions has already been filled by the "right" officer. If a commander replaced his loyal and capable personnel with newly arrived officers of higher but authorized ranks, it might also have an impact on the morale and combat effectiveness of his command. So the commander delayed action until a favorable opportunity arose. In the meantime, the newly assigned officers were given unauthorized positions such as assistants, inspectors, or more ludicrously, they were left without a job. This inevitably caused resentment among the individuals concerned and prompted critical comments by others, "why promote if there are no positions to fill?" This situation was most common in the rank of colonel.

Special promotions based on positions held had helped the RVNAF meet the needs of a rapidly expanding military establishment, and inspired the majority of officers of lower ranks to seek increased responsibilities, in combat units as well as in staffs. However, this practice also provided an opportunity for irresponsible commanders to place relatives or favorites in positions with higher authorized ranks

so that they might advance themselves more easily and quickly. It was also a goal to be attained by ambitious officers who were not satisfied unless they occupied a position higher than the rank they currently held. It created the custom among the RVNAF leadership to employ individuals with ranks lower than those authorized.

In spite of these inevitable shortcomings, promotion regulations within the RVNAF succeeded in creating confidence and satisfaction among most NCO cadres and officers, from company grade to lieutenant colonels. The exception was a handful of full colonels and general officers who continued to be dissatisfied with the system.

CHAPTER IV

Personnel Services

The services which the Adjutant General system of the RVNAF rendered to military personnel from induction to discharge were numerous. However, only four vital services will be discussed in this monograph: personnel records, casualty reports, leaves and postal service.

Personnel Records

Personnel records were a file of documents with lasting usefulness to a serviceman from his active peripatetic days, through unfortunate injuries, sickness or disability to death. For prompt action, and to insure maximum accuracy, availability, and completeness of information, personnel records were always in two locations. The secondary file was maintained and updated by a single, fixed, and safe agency (the Directorate of Personnel of the Ministry of Defense from 1949 to 1964 and subsequently the AG, JGS), and the primary file, which accompanied the individual, was maintained and updated by the unit or organization to which he was assigned. During the critical years of enemy general offensives, such as 1968 and 1972, the secondary records played an important role in restoring copies for tens of thousands of primary records that had been destroyed by enemy action.

Secondary records included a biographical form and a reference dossier. Primary records consisted of a military record booklet, a reference dossier and a medical record.

The reference dossier in both records had identical contents, and contained all administrative papers related to the individual. It was composed of several files separated into folders to facilitate

reference. For example, the civil status file contained the civilian identification card, the birth certificate and the marriage license of the serviceman, and the birth or death certificates of his wife and children. The reference dossier also included a transfer and assignment file, the efficiency rating file, the awards file (decorations, commendations, promotion decrees), the punishment file which contained disciplinary orders, minutes of investigation, summonses, court judgments and the miscellaneous file.

Biographical forms were introduced in 1964 at the time the Directorate of Personnel, was absorbed into the JGS Adjutant General's Office; form QD-1A was used for officers, and QD-15A for NCOs and EM. Both forms had identical contents, the only difference being that the officer's form was larger to accommodate all changes in his career. They contained items of information such as full name, service number, date and place of birth, branch of service, nationality, religion, civilian occupation; marital status to include names of spouse and children; name of next of kin to be notified in case of emergency; educational background; military school training; successive ranks; disciplinary action; awards and decorations; successive positions held and annual rating scores. Biographical forms were initially established in a single copy, by the recruiting unit for volunteers and by the induction center for draftees until 1966, and then subsequently by the regional recruitment and induction centers. These forms were sent to the Data Processing Center of the AG, JGS where updating was carried out daily as pertinent administrative documents were received, including transfers, assignments, punishment orders, announcements of awards, promotion decrees, annual rating sheets, course grade sheets, etc.

A biographical form provided valuable information for the convenient use of personnel management authorities at the JGS level in selecting individuals for various assignment. Its format facilitated rapid reproduction for the use of higher level staffs (JGS, Ministry of Defense, or the President's Office) or intermediate level staffs (corps, MR, or division). The most important problem areas for the

Personnel Records Center of the AG Office were the input of information, availability of qualified personnel and storage facilities. Any neglect on the part of management personnel from the lowest level to the JGS to dispatch administrative documents to the Personnel Records Center, or any mail loss would result in the biographical information being incomplete. The new promotion regulations discussed in Chapter IV helped considerably in the updating of biographical records making them more accurate. The Personnel Records Center was usually in a chronic shortage of personnel because of its low priority. Consequently the principle of management by objectives was put into effect, which made officer personnel files receive the most attention. Upon receipt every administrative document concerning officers was immediately posted on biographical data sheets, then either filed in individual records or reproduced in multiple copies before filing as was the case with group documents such as promotion decrees and award decisions. With respect to NCOs and EM, administrative documents received were duplicated for individual filing, but the posting on biographical forms was done only when necessary or as time was available.

There were two forms of military record booklets, Form QD-32A for officers and Form QD-32B for NCOs and EM. The contents of both forms were identical but the officer booklet had more blank pages. More detailed information with complete reference to administrative documents appeared in the military record booklet than in the biographical form. These booklets were established by recruiting units for volunteers, and by induction centers for draftees up to 1966. After this time the work was done by recruitment and induction centers. Once prepared, military record booklets were immediately sent to schools or training centers to be available before the time recruits arrived. From then on, the men and their military record booklets became inseparable. When transferred, these booklets and the reference files accompanied the individual concerned to his new organization. Military record booklets of personnel on loan outside the service, in training abroad, assigned a class 3 health status, awaiting court trial, serving sentences, deserters, and missing in action were all sent to the Central Administration Unit for

processing if their parent units were located in Military Region 3, and to regional administration units if they were located elsewhere. Upon discharge, military record booklets of class 3 officer personnel (disabled) were sent by central and regional administration units to the Directorate of Mobilization for storage; booklets of NCOs and EM went to original induction services. Booklets of those listed as MIA were kept at central or regional administration units for two years, after which time they were sent to the Directorate of Mobilization in case of officers, and to original induction services in case of NCOs and EM. For ordinary discharged personnel, their booklets were sent for storage by their last units to the Directorate of Mobilization (officers) and to original induction services (NCOs and EM). Military record booklets of deceased officers were sent for storage by parent units to the Central Archives Center; NCO and EM booklets went to the archives annex of the region where they died. As for deserters, forced laborers, and convicts, their booklets were kept on file at central and regional administration units until their status was resolved.

Efficient storing and updating were two vital functions in the management of military record booklets. Personnel services could not be rendered in a timely manner unless these two tasks were performed effectively. Inspections conducted during 1967 revealed serious shortcomings. It was discovered that many individuals in units under inspection lacked these records although they had been on duty for at least six months. There were several reasons for this situation: dereliction of duty, lack of coordination by personnel responsible for the records, lack of command supervision, delay in sending records, loss or even non-existence of the records. Many records inspected revealed unclear, incomplete and untimely posting. Civil status files, for example, lacked marriage certificates and children's and spouse's birth certificates, which unfortunately, resulted in delay in granting family allowances. The address of persons to be notified in case of emergency was often unclear or out of date. Awards and punishment orders were incompletely posted. Length of service, place of service, time served in combat units were also unclear, causing difficulty in

determining retirement pension. Documents in the reference files were out of chronological order and in disarray, making inquiry very difficult. All of these deficiencies apparently resulted from lack of training and a shortage of personnel.

To overcome these deficiencies the JGS enforced several stringent measures in conjunction with a strict system of rewards and punishments. An intensive two-week course on the management of personnel records was immediately initiated at division and CTZ headquarters and at the Adjutant General's School for all personnel, handling personnel records, who had not been properly trained. This course had been prepared by the Adjutant General, JGS. The JGS also directed each CTZ headquarters to organize two or three demonstration teams to act as consultants and help personnel from subordinate units to improve. At the same time, the AG Divisions of the JGS and Corps/CTZ sent mobile support teams to the field to help units assess the status of their records and to assist in overcoming problems. A grace period of three months was given each unit to check personnel records on hand against assigned personnel and to be certain that they were adequate. For missing records, the unit was required to make inquiries and if original units failed to respond within 15 days, a report had to be submitted to the AG, JGS for punitive action. If missing records could not be located after inquiries, the unit had to request copies from the Personnel Records Center at the JGS. Any records found in excess had to be forwarded immediately to units where the personnel concerned had been transferred if this was possible; otherwise, they were forwarded to the Personnel Records Section, AG, JGS for appropriate action.

Most of the confusion in records, it was found, could be traced to frequent transfers of personnel which were made without proper processing. A definite procedure was therefore established to regulate the handling of transferred personnel. According to this procedure, a serviceman being transferred would report to his unit's personnel section to receive a check-out slip. Equipped with this slip, he would report to the medical section to receive and have his medical records brought up to date. At the supply section, his blue clothing records on file would be updated and checked against the yellow records in his

possession. He also received a list of the clothing items issued which would accompany him during transfer along with the blue clothing records. At the payroll section he would receive all pay due and a certificate of pay cessation (and a certificate of last meal for EM). At the transportation section he would be assigned transportation and scheduled for departure. Having processed through these four places, the transferee would return to the personnel section to surrender the check-out slip, the medical record booklet, and the blue clothing record booklet. He could request permission to inspect his own personnel records to insure that all information had been accurately recorded. Finally he would receive a transfer order. One day after the transferee's departure, the personnel section would send to the new unit, by registered military mail, the transferee's medical records, clothing records, personnel records, reference file and a copy of the pay cessation certificate. Newly arrived personnel would also follow the same procedure when checking in. One week after an individual reported for duty, if his records had not been received, the receiving unit's personnel section would send a message to the original unit. If after two such reminders within a month the original unit's personnel section did not comply, the receiving unit would then notify the AG, JGS for punitive action. Once received, the documents would be distributed among the sections concerned for appropriate action.

This new procedure also emphasized that recruits graduating from training centers could not depart for new assignments until equipped with complete medical, clothing and personnel records. Those who did not have these records would be kept at the training centers until the records had been prepared. Training centers were required to report the situation to the AG, JGS giving the number of personnel in this category and the reason why complete records were not available. These three booklets were to be turned over, along with recruits, to the groups leaders at the using units. The AG Division and the Central Training Command frequently made unannounced JGS visits to training centers at graduation times to make sure that the processing

of personnel was properly executed.¹ The rigidity of measures being taken gave rise to some concern on the part of training authorities who warned of a possible backlog of graduating recruits. However, thanks to the efforts of all concerned, this did not occur, and one of our major problems in the management of personnel records was resolved.

The objective of improving the management of personnel and clothing records eventually became part of the "New Horizon" program initiated by the General Political Warfare Department. These records were made a topic for discussion in open study groups to make certain that all military personnel were aware of their importance, the requirement for timely and accurate information, the problem caused when records were not complete, and the responsibilities of the personnel section in record keeping. Military social workers cooperated closely with local authorities to help in securing copies of birth and marriage certificates and updating civil status records.

Through the ever-growing experience of personnel in the adjutant general branch, the individual's awareness of the importance of personnel records, and continued control and supervision by commanders at all levels, great progress was made in the management of personnel records. Beginning in 1970, there was a personnel record for almost every individual assigned to units and losses of records became rare. Recorded information was also comparatively complete and accurate. However, an important problem area still existed with the records of deserters who had had been rehabilitated by amnesty, ex-deserters doing hard labor, ex-military convicts, and those reinstated in the service with a stay of sentence. The individual records for many of these personnel had been lost and could not be found, or would require much

¹To minimize the incidence of desertion and provide better care for draftees on the way from training centers to assigned units, the latter had to send their own escorts to training centers to receive and bring them back.

time in reconstructing. This problem resulted from the central and regional administrative units being inadequately equipped and staffed to handle the volume of work. Authorized personnel and equipment of these units were far below the level required by the actual workload and management was usually weak at the unit level. On the other hand, there were far too many deserters and reformed deserters which resulted in a constant accumulation of personnel records of this kind. The division of administrative responsibility between the Ministry of Defense manpower mobilization system and the AG, JGS was also far from being clear-cut and logical. Since these types of personnel had been removed from the accountability of the armed forces it appeared that their records would have been more efficiently managed by the original induction units than by the JGS surplus personnel management system. However, the mass reinstatement of these personnel, because of an urgent need for replacements in combat units, made it necessary to establish temporary records based on memory in order to save time pending the location of the original ones. These reconstructed records eventually achieved de facto official status since the search for most of the original documents proved fruitless.

Casualty Reporting

Another vital service performed by all units was casualty reporting. Each unit was required to report promptly, accurately, and completely such information concerning its personnel as wounds, light or serious, missing in action, and deaths, whether in combat action or other line of duty.

Casualty reporting took place in two steps. The first consisted of a notification by the fastest means (radio, wire, or messenger) to the unit commander and next of kin, briefly providing the type of casualty and the circumstances under which it occurred. The second step was to confirm the casualty by a detailed narrative report. The major problems most often encountered concerned the notification of next of kin and drafting the narrative report. Notifications were often delayed or even failed to reach their destination. One reason

for this was that the addresses recorded in the record booklets were often incomplete and inaccurate. There were also instances where the addresses, mostly rural, were located in insecure areas or inaccessible to either the military or the national post office because of unexpected changes in the security situation. To help solve this problem, draftees at recruitment and induction centers were reminded by political warfare personnel of the importance of recording accurate information about next of kin, and shown how to do so. At the unit level, the updating of civil status records, including the updating of next of kin's addresses was constantly discussed and emphasized in the unit's information and education program. In case it was impossible to notify next of kin through the address given in the records, the unit concerned had to report to AG, JGS and MR headquarters for assistance in finding other means of notification.

The narrative report, which was drafted by the immediate commanders (platoon or company commanders), was often late in being prepared. Problems such as lack of essential information, wrong identification, and combat activity all delayed action being taken for beneficiaries. To rectify this situation, two improved forms, QD-830 and QD-831, were introduced in 1967. Form QD-830, a more complete biographical sketch, contained all necessary information that small unit commanders needed to know about their subordinates and to have at their fingertips: name; service number; date and place of birth; date of entry in military service; military courses completed; civilian occupation; health status; religion; marital status; names and ages of parents whether dead or alive; names, ages, and occupations of wife and children, and; address of next of kin to be notified in case of emergency. This biographical sketch came in pocket-size format for the daily use of squad, platoon and company commanders. It helped these small unit commanders to improve their leadership skills in the area of knowledge of subordinates, especially in the initial stages of acquaintance. Form QD-831, or the casualty report, contained all information necessary when a narrative summary was required. The contents included, apart from the personnel data excerpted from QD-830, information on the type of casualty, date and place of

occurrence, circumstances of occurrence, cause of the casualty and confirmation by the immediate commander. This form was also in pocket booklet format so that it could be carried by platoon leaders and company commanders during combat operations. The reporting officer only had to fill in and check blanks, sign, and forward the report through channels to the administrative unit concerned. Form QD-831 was also used to substantiate the award of the Purple Heart medal. This new procedure provided real benefits in that it enabled a two or three-fold reduction in time, helped determine whether casualty had occurred in line of duty and thus expedite the award of compensation; it also saved time for platoon and company commanders who were always busy and short of administrative assistance.

Another significant problem in casualty reporting resulted from discrepancies usually found in statistics maintained by combat units, medical units and personnel administration units. The figures reported by combat units were consistently higher than those contained in medical reports. There were several reasons for this. First, the term "casualty" was understood differently by personnel in the two reporting channels. Combat units considered casualties as any individual who was missing, killed or wounded, seriously or lightly, and those cared for at the first aid station even though they may not have been evacuated. But for medical purposes, the term casualty meant only wounded individuals who had been evacuated and treated in medical facilities, whether dispensaries or general hospitals. Individuals with light wounds who had received medical attention and returned to duty were not reported as casualties by medical authorities. Second, combat units often reported casualty figures without being able to account for them; therefore, they had to make repeated corrections in daily reports which were riddled with errors. Then also, casualty reports were often filed at least twice by battalion commanders; the first report was a preliminary one and invariably gave lower casualty figures for friendly troops than for the enemy. A few days later, a revised report would be filed to adjust friendly casualty figures previously reported. The readjusted figures were generally higher than the original ones. When asked about this

situation, an officer who had served in combat units for a long time confided: "Reporting and rectifying are inevitable on the battlefield. At the beginning of an engagement a unit must always report on the preliminary outcome to higher echelons. Only much later, after the fighting has declined, does the unit have time to make a head count of casualties and arrive at accurate statistics. The discrepancy between the two sets of figures is both a fact of life and a psychological hangup with many field commanders, who are obsessed with the competitive spirit and the kill ratio numbers game. Preliminary reports have often been given more attention than final ones. But corrected figures are usually eclipsed by new developments. This is an incurable psychological illness prevalent among Vietnamese tactical commanders. I wonder whether it also affects those of other countries."

The statistics compiled by personnel administration centers in each military region were based on those reported by combat units on form QD-831 and on the monthly casualty report form QD-832 compiled by regimental administrative units. They were usually lower than the figures furnished by combat units, but higher than those reported by medical units. This discrepancy could be attributed to the number of killed or missing in action that had not been processed through medical channels. Efforts had been made to bridge the gap between the reports of combat units and those of personnel administration units, mainly by standardizing the definition of the term "casualty," insuring the updating of preliminary reports, following up on corrections emanating from operation centers, insuring timely and accurate drafting of report forms QD-832, and compiling casualty figures according to dates of occurrence instead of dates of reporting. Even though some progress was made, it did not fully satisfy requirements. However, both sets of figures were useful. The figures from units, though not very reliable, had the advantage of being immediately available at the end of each month and were useful for short-range planning. The figures received from personnel administration centers, while more accurate and reliable because they accounted for every individual reported, had the disadvantage of being available only after one month's delay at the earliest, but they could be used for long-range planning purposes.

Commenting on the casualty reporting by personnel administration units and the responsibility of the S-1 section of a battalion in combat operation, several battalion and regimental commanders remarked: "Among the systems of casualty reporting, the most reliable and accurate is that of personnel administration. Ever since form QD-831 was used as a documentary basis for the award of the Purple Heart, casualty reporting has become more realistic and accurate. Scratches and minor bleeding caused by enemy action are considered insignificant and therefore ignored and not reported. There have been quite a few errors in reporting. For example, a small unit commander was reported as killed, or wounded and evacuated, or a man was listed as missing in action while in fact he had gone on leave or had been evacuated. The S-1 section does not always accompany the battalion command post in combat but remains at the rear base to take care of mail and administration. But forms QD-831 are completed at the company level in the area of operation and sent back to the battalion S-1 in the rear by mail, messenger or supply runs a day or two after the event. The battalion S-1 section does not follow the battalion in combat because its presence at the front serves no useful purpose. Daily personnel reporting to regimental headquarters is handled by S-3, and the administration of personnel is also performed at the regimental level. The administrative work at the rear area therefore requires the presence of the S-1."

Leaves of Absence

After a period of service away from home, every fighting man longed for a leave of absence from duty. Two kinds of leaves existed in the RVNAF: the short and the long-term leave. Short-term leaves included the overnight pass issued to NCOs and EM living off-base, the 24-hour pass issued on weekends or holidays by the primary unit commander, and special leaves granted for weddings, childbirth or death of parents and parents-in-law. The length of absence in such cases ranged from a few days to a maximum of 15 days, and was not deducted from the annual leave. Other types of short-term leaves were graduation leaves on the basis of

one day for every month in training granted by schools and training centers upon graduation and 30-day annual leaves in peace time and 15-day annual leaves in war time divided into two seven-day increments granted by the parent unit commander. Annual leaves were regarded as a right and not a privilege, and, in peace time, could be accumulated up to six months. In war time this regulation was abolished, and annual leaves had to be taken within the year or forfeited. The authority to grant annual leaves rested with the JGS.

There were five general types of long-term leaves. The first type was a three-month convalescence leave with pay which had to be recommended by the medical board of a hospital. This leave was granted by the commander of the hospital concerned. The second type was the six-month leave granted to persons affected by an incurable disease. The term of this leave was renewable, if recommended by the medical board, up to five years if the disease was not attributable to duty or eight years if it was. The third type was a six-month to two-year leave with pay granted in peace time for educational purposes. Another long-term leave was granted without pay for special reasons such as family problems, education, and candidacy for public office. In war time, this type of leave was abolished for all purposes other than candidacy for public office. Finally, the severance leave of five days for every year in service up to a maximum of 90 days was granted by the parent unit commander upon discharge.

Among the various kinds of leaves, the 24-hour pass and annual leave were the most popular and received the most attention. However, because of urgent operational requirements and the war situation, annual leaves were often cancelled or reduced by unit commanders, giving rise to complaints, and affecting the morale and effectiveness of their units. The JGS repeatedly reminded commanders of combat units to permit not more than 10% of their assigned personnel to be on annual leave at any one time. The second matter of concern for personnel on leave was transportation and travel security. Military transportation facilities were usually very limited in spite of the maximum support given by U.S. forces, and had to be used primarily for tactical and logistic missions. On the other hand, civilian transportation was often deemed unsafe.

Up to 1970, there were no recreational facilities within the RVNAF for the enjoyment of military personnel on leave because of the lack of quarters and resources. However, in 1970, barracks were made available by the redeployment of U.S. forces and in cooperation with corps and division commanders, the Central Logistics Command and the General Political Warfare Department began to organize rest and recreation centers for the enjoyment of personnel on leave, their families and even entire units. MR-3 had the Vung Tau R&R Center located in the quarters vacated by Australian forces. In MR-1, the Thai Duong Ha R&R Center was housed in the old premises of the PA&E Company at Cua Thuan. In spite of the excellent location and adequate quarters, the scant recreational facilities available failed to attract individuals on leave except some officers who lived in the cities. Visiting with wives and children in their native villages, after a long absence and with only a few days to enjoy, seemed to be what the majority of our fighting soldiers liked and wanted the most. They had rather spend the precious time repairing the roof of the house, taking care of the rice field or vegetable plot, helping around the house and caring for the wife, children, or parents.

At the end of 1970, the R&R Centers began receiving entire companies and battalions for rest and recuperation. According to unit commanders, sending companies and battalions to these centers for recreational purposes was better than keeping them at their rear bases. The men were relaxed, relieved of tension, and did not steal time to spend with their families; all available times, therefore, was devoted to genuine recuperation. If these centers had had more recreational facilities, and if additional food allowances had been granted for better nutrition during this short period of recuperation, the results would have been far more satisfactory. By mid-1971, however, units no longer took turns resting at R&R Centers because of the deteriorating security situation. Personnel on annual leave no longer liked to go there, and units were no longer granted rest periods. R&R Centers were closed to wait for better days, the exception being the Vung Tau R&R Center, which still catered to a number of guests on weekends or major holidays.

For a better understanding of how the system of leaves fared during the war, the following opinions had been recorded during open discussions held by the General Political Warfare Department. Representatives of fixed units, and major unit headquarters such as divisions, corps and the JGS stated: "The men were fully aware of their rights for leaves and were able to exercise these rights without any restriction. A number of men abused their rights, especially with regard to short-term special passes. There were also men who, out of devotion to duty, and conscious of their privileged position as compared to that of personnel in combat units, voluntarily forfeited much of their authorized leaves." Combat unit representatives, especially assistant company commanders for political warfare, said, "Though the men were fully aware of their rights for leaves as authorized by the JGS, it was often hard for companies to comply because of their chronic personnel shortage. Personnel on leave often failed to return to duty on time because of long waits for transportation often lasting from seven to ten days. It was not possible for personnel to take leaves back to back; one group had to return to duty before the next group was allowed to go. Still it was very difficult for companies to muster enough men for combat operations. Company commanders felt strongly for their troops and never wanted to cancel their leaves. It was only because of operational needs and a sincere concern for the lives of troops in combat operations that company commanders had been compelled to postpone their men's leave of absence. Asked about the rumor that companies had expressly made leaves scarce and subject to bribery, the representatives denied any knowledge of it, and surmised that it might have stemmed from the possible instance of an occasional man buying a beer or two for the people who helped him with transportation.

The Military Postal System

Prior to the armistice of 1954, postal services were provided by French forces. The National Army of Vietnam had only mail carriers who transmitted official and personal mail and postal money orders via the

French military post office system. After the armistice, this organization was transferred to the Vietnamese Army, and in April 1955, the Directorate of Military Post Office was activated to manage and operate mail services. The first director was chosen from among senior officials of the civilian post office to facilitate coordination of postal services between the civilian and the military. Under the directorate, there was at the time only one military post office in each military region with one or two annexes. With reorganization and redeployment of the RVNAF, outlets of the military post office were increased to provide better service in the areas where military installations and agencies were located.

In 1964, when the Adjutant General's branch was created, the Directorate of Military Post Office, which had been placed under the Defense Ministry, was renamed Military Post Office Center (MPOC) and placed under the AG, JGS. The military postmaster was chosen from a group of field grade officers who had come from the civil service. By 1966, the center controlled 29 post office annexes which served more than 1,500 APO units and addresses. In 1973 there were 40 annexes serving more than 3,000 APO units.

The MPOC and its annexes were responsible for receiving, transmitting and distributing official mail, regular and registered mail, telegrams, money orders, parcels from military agencies and individuals, and coordinating with local civilian post offices in daily operations such as using transportation facilities or forwarding mail to civilian addresses.

Each unit or organization assigned an APO address was required to appoint an official mail representative and an assistant with the responsibilities to receive outgoing official and personal mail, telegrams, parcels from units and individuals, and to issue money orders; to transmit the mail, telegrams, parcels, money orders to branch or subordinate APOs addresses; and to receive and distribute incoming mail, telegrams, parcels, and money orders to units and individuals within the APO address.

The RVNAF postal system operated independently of the government's postal organization, but closely coordinated its operations with the

latter in areas such as utilization of means of transportation and distribution of mail, messages, and parcels to civilian addresses.

Means of transportation available daily for the MPOC and annexes included, for the most part, military transport facilities such as motor vehicles, ships, and airplanes operated by Vietnamese and U.S. forces, occasionally supplemented by civilian contractors such as bus companies and Air Vietnam. Transit from one APO address to another took two to three days at the most.

All personal mail from one APO address to another was free of charge but personal mail sent to a civilian address was charged half the civilian rate. A special kind of stamp was issued free by the MPOC to men in combat operations, on duty in remote and isolated outposts, under treatment in military or civilian hospitals, and to draftees for sending letters home or to any other civilian address.

The most frequent shortcoming in the military postal service was the time the mail took to reach the responsible person or beneficiary. For example, an official or personal letter going from a unit in Danang in MR-1 to the JGS in Saigon took five to seven days to reach the responsible party or its recipient. An extensive investigation conducted by AG, JGS and MPOC personnel revealed that the delay did not take place between one APO and another as many servicemen had thought, but primarily between the sending unit and the original APO or annex, and between the destination APO or annex and the receiving unit. The delay was also caused by the unit's internal distribution system. The time delay was found to be two or three times longer at the original and destination APOs than between these APOs. The problem was due both to a lack of supervision by the unit commander and a disregard for the time of mail reception and distribution at the APO or annex. A minute's tardiness by the mailman at the original APO might result in a delay in the distribution of mail by a period of 6 hours, one day, or even more. Occasionally, for various reasons, the unit mail representative did not show up at the APO for days during which time the mail accumulated. The second reason was the slow internal distribution procedure which required recording and signing.

Another problem encountered by a unit during combat operation was the lack of coordination between the mailman and the supply officer in handling the distribution of mail concurrently with the delivery of supplies to the field. There was also the lack of coordination between the unit and the area logistics command to have the APO changed in case of long-term operation outside the area of responsibility of the original APO, and between the units and the MPOC in case of long-term operations outside the military region. Several efforts were made to correct the situation, but the best remedy to our mail problem probably remained command supervision over accountable subordinates.

A survey conducted in 1966 by the General Political Warfare Department revealed that most enlisted men were not aware of their mail privileges. They rarely used mail to communicate with their families, perhaps because they had rarely traveled and had stayed with relatives in their home village all their lives. They did not know how to send money home through the post office, or use free stamps because the mail officer was not available to provide guidance. Under the New Horizon program initiated in 1967, open discussions were held by company political warfare officers on the troops' rights, and on procedures to send postal money orders to family members. Time was also allotted to the men for writing letters home as part of their scheduled activities. Free stamps were distributed during the activities hour by the political warfare officer instead of by the mail officer. This program thus filled the men with a joyful spirit but the use of postal money orders was not enthusiastically endorsed by the men, who preferred to be granted a 24-hour pass to take the money home, or to have their wives and children visit them.

As for mail security, several measures were taken to prevent loss or interception, seizure and utilization of mail by the Communists. Mailmen, with proper security clearances, were chosen from good and reliable personnel. Each mailman was issued a register to record the receiving and delivering of mail, which was daily inspected by the chief of the mail and message section. Each mailman was also issued a leather case with lock for carrying the mail in transit. Throughout

the war, therefore, no regrettable incidents occurred which involved mail security, especially the interception of mail bags by the enemy.

CHAPTER V

Discipline, Military Justice, and Problems of Desertion

"Discipline is the strength of the Army." This slogan was the first thing every Vietnamese citizen saw as he walked through the gate of an induction center. It was the most quoted phrase in the RVNAF and could be seen in the most conspicuous places in billets, classrooms, parade grounds, mess halls, sleeping quarters, and offices. It was the first statement made by cadres and instructors in a course on military conduct and discipline, a commandment to be obeyed by every serviceman, a code to be upheld by every cadre from corporal to general.

Disciplinary Action and Military Justice

The fabric of the RVNAF was held together by two basic documents, Directive 2121/TTM/1/PC of the JGS that specified the authority and sanctions against breach of military conduct and discipline, and Ordinance No. 8 of 1951 that promulgated a Vietnamese military code and the organization of a military justice system.

The RVNAF divided disciplinary infractions into two areas: the area of military conduct, which included attitude and behavior toward self, superiors, inferiors, peers, civil servants, cadres and police, family and the people; and the area of military discipline, which included violation of command channels, AWOL, desertion, malingering, dereliction of duty, and protecting, aiding or abetting the enemy. As part of its program to improve command and leadership, in 1966, the JGS published a manual for small unit commanders which contained a summary of infractions, punishments and authority for punishment.

Punishments from the lightest to the most severe included: administrative restriction, disciplinary confinement, with or without pay loss, transfer to hardship posts, demotion, dishonorable discharge, and trial by a court-martial which usually resulted in a prison term or even dishonorable discharge. For enlisted men, confinement always meant imprisonment in a stockade for periods up to 60 days, including confinement to a solitary cell under guard. For NCOs and officers, confinement was usually less demanding; in many cases it only involved restriction to quarters.

Men incurring punishment during combat operations would serve it when the operations were over. Men incurring punishment while under medical treatment at military hospitals would serve it after recovery. While serving their sentence, EM had to perform labor during duty and off-duty hours, and were confined in their cells at night. NCOs and officers were sometimes detained in disciplinary barracks and not allowed visits or freedom of movement. However, in case of service needs they were allowed to go to work, but would be required to go back to confinement for meditation during off-duty hours and at night. Before 1965, EM under punishment lost their daily base pay but not their family allowance for every day they served in the stockade. After 1965, this measure was abolished and EM forfeited their pay only in case of damage or loss of clothing or equipment, embezzlement, AWOL, or an unexcused late in reporting for duty. In case of repeated violations of discipline, the punished serviceman might be transferred to a hardship assignment. For example, he could be transferred from a staff position to combat duty or from an urban area to the remote back country. During the First Indochina War of 1949-54, several disciplinary companies were formed in each MR to deal with hard-core disciplinary cases, but this measure, considered unnecessarily cruel, was abandoned after 1954.

The authority to impose disciplinary action depended on position and rank. Such an authority conferred by position was always greater than that conferred by rank. For instance, a major had the authority to give an NCO under his command up to 12 days of confinement to quarters. But if he held the position of garrison commander, the

number of punishment days he could inflict would increase to 20. Cadres from corporals to full colonels had, besides the authority to punish men under their own command, the authority to recommend disciplinary action against other inferiors who had been caught violating military conduct or discipline. General officers had the authority to punish men of inferior rank whether under their command or not. When the maximum penalty allowed a cadre had been imposed, and he felt the offense deserved more retribution, he could recommend additional punishment to a higher commander. A man receiving punishment from his superior could appeal to a higher echelon authority if he felt himself victim of injustice or excesses. These appeals would be considered and investigated by the Directorate of the Inspector General or a military security agency.

Decree 13/64, which set forth the statute for career members of the armed forces, provided for a disciplinary board to hold hearings and decide on cases of serious infraction which warranted demotion or dishonorable discharge. A central disciplinary board was convened for officers, and a CTZ or MR disciplinary board for NCOs and EM. Members of a disciplinary board who were nominated by the Chief, JGS or by the corps/MR commander for each case, consisted of a chairman, a reporter and three members. The chairman was a general officer if the defendant was a field grade officer, a full colonel if the defendant was a company grade officer, and a company grade officer if the defendant was a NCO or EM. Other members had to be at least one rank higher than the offender. The violator was notified of his case and all the pertinent dossier; he had to be prepared to report before the disciplinary board for defense. On the meeting day, with the defendant on hand, the reporter first read the instructions for setting up the board, then briefly presented the facts concerning the offense as recorded in reports, and the results of the investigation of the offense. Board members took turn asking questions after the defendant had presented his defense. Subsequently, the board met in closed session, and voted by secret ballot. The board had the right to recommend disciplinary actions other than discharge or demotion but not lighter than those already spelled out by responsible authorities. Then, in conformity with the decision of the board, the

offender would be demoted or dishonorably discharged. However in cases where the violation was too blatant and egregious, the responsible authority reserved the exclusive right to impose immediate demotion or discharge without recourse to the disciplinary board for the purpose of setting an immediate example for others.

The RVNAF military code which defined criminal cases to be tried by courts-martial was promulgated by Ordinance No. 8 of 1951 which also established the military justice system. By Decree No. 4/QP/ND of 26 January 1951, the Directorate of Military Justice was created with the responsibility to organize military courts, to recruit and administer personnel for these tribunals, to issue instructions to the military prosecutor, and to research documents from a legal point of view. During the same year, by Decree No. 138/VP/ND of 23 August 1951, the national gendarmerie was established to replace the French gendarmerie in the maintenance of public safety and law and order, and in the enforcement of military law. The activities of this agency were comprehensive because in addition to its affiliation with the Ministry of Defense, it also operated under the Ministry of the Interior in matters of administrative police and national law enforcement, under the Ministry of Justice in matters of judicial police such as the discovery and investigation of felony or misdemeanor, or police infractions and under the Ministry of Economic Affairs in controlling prices and uncovering contraband. In 1952, to meet the requirements of an expanding national army, the gendarmerie was supplemented by an adjunct branch called the military police (the Provost Marshal's Office). The gendarmerie differed from the military police (MP) in that it worked with military authorities and military justice as well as with civilian authorities in a technical capacity, whereas the MPs worked only within the military under the authority of a garrison commander. The gendarmes had to take an oath of office before the court, the military police did not. Besides the usual military uniforms, gendarmes also wore a red cap, which earned them the popular name of "red-capped policemen."

In 1953, because of their close working relationship, the Military Justice Directorate and the Gendarmerie were fused into one organization called the Directorate of Military Justice and Gendarmerie by Decree 70/QP of June 1953. Under the director, a Vietnamese officer, there were two sub-directorates for justice and gendarmerie. Under the sub-directorate of the gendarmerie, there was a command to direct and control gendarme units. Although part of the organization of the national army, the gendarmerie was under French command. Not until 1954 were gendarme installations handed over to Vietnamese control, among them were the Thu Duc and Hanoi Gendarmerie Schools. In September 1955, both the gendarmerie directorate and command were transferred to Vietnamese control. By this time, the gendarmes numbered about 1,000 men distributed among four companies of various sizes. The South Vietnam Company had two platoons and 29 stations; the Central Vietnam Company, two platoons and 10 stations; the North Vietnam Company, two platoons and 11 stations; and the Central Highlands Company, two platoons and five stations. The military police on the other hand, had just over 100 men deployed in seven stations.

Despite the long years of RVNAF reorganization, and the changing governmental structure under the advisory assistance of the United States since 1955, the military justice and gendarmerie system remained unchanged. Not until 1964 was the gendarmerie excluded from the organizational structure of the RVNAF. The defense budget for 1965 in fact did not provide any expenditure for it. The gendarmerie therefore had to disband, and the Directorate of Military Justice and Gendarmerie became just the Directorate of Military Justice. Almost one half of the gendarmes went to the national police, and the rest to the military police, but the work the gendarmes had been doing for military tribunals was not clearly assigned to any agency. Neither the civilian nor military police, since they were patterned on the American model, were given the responsibility to carry out the court duties previously performed by the gendarmes. This resulted in thousands of cases which were under investigation being discontinued. The functioning of military courts, too, was interrupted for a considerable time.

In 1966, upon a recommendation by the Directorate of Military Justice to fill this vacuum, the military police command was given the responsibility of carrying out court-martial duties formerly assigned to the gendarmerie. The military judicial police thus came into being within the RVNAF military police organization, and later became known as the criminal investigation system, which included a head office at the military police command, and judicial investigation military police companies at the CTZ or MR echelon. Each company was assigned an area of responsibility, and was stationed in squads or teams at crucial points to carry out orders from CTZ military courts under the latter's technical supervision.

The most serious and unsurmountable problem encountered by the investigative military police was the shortage of personnel in the face of an ever-increasing number of cases to be handled and the travel of personnel to conduct investigations or deliver summonses to defendants living in insecure areas. Consequently, investigations took an inordinately long time, and were usually left pending, a situation which caused a serious backlog at the prosecutor's office in the regular and field military courts.

Military Courts and Prisons

It was not until ten months after the creation of the Directorate of Military Justice on 26 January 1951 that a military court was established in Saigon on 22 November 1951. Two other military courts were set up in Hanoi on 23 March 1953, and in Hue on 21 November 1953. In 1955, after the regroupment of the National Army to the South, and the ensuing territorial reorganization, the Nha Trang military court was activated on 13 May 1955. In 1961, along with the organization of South Vietnam into four tactical zones, the Can Tho military court was established to share the burden with the Saigon court. Thus, each corps area was served by a military court, the Hue court for I CTZ, the Nha Trang court for II CTZ, the Saigon court for III CTZ, and the Can Tho court for IV CTZ. The presiding judge of each court was a civilian

judge appointed from the local court of appeals. The alternate presiding judge was a field grade officer from the Military Justice Directorate. Other associate judges were selected from among officers serving in local units and agencies. The prosecutor and his staff were all members of the Military Justice Directorate. Since there were no military defense attorneys, defendants could retain the service of a civilian attorney, or in case of financial hardship, they were assigned a lawyer appointed by the lawyer's council. The jurisdiction of a military court was usually very broad. It had the authority to try any individual from the regular armed forces, RF/PF, or paramilitary forces who had committed an offense against military or civilian criminal law. The court could hand down any sentence including a death sentence, but the defendant could always appeal to higher authority.

In 1962, to meet the security situation, field military courts came into being in each CTZ by virtue of Decree Law 11/62 of 21 May 1962. The objective was to speed up and simplify the trial of flagrante delicto cases where the evidence was so obvious as to require no extensive investigation. As the GVN saw it, flagrante delicto cases included not only individuals caught in the act, but also those caught in possession of any objects, weapons, instruments or documents that led authorities to believe that they were party to a crime. Four years later, Decree Law 4/66 extended the jurisdiction of the field military court in response to the war situation, to include the authority to try cases involving bribery, embezzlement, illegal speculation and hoarding whether committed by civilians or uniformed men. Another legislation, Decree Law 15/66, further gave field military courts the authority to try desertion cases, individuals who incited desertion, or protected and harbored deserters. Finally, Decree Law 6/70 promulgated in 1970 endowed field military courts with the authority to try not only deserters and accomplices but also military, civilian and police personnel caught in flagrante delicto criminal acts as well as civilians who were parties to, and accomplices in, felonies or misdemeanors as spelled out in the criminal code and regulations currently in effect.

Each court session was presided over by a military judge selected from among local senior military officers and assisted by four military jury members. Decisions reached were final and effective immediately except for the death sentence. Because of their all-military nature, field military courts acted quickly. These courts also met more frequently and sometimes in the area where the crime had been committed so as to make their decisions an example to both the military and the civilian populace. Sentences handed down by these courts were often very severe.

In 1970, the Supreme Court decided that the process of law in field military courts was unconstitutional. As a consequence, the court membership was revised to include at each trial a presiding judge who could be civilian or military and four associate judges. If the presiding judge was a civilian, he had to be the president or an associate judge of the local civilian court of appeals. If he was a military man, the presiding judge had to be an officer with the rank of major or above selected from among military justice personnel. Associate judges of field military courts were also required to be professional military judges. Both presiding and associate judges were to be nominated by the Supreme Court. In addition, defendants brought to trial by field military courts had the right to appeal to the Supreme Court except in case of desertion. The professional composition of field military courts, although an improvement from a legal standpoint, lost its cutting edge so necessary in war time. As a result, field military courts unwittingly reverted to the slow and deliberate pace of regular courts. Sentences no longer daunted criminals. Civilian judges were not as eager as their military counterparts had been, perhaps out of fear of retaliation in a troubled war situation. On-the-spot court sessions were also no longer held.

Before 1963, the RVNAF had no separate prisons. Military offenders who were convicted by a court-martial were incarcerated by gendarme companies along with civilian convicts in national or provincial civilian jails. In 1964, in order to relieve overcrowded civilian jails, and to make administrative work simpler, four military prisons were built

next to military court buildings in Hue, Nha Trang, Saigon, and Can Tho. The Hue military prison, heavily damaged during the 1968 Communist offensive was moved to Da Nang in 1970 for greater security, and to be in close proximity of regular and field courts which had been moved there two years earlier. Upon conviction, military personnel were sent directly to combat units as field work gangs, if they were deserters condemned to forced labor, or to the nearest military prison to serve their sentences, if they were other types of offenders. Civilians being prosecuted before a military court and insubordinate men who resisted the draft were also detained in these institutions pending court proceedings.

The shortcomings of military jails were lack of basic comforts, bad food, overcrowding, and delayed trials. There were few conveniences in these facilities because prisons had low construction priority. Most improvement programs were of the self-help type initiated by prison commanders with building materials provided by U. S. advisors. Compared with Communist POW camps, military prisons had far fewer conveniences. In spite of this awareness, the RVNAF could do little for lack of resources. In the way of food, for example, per capita food allowances were so low that poor nutrition was the inevitable result. A program to increase food intake through vegetable farming and animal raising could not materialize because all military prisons were located in crowded cities where there was insufficient land for either activity. Frequent visits by families were a reluctantly accepted source of increased food supply for inmates. The number of inmates also varied unexpectedly; at times it increased by 50% of capacity, especially after a police operation to locate deserters. There was a protracted delay before trial, usually about three months for deserters, and more than a year for other offenders. A backlog of cases was normal occurrence. Acts of leniency by the Defense Ministry, such as dropping of charges or temporary release to allow offenders to serve in combat units, coupled with the urging for prompter action by military courts to bring desertion cases to trial (deserters being the main inmate population of military jails), helped to alleviate this congestion to some extent.

Absence Without Leave and Desertion

The most prevalent offense against military discipline, one that directly affected the capability of units, particularly combat units, was absence without leave. An individual was considered AWOL when he left his unit without a pass, or failed to report back to his unit after the expiration of an authorized leave or on completion of temporary duty.

Personnel charged with AWOL received punishments amounting to a jail term for EM, and confinement to an MP house for NCOs and officers. The jail or confinement term was equal to twice the number of days absent if it was the first such offense of the year, and three times that number if it was the second such offense of the year. In addition, the culprits suffered a pay forfeit equal to the number of days on AWOL. A three-time offender within two consecutive years would, besides jail or confinement and forfeiture of pay, be brought to trial by a disciplinary board for demotion, denied attendance of military schools, and disqualified for promotion for one year.

After a grace period, anyone on AWOL who failed to return to his unit became a deserter. Before 1964, this grace period was fixed at six days for draftees with 90 days in the service, and 15 days if the service was longer. In 1965, the grace period was changed to be 30 days for all personnel. However, in 1966, Decree Law 15/66 reduced this period to be 15 days for all servicemen. On the sixteenth day, therefore, an AWOL became a deserter. His parent unit then prepared a search warrant Form QD-828, and dispatched it to military and civilian police agencies with request for action. If the offender reported to his unit after the search warrant had gone out, his parent unit would reconsider his case to determine whether he should be pardoned or turned over to the military police. He might be pardoned if he could produce written evidence to justify the overstaying of his grace period. Such evidence could be based on the inability to secure transportation, an accident, or any other incident beyond his control. If proper justification was presented, the parent unit would draft a stop-search notice on Form QD-829

and send it to responsible agencies. If a deserter was caught by, or reported to, some other military unit or organization, the latter would draft the stop-search notice, and turn him over to the MPs for appropriate action.

Desertion was the greatest loss borne by the RVNAF over the years. It constantly threatened the JGS efforts to implement force structure expansion plans. From 1965 to 1972, desertions averaged about 120,000 per year, and the average monthly desertion rate was 12 per thousand. (*Table 11*)

In the ARVN, a breakdown of the monthly desertion rate by combat and non-combat units during 1968-72 indicated that desertion was about four to seven times higher in combat units, especially infantry. The desertion rate among territorial forces was much lower, compared to regular forces. There were about twice as many deserters in the RF than in the PF which in fact had the lowest desertion rate of all, except non-combat units. (*Table 12*)

A further analysis showed that even though the desertion rate among non-combat units was low, this rate was steadily rising every year, climbing from 4.6 per thousand in 1968 to 12.9 per thousand in late 1972. The same rising trend affected ARVN combat units over the same period. Desertion seemed to be worst among the rangers, followed in decreasing order by the infantry, the paratroopers, and the marines. Among infantry divisions, desertion was highest in MR-4, lesser in MR-2, and least in MR-1. In any event, the ARVN always led in desertion rate among the three services but this rate abated significantly during the post-cease-fire period. (*Table 13*)

In an attempt to arrive at a practical solution to the desertion problem, the General Political Warfare Department, JGS, conducted interviews with deserters who had been arrested or surrendered themselves, and held extensive consultation with leaders of small units. Five causes were cited by deserters to justify their action: (1) homesickness brought about by separation from families; (2) dislike of units to which assigned; (3) dislike of military service, abhorrence of killings; (4) discontent with commanders; (5) poverty and inadequacy of military pay to support families.

Table 11 — Annual Desertions and Monthly
Desertion Rates, 1965-1972

Year	Total Desertions	Monthly Rate (per thousand)
1965	113,000	N/A
1966	116,412	16.2
1967	81,797	10.5
1968	139,667	12.8
1969	107,942	10.1
1970	126,753	10.4
1971	140,182	11.1
1972	132,009	12.3

Table 12 – Analysis of ARVN Monthly Desertion Rates, 1968-1972

(Per Thousand)

	1968	1969		1970		1971				1972									
	4 Q	1-2 Q	3-4 Q	1-2 Q	3-4 Q	1 Q	2 Q	3 Q	4 Q	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
COMBAT	36.1	27.1	29.3	32.3	32.1	34.6	38.7	36.7	37.2	28.9	26.0	31.4	33.0	38.0	38.9	51.1	59.0	64.9	82.1
1st Division	31.2	18.4	20.1	20.2	20.3	24.5	33.2	30.7	23.1	14.8	21.4	19.1	21.3	28.3	31.2	38.8	56.1	63.1	64.9
2nd Division	32.0	29.6	37.0	40.1	27.8	33.4	33.6	30.1	30.0	38.4	22.7	23.1	30.4	39.6	36.1	39.3	39.6	83.1	78.7
3rd Division									29.6	35.7	35.6	34.8	31.1	15.5	32.2	38.9	66.3	66.9	75.4
5th Division	29.8	24.3	22.1	23.5	25.0	30.2	39.1	35.4	37.7	29.5	34.4	39.2	27.9	48.7	35.5	43.9	78.4	59.2	73.2
7th Division	29.0	22.7	35.4	35.1	46.2	49.0	40.0	40.7	55.5	28.6	28.8	28.3	45.9	65.5	98.1	102.3	79.7	83.4	52.6
9th Division	55.0	39.0	44.8	54.1	51.2	56.5	49.6	47.7	53.2	26.1	22.9	50.1	64.8	59.3	39.2	139.4	63.6	66.9	104.7
18th Division	41.3	46.1	44.7	35.1	36.7	25.8	40.7	40.7	37.1	23.9	27.3	31.6	28.9	34.6	46.8	34.5	29.8	27.0	29.4
21st Division	58.3	49.4	44.1	48.8	41.7	58.8	49.4	43.5	42.8	59.0	34.6	48.9	49.6	35.1	32.9	32.7	73.8	87.9	86.5
22nd Division	27.7	15.1	16.3	27.5	28.3	24.9	37.5	38.1	24.8	18.2	16.8	22.9	18.9	22.8	23.0	42.2	61.6	62.0	81.3
23rd Division	28.8	25.7	24.6	29.4	32.3	36.2	37.2	39.5	46.0	26.9	26.2	31.8	32.6	31.8	29.3	40.3	83.8	72.5	63.4
25th Division	50.8	16.5	22.8	29.1	33.6	46.4	34.9	36.6	36.4	29.6	39.3	30.4	37.7	43.6	60.8	35.6	42.6	40.7	52.8
Rangers	44.7	36.3	35.5	36.6	31.5	27.8	36.2	28.2	32.4	27.5	18.1	31.2	29.0	36.8	36.5	48.3	62.5	53.4	53.4
Airborne Division	32.4	18.5	19.3	18.7	34.7	28.7	41.5	34.5	36.4	26.2	38.3	25.0	28.4	51.3	32.7	35.8	37.9	55.3	45.8
NON-COMBAT	4.6	5.2	5.4	6.0	5.7	7.9	4.4	5.2	6.5	6.5	6.4	8.3	8.6	8.9	7.0	7.2	7.5	12.0	12.9
REGIONAL FORCES	16.9	12.8	10.9	10.2	11.5	10.3	12.2	11.1	10.5	8.5	7.7	13.3	11.9	14.9	16.6	14.7	15.9	18.3	16.8
POPULAR FORCES	8.6	6.5	5.7	6.3	8.4	7.3	9.1	8.6	7.5	5.3	2.8	9.6	8.5	11.1	11.5	13.2	11.5	8.9	9.5

Table 13 — Analysis of RVNAF Monthly Desertion Rates, 1973-1974

SERVICE OR COMBAT ARM	(PER THOUSAND)						
	JAN TO JUN 1973	JUN TO AUG 1973	SEP TO NOV 1973	DEC TO FEB 1974	MAR TO MAY 1974	JUN TO AUG 1974	SEP TO NOV 1974
INF	28.3	22.5	23.1	23.8	21.1	22.8	22.4
RANGER	NA	NA	57.1	57.2	51.7	51.1	62.3
ABN	NA	NA	28.7	18.4	13.9	16.3	18.3
VNMC	24.8	15.2	17.4	21.6	15.8	13.1	11.0
RF	15.5	14.6	14.9	17.2	19.0	21.7	21.7
PF	9.0	7.0	5.9	6.7	10.3	12.6	13.2
VNAF	4.4	2.8	2.3	1.9	3.1	2.3	2.1
VNN	5.7	3.0	2.6	2.2	2.1	2.1	1.8

In addition, small unit commanders believed that there were other factors contributing to desertion. Deserters, they thought, had not been dealt with harshly enough by the law to serve as examples. Also, most of those who deserted had not been ideologically motivated enough in civilian life; they had harbored the intent to desert from the moment they arrived in draft centers. Finally, they could have been incited, or threatened to desert by the enemy.

As for the most opportune time for desertion, it was learned that many made the attempt during travels from induction centers to military schools or from schools to assigned units, during annual or graduation leaves after they had drawn the enlistment bonus, and during R&R time, especially after an operation in which their unit had suffered heavy losses. The first year in military service was also the most likely time for desertion; so were occasions such as the beginning of the harvest season and Tet holidays. After one year in service, the soldier was much less inclined to desert for any reason.

Areas near population centers, served by lines of communication, had better job opportunities and were most propitious for deserters than sparsely populated jungled or mountainous areas. The areas fringing the capital city and the entire IV Corps Tactical Zone were most favorable for deserters. Dense population in these areas made for difficult control. If there was less desertion among RF and PF units, it was because they served in their home areas, and the war was usually not as severe as it was for the regular army.

A common and most significant trait among deserters was that they almost never took weapons along or went to the other side. This was strong evidence that desertion had always been a socio-economical problem, never a political one. Therefore, the majority of deserters almost always turned up in areas near major population centers which had better job opportunities and where their family lived. Saigon, its suburbs, and the Mekong Delta, were favorite places of refuge for deserters. For one thing, the dense population in these areas made it easier for fugitives to remain undetected and even change identity to start a new life. Second, making a living there was not a problem.

Even if things got worse, deserters could always re-enlist in another unit, preferably in the RF and PF, and seldom ran the risk of being discovered. This also explained why there were fewer deserters among the RF and PF. Not only did these troopers serve in their home areas--a desire shared by most enlisted men--their combat duties were not always as demanding as in the regular army.

The RVNAF Efforts to Control Desertion

To assist with the problem of desertion, in 1966, the JGS established a system of committees at each echelon of the RVNAF hierarchy, down to regiments. At the JGS level, the committee was headed by the director of the General Political Warfare Department who represented the Chief, JGS. Other members included the commanders, Central Logistics and Training Commands, the Assistant Chiefs of Staff J1, and J3, JGS, the Adjutant General, the MP commander, and representatives of the Military Justice Directorate and the National Police. At corps, division and regiment levels, committee membership was similar with the commanders themselves serving as chairmen. These committees met at least once a month to hear reports of last month's desertion figures; reviewed actions that had been, were being, and would be taken, and results; problems encountered, and recommended actions.

To combat desertion, the JGS initiated several measures, the first and foremost among them was to improve command and leadership in small units. The JGS was convinced that the command and leadership skills of squad and platoon leaders, and of company and battalion commanders, had much to do with desertion. A noted shortcoming involved unit leadership during bivouacs or rest periods in barracks. Attention to the men during these periods was far more lax than during combat operations. Yet it was during these rest periods and idle moments that men needed the most attention and care about their physical and mental well-being from commanders. It was during these moments that men felt homesick, missed their wives and children, and mulled over death and destruction

on the battlefield. The intent and act of desertion more frequently occurred then than in combat, when all thoughts were about the enemy.

To assist small unit commanders in improving their command and leadership abilities, political warfare officers were assigned as assistants to battalion and company commanders throughout the army. In a certain sense, these officers acted as big brothers in an extended family who coordinated personnel, supply and political warfare activities, to assist commanders in meeting their men's material and moral needs. This was part of the New Horizon program of 1966 and the "unit building" program of 1970, both of which provided guidance to small units in carrying out a uniform program of action. This program was designed to improve food services in such a way as to provide men with adequate meals within the limits of food allowances. To achieve this, units were directed to set up food committees to purchase fresh foods and supervise the preparation of meals and farming committees to raise vegetables, pigs and chickens as a supplementary source of food. An effort was also made to improve the distribution of clothing to insure timely replacement, avoid ragged appearance, and prevent abuse or illegal selling and buying of clothing. Emphasis was placed on improving mail service to insure prompt delivery wherever the men might be, to encourage men to write home and use the postal service to send money and gifts home. Commanders made arrangements to hold group entertainment sessions, variety shows and sports competitions to strengthen esprit de corps and physical health. Informal meetings were held, and men were encouraged to tell stories about areas of scenic beauty and famous persons in their home villages to foster love of country and people. Officers were reminded of their leadership responsibilities to talk with each individual to find out about his problems, family, and wishes in order to better help him; visit his men in the hospital; and to share with his subordinates joy at weddings or childbirth, and grief at death. It was also stressed that classes should be conducted on the duties and responsibilities of servicemen with respect to the maintenance of discipline, punishments for offenses against military conduct and discipline, especially desertion, and the enemy's deception in instigating ARVN soldiers to leave their units.

To lend additional support to this drive for the improvement of command and leadership, the JGS published a pocket-size handbook on "Command and Leadership of Small Units" in September 1966. This handbook listed the qualities that every commander needed to cultivate; things he needed to know about his subordinates; methods of securing their loyalty and admiration; important things to do when newly assigned to a unit; things that needed to be done before and after an operation; the authority delegated to him for the maintenance of discipline; and finally the indications of a well-led unit.

The second measure the JGS took to combat desertion was to improve personnel management procedures. Three areas singled out for specific attention were assignment, transfer, and leaves. Draftees in recruitment and induction centers received first priority for training at a training center nearest to their hometowns and maximum care was exercised to avoid sending them to training centers in another military region. Training centers were directed to assign trainees to the platoon or company that came from the same village, district or province in order to foster an at-home feeling, minimize the effects of homesickness and disorientation, and extend friendship in moments of sorrow. When draftees had finished training, maximum effort was made to assign whole platoons or companies to the MR of origin whenever possible to preserve the valuable esprit de corps that had developed during training. Units from combat arms and technical services that took in new recruits were required to send a party to the training center to welcome them, arrange for transportation, and care for them throughout the trip back. Efforts were also made by infantry divisions to arrange for new arrivals to spend a few days at the division's training center for orientation purposes, and if possible, to assign entire teams, squads or platoons to divisional units. Draftees who initially could not be assigned to their home MR would have the right to request a transfer after two years of service, and responsible authorities were under obligation to grant such requests. But this right was to be forfeited if a man had been AWOL during the year. Finally, freshly trained recruits were to be placed in the right jobs according to their MOS and health status.

With regard to leaves, at first trainees were granted 24-hour passes on weekends, holidays and on graduation. But since an increasing number of trainees took advantage of these occasions to desert, these leaves were later suspended and granted only if sponsored by a known serviceman. Graduation leaves, therefore, were granted only after trainees had served three or six months in a unit. At units, commanders were required to issue annual leaves to their men in rotation, and could not use operational or service demands to cancel them. Especially for the three days of Tet, when all leaves were usually suspended to guard against Communist surprise attack, units arranged for their men to go on leave before Tet, and increased transportation facilities were made available for this purpose. During the Tet holidays, games were organized in the barracks for the amusement of the men retained because of military requirements, and military transports were often utilized to permit their families to visit them.

Besides measures taken with respect to assignments, transfers, and leaves, the JGS also announced a maximum desertion rate for each division, each ranger group, and each sector. If a unit exceeded this rate, punishment was meted out to the commander concerned after each review of the desertion situation during the monthly meetings of the desertion control committees.

As a further effort to make the desertion control plan work, the JGS directed an over-all improvement in support activities. In the movement of recruits from induction to training centers and to assigned units after training, maximum use was made of military air transports. An effort was also made to avoid the switching of transportation means, as this was an excellent opportunity for draftees to escape. In case of land transportation, the itinerary of truck convoys was carefully planned and coordinated so as to avoid unnecessary stopovers which provided opportunities for escape.

To ensure safety for men on leave, units were required to provide military transportation because civilian buses were too often intercepted by Communists. As a consequence, helicopters and propeller-driven aircraft on resupply, or periodic and even unscheduled liaison missions were

frequently loaded with men on leave on their return flight. The outgoing trip was therefore no problem. On their return trip, however, the men ran into many difficulties because air transportation was primarily used for combat or resupply missions. Men returning from leave usually had to wait seven to ten days for transportation. In order to help feed personnel on leave or being transferred while they waited for special flights, transit facilities at transportation terminals in Can Tho, Saigon, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Pleiku, Da Nang, and Hue were expanded and renovated. Sector administrative and logistic support centers were also provided with additional facilities to handle the accommodation of these men in the same way as transportation terminals. Servicemen on leave or TDY, therefore, could stay and eat at these places. They could either pay cash for their meals, have their administrative units pay for them later, or do so through payroll deductions. Besides providing accommodations and transportation, transportation terminals and sector administrative and logistic support centers also certified the time that each man had to spend in transit so that this time could be deducted from his absence. In addition, individuals on leave were educated and reminded about how to report to sub-sectors, sectors, town garrisons along the way for help. These instructions were printed on the reverse side of the leave permits and transfer orders. Immediate family members who wished to visit their men in the field were allowed to employ military transport accommodation facilities like servicemen. Finally, statistics revealed that most deserters lived off-base. Consequently, the building of dependent housing for married men played a vital role in the effort to control desertion. The problem of dependent housing will be discussed in Chapter IX.

Another effort made to both prevent and reduce desertion was to improve benefits for the servicemen. The purpose was to help servicemen realize that they could look forward to a secure future for themselves and their families. Measures taken to improve benefits included:

- (1) prompt and correct settlement of benefits to which servicemen were legally entitled while on duty, when wounded, missing or killed, and during retirement, (monthly salaries, disability benefits, allowances

for MIA, KIA, orphans, widows or parents, pensions); (2) rehabilitation and vocational guidance, employment of veterans; (3) increased pay and pension to offset the rising cost of living; (4) grant combat bonuses of 4,500 piasters per month to each man in infantry, airborne, marine, and ranger battalions, and 2,000 piasters to each man in RF battalions.

All of these measures assisted in reducing desertion but never solved the problem effectively. As a result, active control was always necessary to prevent and deter men from leaving their units without permission. Fixed and mobile control posts manned by the military and national police were deployed along axes of communication and at blocking positions to check papers of draft-age men whether in civilian clothes or in military uniform. More elaborate were police operations conducted to arrest deserters hiding in villages or urban areas along with draft dodgers and underground Communist agents. All of these fugitives employed similar methods to deceive government authorities and escape arrest--tunnels, identity change and disguise, and forged or illegally procured papers. Police operations were useful in several respects. First, they helped verify residence status, and arrest criminals, deserters, draft dodgers, thieves, hooligans, and underground Communist agents. Then they also created a sense of insecurity among these people which sometimes forced them to surrender. Police operations launched in urban areas were usually joint enterprises by the military and national police with reinforcements from army units, but the initiative and control of these activities rested with the national police which alone were authorized to search private homes and individuals. In the countryside, however, police operations were normally organized and led by military authorities. Suspects and individuals who lacked proper identification papers were turned over to the police for investigation while draft dodgers and deserters were detained at the town garrison, where the judicial military police initiated action to prosecute them before a military court.

Before 1966, desertion was an offense which was tried by a regular military court. Court procedures often took a long time, which reduced the impact of the punishment. To support desertion control measures, the GVN promulgated Decree Law 15/66 in April 1966 conferring authority

to try deserters at the CTZ field military court. Sentences passed by these courts ranged from five years of imprisonment to the death penalty in case a serviceman joined the enemy or deserted for the third time. In an effort to deter desertion, the Military Justice Directorate and courts increased their activities and court sessions were held at an accelerated pace. Convicted deserters served their time as hard-labor gangs for companies and battalions in operations, during which time they would do heavy work such as carrying ammunition or felling trees, working in the midst of fighting hazards like all other soldiers but carrying no weapons. Their food rations were reduced and their nights were spent in confinement. If they were wounded, captured or killed, they or their survivors received no benefits.

In general, the measures taken by the GVN and the RVNAF to control desertion were fairly adequate but the results still left much to be desired because of several difficulties. First, our troops were continually exposed to Communist proselytizing action. Dissolving the ranks of the RVNAF had always been a major Communist effort of equal importance with military and political activities. Our enemy employed all kinds of techniques under any conditions to induce or coerce RVNAF servicemen to desert their posts or simply to leave the service. The relatives, wives, children, and parents of our servicemen were the Communists' most prized targets in this effort.

Next, there was the problem of forged identification papers which made detection extremely difficult. For control purposes, every serviceman away from his unit had to have three kinds of documents--a plastic military ID card, a certificate of active service issued by the unit commander and valid for one quarter, a pass, leave of absence or movement order justifying his whereabouts. Similar papers were also required of every male citizen--a plastic ID card issued by the national police, a voter registration card, and a certificate of draft status issued by appropriate authorities. These were considered sufficient for control purposes. However, with today's sophisticated equipment and know-how, the forging of papers was easy. Resourceful deserters could always obtain all the necessary papers that would help them past control stations

and government authorities. Several paper-forging organizations had been uncovered with complete equipment in the very heart of Saigon. The problem of forged papers resulted in regrettable incidents between the police and servicemen, and reduced the efficiency of the control system. There were instances of genuine papers that policemen took for false ones, and the suspected serviceman was taken to a police station for investigation. Such incidents caused irritation and resentment for both sides.

Then, the uninvolved attitude of civilian authorities also made it difficult to uncover deserters. As long as deserters could find a shelter, the desertion problem would not melt away. Local authorities at the block, ward, hamlet, village level, and the police usually looked the other way, and failed to enforce search orders correctly because of ineptitude, deference, fear of reprisal, or venality. Deserters were also frequently harbored by religious groups, either out of charity, brotherly love, or self-interest. A few religious groups in South Vietnam even kept their doors wide opened to all draft-age male citizens, including deserters. Whether by accident or by design, many sacred pagodas and temples had become safe havens for deserters to elude the police dragnet. Searches of these sacred places to uncover deserters often met with opposition and slander in the name of religious freedom. As a result, local authorities usually left them alone.

Over the years, the GVN's treatment of Communist cadres and troops under its open arms policy had given servicemen standing trial for desertion and judges hearing desertion cases ample food for thought. If the Communists, who killed our people and soldiers, were treated with clemency and forgiveness, they reasoned, why should the government be too harsh toward the men who, during the performance of their duties, committed the error of desertion? It was probably for this reason that our courts usually punished desertion with leniency, giving sentences ranging from just six months to a few years of imprisonment, rarely imposing the maximum-security cell, and virtually never passing death sentences although the penalties were in the books. The lenient attitude of trial judges toward deserters prompted complaints from unit commanders. One was heard saying, "Dealing with deserters that way is like putting the

horse in the barn and leaving the door open. The courts tolerate and encourage desertion. The courts should give the men a clear-cut choice between two deaths, a glorious death on the battlefield commemorated and compensated for by the government and the nation, or the ignoble death of a cowardly, fugitive deserter." How right those remarks were, especially for a field commander beset by the problem of desertion and depleted ranks! But for a judge who administered justice, what a difficult situation it must have been.

The amnesty policy proclaimed by the GVN in 1964 in the wake of the 1 November 1963 revolution that toppled President Ngo Dinh Diem, opened up rehabilitation opportunities for the deserters, but also set a barrier to future desertion control efforts. Deserters still at large, under arrest, and awaiting trial, or serving their time in field work gangs, were all reinstated, if within draft age, and assigned to combat units as required. Though it helped the RVNAF to regain a number of personnel and alleviate troop shortages, this humane and clement policy set a harmful precedent. Believing that there would be other pardoning acts attendant upon some future big event, servicemen kept deserting and went into hiding. Indeed, during the years of greatest military activity, this leniency program created huge dents among combat ranks. During the 1968 Communist Tet offensive, and during the 1972 Easter offensive, the ARVN desertion rate was at its highest level.

During the years of critical troop shortage, the JGS implemented the policy of reinstating not only deserters but also men in military jails awaiting trial and those serving in civilian correctional institutions. These men had their charges dropped, received a parole or a stay on their sentence, and were taken to regional administrative units for reprocessing into the service. Because of the pressing needs of combat units, the overworked administrative units and careless authorities hastily turned these men over to combat battalions totally deprived physically and unsettled mentally after their time in jail. Desertion under such circumstances was an inevitable outcome.

The inevitability of desertion was also a product of the general mobilization law. If this law had helped to replenish the ranks of the RVNAF, it also made desertion unavoidable. It brought into the military

service all kinds of people, including the worst elements of a society which had been divided and rotten by a quarter-century war. Uncertain about their own beliefs in a war of ideologies, they were impressed into service. Whether undergoing training or serving in the field, these men were not ideologically prepared for the struggle.

The less ideologically determined a man was, the greater the material incentive had to be. It must be admitted that the government and armed forces of South Vietnam had endeavored to provide servicemen with every material incentive possible. Unfortunately the benefits were always inadequate. Even while doing their service, most men could not support their families with their salary; after they reached old age and retirement, the situation naturally became worse. Most servicemen saw nothing bright about their future in the military.

Observations

The code of military conduct and discipline for the RVNAF were clear and comprehensive. The law was also adequate and strict in keeping with the requirements of the war. The training in conduct and discipline and their application in schools and training centers were exemplary, especially at the Dalat National Military Academy, the Thu Duc Reserve Officer School, and the Nha Trang NCO School. In these institutions, trainees, cadets, instructors, and staff members not only comported themselves in an exemplary manner but also insisted that their subordinates and fellow soldiers did the same.

However, once assigned to units and in touch with reality, their attitude towards discipline began to relax, especially with regard to military deportment. For example, many commanders let the men under their command grow long hair. To justify their breach of discipline, they argued that a short haircut was irrelevant to valor in combat, and that short hair was a distinctive mark that helped the enemy identify our servicemen easily. Many men were seen on the streets in soiled, rumpled combat uniforms, instead of correct street wear. The mere appearance of these unkempt soldiers indicated the lamentable state of discipline prevailing in the RVNAF, especially during the later stages of war.

There were leaders of small units who failed to maintain close control of their troops while operating through villages and who sometimes even condoned larceny or looting even though they realized that such acts seriously violated military conduct and discipline. Could it be that their hearts had grown weak from witnessing the tremendous hardship that men under their command were experiencing through long days of operating in the jungles and swamps? There were high-ranking cadres and staff officers who used military vehicles, especially the quarter-ton liaison vehicles, for private purposes, knowing that such abuse was forbidden, yet persisting in it. Was it because of the high cost of living, the low pay, and the privation of their families? There were commanders, tyrannical disciplinarians, who insulted their men and kept those they punished in tiny barbed-wire cages exposed to the elements. No military law or discipline allowed such treatment. Then there were cadres who chastised their men but failed to record any punishment in individual records, or who punished them on paper without requiring them to serve. Such acts ruined the effectiveness and meaning of a punishment order.

Most notable was the period after the 1 November 1963 revolution in which RVNAF generals overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem and set up a military government. Military disciplinary action was so lax that it failed to deter any serviceman. A case in point was the disciplinary action against the men who participated in the aborted coup of 1965 under the Nguyen Khanh administration and those who supported the Buddhist struggle of 1966 in I Corps area under the rule of the National Leadership Committee. These disciplinary actions were woefully inadequate, being merely light punishments, transfers out of home areas, and discharges. There were no trials by court-martial. Severe as a discharge was for a serviceman, it also proved to be a blessing allowing the man to live safely during the war and to engage in lucrative business. In addition, those high-ranking commanders who the people and troops believed had violated military discipline never came under investigation to receive their just retribution, but were quietly transferred to another key position or removed from office. They continued to enjoy their privileges intact, waiting for a glorious comeback or a discharge. Over the years, there

were only two division commanders who had been investigated for their offenses and tried by a field court martial. They were both demoted and dishonorably discharged. However, these disciplinary actions were far from being prompt and timely. The word got around among the people and military that these actions had been taken not out of a desire to maintain discipline but because of rising adverse popular sentiment.

Except for a tiny minority of servicemen who were fed up with the war and some narrow-minded personnel who cared for nothing but their self-interests, the great majority of RVNAF servicemen tried to stay within the bounds of military propriety and discipline. They voluntarily curtailed their own personal freedom and material needs to serve as examples to subordinates and peers alike. Silent, perseverent, patient, they fought on, and induced subordinates and comrades-in-arms to fight with the hope that peace would soon be restored and that the nation could bind the wounds of war in order to gain strength for the long-term ideological struggle with the Communists.

PART TWO

TRAINING

CHAPTER VI

The RVNAF Training Base

Organization and Development

"The more sweat you shed on a training field,
the less blood you shed on a battlefield."

Inscribed in big red letters at the entrance of every military school and training center, the above RVNAF training motto stressed a simple truth. It served as a constant reminder for every serviceman undergoing training that while training might be painful, it could save his life in combat.

Until 1954, the Vietnamese National Armed Forces' organization for training was under heavy French influence. The first school for officers was established at Hue in 1948 on the initiative of Mr. Phan Van Giao, governor of Central Vietnam, and sanctioned by the French High Commissioner. Vietnam was yet to emerge officially as an independent state.

After graduating two classes, this officer's school was relocated to Dalat where Bao Dai, the Chief of State, established his home and headquarters.¹ Bao Dai took a special interest in the school and renamed it "Ecole Militaire Inter-Armes de Dalat" (Dalat Inter-Arms Military School), known under the French acronym EMIAD.

In the fall of 1950, three regional military schools were created to train non-commissioned officers: Nam Dinh (MR-3 or North Vietnam), Hue (MR-2 or Central Vietnam), and Trung Chanh (MR-1 or South Vietnam).

¹President Nguyen Van Thieu was among the graduates of this school's first class.

Then in 1951, to meet growing training requirements occasioned by partial mobilization, the following schools and training centers were established in rapid succession: the Thu Duc and Nam Dinh Reserve Officer Schools; three training centers: Cay Diep (MR-1), Mang Ca (MR-2), and Bac Ninh (MR-3) for the training of draftees and recruits; the medical college in Hanoi (MR-3) for the training of career medical officers; the School of Gendarmerie (Military Police) at Thu Duc; and two training centers for drivers and auto mechanics, one at Hue and the other at Dalat.²

In 1952, as the General Staff and military region headquarters were established, the Vietnamese National Armed Forces studied plans for the activation of infantry divisions. Four division training centers were thus established, one in each region, for the purpose of training infantry personnel. However, a short time later, these facilities were redesignated Regional Technical Training Centers, in order to accommodate diverse training requirements occasioned by force development such as artillery, engineer, and even administration.³ At the same time, four signal training centers were established, one in each region, for the training of radio operators and second echelon signal maintenance personnel. In Hanoi, a French-controlled "Centre de Formation Tactique" (Tactical Training Center) was also created for the training of company, battalion, and regimental commanders. This center was eventually redesignated "Centre d'Etudes Militaires" (Center for Military Studies) and assigned the additional responsibility of training staff officers.

Also during 1952, a regional military school for Montagnards was created in the Central Highlands for the training of non-commissioned

² After graduating the first class of reserve officers (among them Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky), Nam Dinh was merged with the Thu Duc Reserve Officer School in 1952.

³ The Regional Technical Training Center of MR-1 had also the additional responsibility of training paratroopers.

officers assigned to Montagnard battalions. Concurrently, an Air Force Training Center and a Naval Training Center were established at Nha Trang to train specialized personnel for each service.

In 1953, the training base was expanded at an accelerated pace to accommodate growing training requirements occasioned by the influx of draftees and the creation of commando (light) battalions. Several new recruit training centers were established: at Quang Yen (MR-3), Suoi Dau (Nha Trang, MR-2), My Tho, and Soc Trang (both in MR-1), in addition to existing facilities. The Reserve Officer School at Thu Duc also expanded to increase its capacity from 500 to 1,300 cadets.

During these formative years, the Vietnamese training base was complemented as required by the French school system, both in country and in France. Most students attending military or service schools in France were officers and only a few were selected for each course. These courses were in general comprehensive and well conducted, lasting from one to two years. In-country courses were much shorter, usually a few months, and were designed to train either specialists or cadres on an accelerated basis.

All military schools and training centers were placed under the control of the "Direction des Ecoles" (School Directorate) until 1953 when this control was taken over by the Military Training Bureau of the General Staff. Although part of the Vietnamese National Armed Forces, these schools and training centers were commanded and staffed by French officers and NCOs. During this period, Vietnamese instructors were few. Despite a gradual increase in numbers, Vietnamese instructors only played a secondary role: they were either assistants or orientation briefers. French was the principal language used in the training process. In units, training did not receive enough emphasis during this period; it was occasionally conducted by French officers and NCOs.

After the 1954 Geneva Accords, all training facilities in North Vietnam were evacuated to the South. At the same time, the training process underwent a great transformation in keeping with the reorganization of the Vietnamese National Armed Forces, which was undertaken with the training assistance of the joint U.S.-French Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM) on 19 January 1955. As the French withdrew

from South Vietnam, the training and reorganization assistance task was taken over by MAAG's Combat Arms Training Organization (CATO) as of 28 April 1956. Eventually, all training assistance for the RVNAF was provided by the Training Directorate, MACV as of 26 April 1965.

At the time MAAG assumed reorganizing and retraining responsibilities in early 1956, the Vietnamese National Armed Forces were besieged with several problems. There was a definite shortage of experienced officers trained for high command and staff positions; there was also a shortage of officers and NCOs trained in service branch specialties, particularly in logistics. The existing school and training center system was still undeveloped; it did not have enough facilities, training aids, qualified instructors, and adequate training programs, particularly at the regimental and divisional level. Above all, there were no unified training policies and regulations.

To remedy these shortcomings, a joint Vietnamese-U.S. School Planning Board was established on 8 October 1956. As a result of the board's recommendations, the training base was reorganized during 1957 to include the following developments:

- (1) All regional recruit training centers were merged into a single facility, named the Quang Trung Training Center. Located 12 miles from Saigon, this facility had the capability of accommodating 8,000 recruits at one time; its full-year capacity was 24,000 students.

- (2) An inter-arms school command was established at Thu Duc to exercise control and supervision over several service schools. This responsibility included:

The Infantry School, which was formerly the Reserve Officer School; this school was responsible for training reserve officers and company commanders.

The Armor School, co-located at Thu Duc, which was responsible for training officers, NCOs and enlisted men of the armor branch.

The Engineer School, located at Vung Tau, which was responsible for training engineer cadre and personnel.

The Artillery School, located at Phu Cuong (Binh Duong Province), which was responsible for training artillerymen and officers.

The Signal School, located at Vung Tau, which was responsible for training both Signal Corps and communications officers, and radio and telephone operators.

The Transportation School, which was responsible for training officers of the Transportation Corps.

The Ordnance School, which was responsible for training officers, NCOs and enlisted men of the Ordnance Corps.

The Administration School, which was responsible for training officers, NCOs, and enlisted men for the quartermaster, finance and adjutant general branches.

(3) The former Medical College was redesignated Medical Training Center and given the mission to train all medical personnel.

(4) The Intelligence School, which was established in 1955 at the old fort of Cay Mai in Cho Lon, was responsible for training officers, NCOs, and enlisted men of the military intelligence branch.

(5) The Political Warfare Cadre Training Center, established in 1956 and co-located with the Intelligence School at Cay Mai, was responsible for training all political warfare officers and NCOs.

(6) The Armed Forces Languages School, established in 1956, was responsible for teaching English to all Vietnamese servicemen, especially those selected to attend U.S. service schools.

(7) The former Center of Military Studies was redesignated The Military College and relocated to the JGS compound near Tan Son Nhut. It was capable of training 250 students per year in such courses as the general staff officer's and battalion and regimental commander's.

(8) The four Regional Military Schools were disbanded and absorbed into the Commando and Military Physical Training Center located at Nha Trang. This center conducted courses in commando, combat, patrol and reconnaissance, anti-guerrilla, military physical education, judo, and infantry basics. In 1958, it was transformed into the NCO Academy responsible for the training of NCOs for infantry units.

(9) The Junior Military School, which was established at Vung Tau in 1956, was given the responsibility to combine all separate junior military schools formerly sponsored by French forces such as those at Mong Cay, Hanoi, Hue, Ban Me Thuot and Thu Dau Mot. Entirely supported

by GVN funds, this school provided a high school curriculum similar to civilian high schools to eligible dependents of Vietnamese servicemen, living or deceased. Upon graduation from this school, all students had to enlist in the service with the rank of sergeant.

All of these schools and training centers were now commanded and staffed by Vietnamese officers with the assistance of U.S. advisers. Vietnamese also replaced French as the principal language used in training.

From 1959 to 1963, in keeping with developmental trends, the RVNAF training base underwent another major reorganization which resulted in the following changes:

(1) All service schools formerly under the control of the Thu Duc Inter-Arms School Command were placed under the control of respective combat arm or service branch commands. Several of them were also relocated or split into separate schools. The Ordnance School was relocated to Saigon, sharing a compound with the 80th Ordnance Base Depot. The Transportation School was relocated to a camp adjacent to the Quang Trung Training Center. The Engineer School was moved from Vung Tau to Phu Cuong, the provincial capital of Binh Duong, where it occupied the premises of the Artillery School, now relocated to Duc My in Khanh Hoa Province. The Administration School was split into three separate schools: the Adjutant General, Quartermaster, and Finance and Administration Schools, which were all relocated in the Saigon area. At the training complex in Thu Duc, as a result, there remained only two schools: the Infantry and Armor Schools.

(2) Four additional recruit training centers were established with the purpose of alleviating increasing training burdens placed on the Quang Trung Training Center, and reducing transportation problems. These included the Dong Da Training Center, located at Phu Bai in Thua Thien Province, which was responsible for training new recruits and infantry units assigned to I Corps area; the Lam Son Training Center, located at Duc My, which was responsible for training new recruits and infantry units assigned to II Corps areas; the Van Kiep Training Center, located at Phuoc Le in Phuoc Tuy Province, which operated as an extension

of the Quang Trung Training Center in training recruits and infantry units assigned to III and IV Corps areas; and the Chi Lang Training Center, located at That Son in Chau Doc Province, which was responsible for the training of recruits and infantry units assigned to IV Corps area.

(3) A new Ranger Training Center was established at Duc My in Khanh Hoa Province following the creation of the Ranger Command. In addition to training ranger troops and cadre, this center also provided special courses in jungle and swamp combat.

(4) The Logistics School was established and located in the JGS compound. It was responsible for training middle and high level managers for the ARVN logistic system.

(5) The Martial Arts and Physical Education School was established at the Thu Duc training complex for the training of martial arts and PE instructors required by all three services.

(6) The Inter-Arms Military School at Dalat was redesignated the National Military Academy. Under the new status, the academy began to conduct a two-year curriculum for the training of career officers for the RVNAF. Plans and preparations were also made to switch to a full four-year curriculum similar to that provided by the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

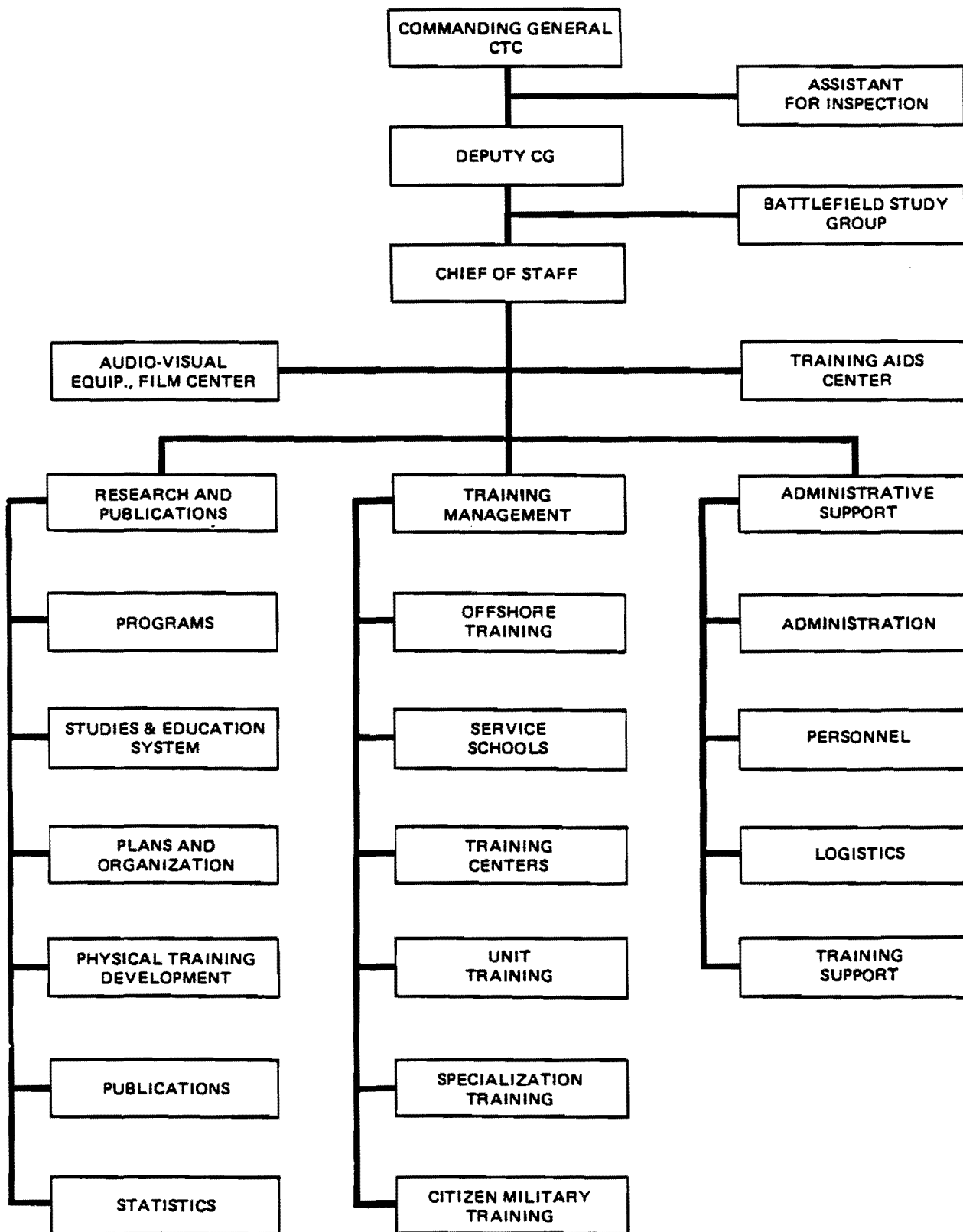
(7) The Military College was redesignated Command and Staff College and relocated to Dalat. It also began conducting a regular command and staff course similar to that of the U.S. Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.

(8) Each infantry division—to include the Airborne and Marine Divisions—established an organic divisional training center to provide basic and refresher training for its enlisted men and NCOs.

In 1964, in an effort to unify and increase the effectiveness of training activities, the JGS Training Bureau was upgraded into a Training Command with responsibilities to operate and control the school and training center system, supervise training activities in the RVNAF, and to prepare and update training manuals and army doctrine.

Part 2 Responsible to the Chief of the Joint General Staff, the commander of the Central Training Command commanded designated military schools

Chart 6 — Organization, Central Training Command, 1974



and training centers at the national level (7 training centers and 19 schools in total), monitored training activities at the Political Warfare College, the Air Force and Naval Training Centers, prepared plans and conducted combined-arms training, developed and reviewed training programs, established and disseminated the annual training schedule for all subordinate agencies, established and coordinated offshore training programs, managed the training budget, inspected training activities to ensure that training policies were correctly implemented, and supervised training activities at the Logistics School and divisional training centers.

In 1965, the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps were integrated with the RVNAF under the respective names of Regional and Popular Forces, the Central Training Command was given additional responsibilities to supervise training activities at RF and PF training centers, and provide staff assistance to corps commanders in their exercise of command and control over these training centers. Also in 1965, to meet increasing requirements, the Political Warfare Cadre Training Center was upgraded into a school and relocated to Dalat where it occupied the premises of the former French School of Gendarmery.

In 1966, by Decree No. 48/SL/QP dated 18 March 1966 of the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, the Political Warfare School was redesignated Political Warfare College with the responsibility of "providing polwar officers for the RVNAF with a university education and a comprehensive military background." The decree also determined that the basic educational program for polwar officers would be the equivalent of a university-level political science curriculum.

Also in 1966, by Decree No. 2349/HD/QP dated 19 December 1966, the responsibilities of the Vietnamese National Military Academy were redefined in these terms: "The NMA is responsible for providing career officers for the Armed Forces of the RVN with a university-level education and military professionalism. As a result, the NMA instituted a four-year curriculum beginning with Class No. 22 which had a modest cadet strength of only 92.

In 1967, in order to meet the requirements for leadership cadre at the national level and to conduct studies beyond the competence of the Command and Staff College, the National Defense College (NDC) was established by a decree of the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, dated 23 August 1967. The NDC was responsible to "educate outstanding and high-ranking military officers and career government civilians to become better qualified in the performance of important duties related to national security, and to study, plan, and develop national defense policies." The first class of the NDC included 15 colonels and lieutenant-colonels and six high-ranking civil servants who graduated in April 1969 after a year of study.

With the creation of the NDC, the RVNAF training base was considered fairly adequate to meet all training requirements from recruits to the highest level of management. What remained to be done in the years ahead was to improve and consolidate training facilities in order to keep abreast of the RVNAF trends toward expansion, modernization, and economy.

The enemy Tet general offensive which broke out on 31 January 1968 inflicted considerable damage to the Armed Forces Language School; 70% of its facilities were destroyed during heavy fighting. To meet increasing demands in English language instruction which were occasioned by an accelerated offshore training program, the school was temporarily split into three components. One component, located in the compound of the 3d Recuperation Center at Vung Tau, was large enough to accommodate 600 students. Another component occupied a building complex left unused by the Ministry of Finance in Saigon and took in 1,000 students. The third component was located in two large U.S. warehouses near Tan Son Nhut and had the capacity of 1,080 students. Rehabilitation work at these three places progressed rapidly and by the end of 1968, the completely renovated Language School had expanded its capacity to 5,000 students. The offshore training program, therefore, did not suffer any setback. At the same time, a new construction plan was approved with MASF/MILCON funds, which eventually made the RVNAF Language School a modern facility with a permanent 2,000-student capacity.

To improve the training of Popular Forces, a joint RVN-U.S. evaluation committee recommended the consolidation of the 26 provincial training centers which had been hastily created during the last few years, since most of them were below desired standards. As a result, and with a view to economize resources, unify training activities, and facilitate control, these 26 PF training centers were gradually deactivated and consolidated into 17, and subsequently into 12 inter-provincial facilities by the end of 1969. Eventually, only five such facilities remained in 1971 (Quang Nam, Pleiku, Ninh Thuan, Dinh Tuong, and Vinh Long Provinces) but they had been greatly improved in terms of basic amenities.

Another large construction project was initiated in the second half of 1968 to improve and modernize the National Military Academy in Dalat. The project, which was heartily endorsed by General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, was undertaken by the RMK contracting firm at a cost of VN\$800 million (or US\$6,729,661). The objective was to add an academic building, a cadet headquarters, 100 sets of faculty quarters, a laboratory, an auditorium, a gymnasium, BOQs and BEQs to existing facilities. The project was completed in 1971 without the gymnasium and 50 sets of faculty quarters because of cost overrun. The RVNAF were extremely proud of their new military academy which had become a show case for visiting foreign dignitaries. Its modern laboratory ranked first in the country in terms of equipment and facilities.

During 1970, a joint RVN-U.S. committee with members from the CTC, CLC, and MACV was established to study a long-range plan aimed at consolidating, improving, and modernizing the entire RVNAF training base in view of the force structure leveling and limited new construction funds. After conducting a three-month survey of all RVNAF schools and training centers, the committee prepared a master plan which was approved by the JGS and MACV for implementation in two phases.

Phase one consisted of renovating 23 training centers and seven service schools to include new construction and rehabilitation work on such facilities as sleeping quarters, classrooms, mess halls, bathrooms, kitchens, firing ranges, and water distribution systems. Phase two called for the construction of three new building complexes at Long Thanh to relocate the Infantry School, the Armor School, and the Artillery School

in a single area. This would help make combined-arms training more effective and solve difficulties for the Infantry and Armor Schools in terms of firing ranges and exercise grounds which were being seriously limited by civilian and economic development projects in the Thu Duc-Bien Hoa area. As a second priority, new construction was also planned near Thu Duc for the Command and Staff College. This college was unable to function effectively at Dalat because of cramped quarters and the inconvenience of displacement caused to guest lecturers. The total renovation and new construction project cost US \$28 million and was funded by the MASF/MILCON program. Renovation works related to Phase one were all completed in early 1972.

Phase two, however, did not progress as planned because the re-deployment of U.S. and FWMA forces had made new base facilities available. The construction of the Infantry School at Long Thanh, therefore, did not begin until early 1972; it was completed by the end of 1973 at a cost of nearly US \$5 million. When the Bear Cat base at Long Thanh was evacuated by the Royal Thai Army Division in late 1972, it was turned over to the Armor School which moved in after some rehabilitation work. Then in early 1973, the Command and Staff College in Dalat was relocated to Long Binh where it occupied the building complex formerly used as USARV Headquarters. The Logistics School was also moved from the JGS compound to Long Binh where it was installed on the premises vacated by the Vinnell contracting company.

Under the same plan, the Adjutant General School, the Intelligence School, the Administration and Finance School, and the Quartermaster School were relocated from Saigon to the Thu Duc school complex now vacated by the Infantry School and the Armor School. With this last move, the RVNAF training base was firmly established after nearly 25 years of reorganization and relocation; it consisted of 25 service schools and 24 training centers of all types. (*Tables 14 and 15*)

Table 14 — ARVN Service Schools, 1974

Designation	Location	Creation Year	Capacity (Students)
National Defense College	Saigon	1967	40
Command & General Staff College	Long Binh (Bien Hoa)	1952	400
Logistics Management School	Long Binh	1959	150
National Military Academy	Dalat	1948	800
Artillery School	Duc My (Nha Trang)	1950	400-600
Armor School	Long Thanh	1950	200-400
Infantry School	Long Thanh	1951	600-1000
Engineer School	Phu Cuong	1951	600-1000
Ordnance School	Saigon	1952	200-400
Signal School	Vung Tau	1954	600-1000
Transportation School	Gia Dinh	1954	600-800
Medical School	Saigon	1951	200-400
Military Police School	Vung Tau	1957	200-300
Military Band School	Thu Duc	1959	100
Military Intelligence School	Thu Duc	1955	600
Quartermaster School	Thu Duc	1962	200-300
Administration and Finance School	Thu Duc	1962	200
Adjutant General School	Thu Duc	1962	600-1000
Armed Forces Language School	Gia Dinh	1956	2000
Martial Arts and Physical Training School	Thu Duc	1961	100
Armed Forces Women's School	Saigon	1964	150-200
Non-Commissioned Officers Academy	Nha Trang	1951	4000-6000
Junior Military Academy	Vung Tau	1956	800-1000
Political Warfare Academy	Dalat	1966	400
Armed Forces Social Welfare School	Saigon	1952	100

Table 15 — ARVN Training Centers, 1974

Designation	Location	Creation Year	Capacity
NATIONAL TRAINING CENTERS			
Quang Trung	Gia Dinh	1951	15000-20000
Dong Da	Phu Bai	1961	5000-7000
Lam Son	Duc My	1961	8000-12000
	(Khanh Hoa)		
Van Kiep	Phuoc Le	1961	8000-10000
	(Phuoc Tuy)		
Chi Lang	Chau Doc	1961	8000-10000
Hoa Cam	Da Nang	1971	4000-6000
Phu Cat	Phu Cat	1970	4000-6000
	(Binh Dinh)		
Cao Lanh	Kien Phong	1970	4000-6000
DIVISION TRAINING CENTERS			
1st Infantry Division			
	Phu Bai		500
	(Thua Thien)		
2nd " "	Quang Ngai		500-1000
3rd " "	Da Nang		500
5th " "	Binh Duong		500-1000
7th " "	Dong Tam		500-1000
	(Dinh Tuong)		
9th " "	Vinh Long		500
18th " "	Long Khanh		500-1000
21st " "	Ba Xuyen		500-1000
22nd " "	Phu Thanh		500-1000
	(Binh Dinh)		
23rd " "	Ban Me Thuot		500-1000
25th " "	Cu Chi		500-1000
	(Hau Nghia)		
Airborne	Saigon		500-1000
Marine	Di An		500-1000
	(Bien Hoa)		
MISCELLANEOUS			
Duc My Ranger Training Ctr	Duc My	1960	1500-2000
	(Khanh Hoa)		
Military Dog Replacement Training Center	Thanh Tuy Ha	1965	1000
	(Gia Dinh)		
Polwar Cadre Training Center	Saigon	1961	400

Individual Training for Recruits and NCOs

All ARVN training programs, individual and unit, were developed with U.S. advisory assistance to achieve the five following basic objectives:

Discipline. Every soldier should be taught to observe military discipline, recognize, respect, and obey his superiors.

Health, physical strength, and endurance. Only when he is healthy, strong, and enduring can the soldier bear the various hardships on the battlefield. A unit which is made up of physically fit and disciplined men has all the chances of success.

Technical ability. To carry out an assigned mission, a soldier must have an adequate technical knowledge. He must know how to move on a battlefield by making use of terrain features and coordinating his movement with the ability to use and maintain different types of weapons and equipment assigned to him.

Teamwork. Every soldier should be trained to coordinate his actions and technical ability with other soldiers so that they could act together as an element within a group.

Combat effectiveness. This is the ultimate objective of the training process which is aimed at raising the unit's performance to a level of effectiveness, enabling it to carry out an assigned combat mission.

In the area of individual training, six programs were developed for the recruits and the NCO's.

Individual Refresher. Initiated in June 1955, this program marked the beginning of the retraining effort conducted by U.S. advisers and designed to familiarize ARVN personnel with U.S. Army doctrine and techniques. Initially designated "Command and Leadership," this course was conducted at the Quang Trung Training Center for ARVN officers and NCOs for a period of three weeks during which they were not authorized to wear rank insignia. The program of instruction included such subjects as drill, basic combat tactics, and marksmanship. Accustomed to French methods, almost all trainees found American methods of training more demanding physically and more systematic. In addition, trainees were

also subjected to a rigid discipline and required to participate in evening activities. The course was eventually redesignated "Officer and NCO Refresher" and its duration also increased to six weeks. After 24 courses, the program was terminated and turned over to divisional training centers.

Recruit Training. Upon entering military service, every individual had to undergo basic military training. The recruit training program, which lasted five to six weeks, was designed to provide the new recruit with a sense of duty and discipline, physical fitness, the ability to use individual weapons, and basic combat tactics. After this period of basic military training, the recruits were selected for specialized training depending on their individual aptitude. Those who were to remain with the infantry continued on advanced individual training for another four to six weeks. The total time involved in training an infantry soldier, therefore, was 12 weeks. In 1968 and 1972, however, this training time was reduced to nine weeks because of pressing replacement requirements.

Beginning in 1970, recruit training programs were modified to include both basic combat training (BCT) and advanced individual training (AIT). This was an effort intended to provide the ARVN soldier, regardless of combat arm or service branch, with a solid combat proficiency which was deemed vital to fight a war without frontlines. Therefore, a recruit had to undergo both phases of individual training before specialization, because it was believed that all ARVN soldiers should be able to fight as infantrymen first.

Proficiency Training, CC1 and CC2. As an encouragement for private soldiers to improve themselves in basic military skills, which would make them more eligible for promotions, proficiency training courses of first and second level (CC1 and CC2) were offered at division training centers. The purpose of these courses was to train eligible soldiers to command a combat team or squad. Students for the CC1 course were selected from among privates with a minimum of six months of service who were physically fit, had a good service record, and leadership ability. After 10 weeks of training, graduates received the CC1 certificate which made them

eligible for promotion to the rank of corporal or corporal first class. In addition, the CC1 entitled the holders to a monthly allowance in cash, called proficiency allowance.

CC2 courses were also conducted at division training centers. They were offered to holders of the CC1 certificates who had one year of service, usually corporals or corporals first class. After 12 weeks of training, graduates received the CC2 certificate, which made them eligible for promotion to the rank of sergeant and a monthly proficiency allowance.

CC1 and CC2 proficiency courses were also available for ARVN enlisted men serving in service branches other than infantry. But to be eligible for a proficiency allowance, an ARVN enlisted man was required to have an infantry proficiency certificate in addition to that of his own branch. Specialized CC1 and CC2 courses were conducted as required by service schools or training centers during periods of light training load.

Regular NCO Course. Conducted at the NCO Academy in Nha Trang, regular NCO courses were designed to train draftees with a junior high school diploma to become squad leaders. The program of instruction consisted of two phases, each lasting nine weeks. The first phase was devoted to basic combat and advanced individual training, which was identical to a recruit training program. The second phase effectively trained the new soldier to become an infantry squad leader. Upon graduation, students received the rank of sergeant.

In 1970, in an effort to unify the recruit training process, the first phase of NCO training was conducted at national training centers and called Preparatory NCO Course. Draftees who were qualified for NCO training were therefore sent to the nearest national training center for the preparatory NCO course after completing enlistment formalities at a recruitment center. Those who graduated from this course were next sent to the NCO Academy to complete phase two training, but those who failed were immediately assigned to infantry units to serve as privates like other recruits.

At the end of the second phase of NCO training, a special aptitude test was administered to all graduates. The purpose of this test was to

determine their qualifications for specialization training in one of the service branches. Those who qualified were sent to service schools, each according to his special aptitude, for an additional six to 16 weeks of specialization training. Upon completion of this training, the trainees became specialist NCO's of their own branch of service.

Special NCO Course. Also conducted at the NCO Academy at Nha Trang, special NCO courses were designed for those ARVN soldiers who had demonstrated combat experience or leadership aptitude but did not have the formal civilian education required for NCO training. These courses were first offered in 1966 to selected ARVN soldiers who met the following conditions: able to read and write; aged 18 to 33; a minimum of one year of service, and; corporal or corporal 1st class, or holder of CC1 infantry certificate or preparatory leadership certificate, or having served three months as squad leader or six months as assistant squad leader in a combat unit. The duration of the special NCO course was 12 weeks. Upon graduation, the students received the rank of sergeant and were assigned to infantry combat units.

B1 and B2 Proficiency Courses. B1 and B2 proficiency courses were offered to NCO's desiring to improve their military skills and advance in rank. Conducted at the NCO Academy at Nha Trang, the B1 course in infantry proficiency was designed to train infantry platoon leaders in 16 weeks. Students were selected from among NCOs who had the rank of sergeant or sergeant first class, a 6th grade education, a minimum of two years in service, and good records. Upon graduation, students were awarded the B1 infantry diploma, which although not qualifying them for immediate promotion to the next higher rank, certainly made them eligible for it and entitled them to a monthly proficiency allowance in cash. Holders of the B1 diploma were usually selected to assume the position of platoon leader or assistant platoon leader in an infantry unit.

The B2 infantry proficiency course was also conducted at the NCO Academy and offered to those sergeants first class or master sergeants who had served at least one year after graduating from the B1 course. After 16 weeks of training, graduates were awarded the B2 infantry

diploma. With this diploma, the holders earned a higher proficiency allowance, were eligible for promotion to the next higher rank and usually selected to serve in infantry units as platoon leaders or company sergeants. Both the B1 and B2 courses were scheduled only as required and when there were enough applicants.

Officer Training

The RVNAF school system provided several levels of training for the development of officers during their career advancement. The seven courses listed below typify the training opportunities that were available to an ARVN infantry officer during his career.

Career Officer Training. The first course offered to civilians volunteering to serve as career officers in the Vietnamese National Army was conducted at the Hue Officer School in 1948. After two courses, the school was relocated to Dalat in 1950 and redesignated "Dalat Inter-Arms Military School." In 1959, the school was renamed the "National Military Academy" (NMA).

Cadets of the NMA were all volunteers who chose the military profession as a career. To be admitted to the NMA, volunteers were required to have Vietnamese citizenship, a high-school diploma (baccalaureate, 1st or 2d degree) or an equivalent educational level, and they had to pass an entrance examination.

From Class No. 1 (1 January 1948) to Class 13 (24 April 1956), the NMA program of instruction was nine months and entirely devoted to military subjects. Its objective was to develop command and leadership capabilities among cadets and prepare them for assignment as infantry platoon leaders. From 1957 to 1961, the program was increased to twelve months to include some academic education at the high school level. From 1962 to 1966, the program was changed to a two-year curriculum which included both military training and science education at the junior college level.

In 1967, however, the NMA began to institute a full four-year curriculum patterned after West Point, starting with Class 22 (92 cadets).

This full-fledged program was designed to provide the cadets with a solid military background, a college-level technical education, a leader's capability, and the ability to serve as an instructor. The program included 4,131 hours of academic education and 1,952 hours of military training as detailed in *Table 16*.

Beginning with the four-year curriculum in 1967, the admission of NMA cadets also became more selective. To be eligible for admission, an applicant had to meet the following conditions:

- Vietnamese nationality
- Age ranging from 17 to 21
- Never been criminally convicted
- Meet health requirements and be at least 1.6 meters tall
- Never been married and pledge not to get married during the four years of training
- Holder of Baccalaureate, 2d part diploma, section B or Technical, or an equivalent foreign degree
- Pass the entrance examination

During the first two years of instruction, NMA cadets earned a sergeant's salary, and for the last two years, an aspirant's salary. Upon graduation, cadets received a second lieutenant's commission and became automatically a first lieutenant after one year of service. Those who failed to graduate received the rank of aspirant.

In 1970 and beginning with class 25, the National Military Academy became the sole educational institution providing career officers for all three services. At the end of the second year, cadets were allowed to choose the service of their preference on a quota allocation basis: Army 6/8, Navy 1/8, and Air Force 1/8 of total cadet strength.

Reserve Officer Training. There were two courses available for the training of reserve officers: regular and special, just like those applicable to NCOs.

The Reserve Officer Regular Courses were conducted at the Thu Duc Infantry School and occasionally at the Dalat National Military Academy when the number of students exceeded the Infantry School's capabilities. They were earmarked for the training of drafted or volunteer youths who held the Baccalaureate, 1st degree diploma or a higher degree.

The Reserve Officer program of instruction, which was designed to provide students with the capability to command an infantry platoon,

Table 16 — Four-Year Curriculum, NMA

Course Subjects	Contact Hours				Total Hours
	1st year	2d year	3d year	4th year	
A. ACADEMIC SEASON					
Analytics I, II, III, IV	234	117			351
Vietnamese Composition, Reading and Speech making	117				117
English I, II, III - IV	117	117			234
Political Warfare	72	72	72	72	288
Surveying	58				58
Military Training	72	72	72	72	288
Physical education and Intramural Athletics	216	216	216	216	864
Physics		117		58	175
Chemistry	58	117			175
Sanitary Engineering		58			58
History of Europe and America		58			58
Solid Mechanics		58	117		175
Fluid Mechanics			117		117
Electrical Power			175		175
Electronics			58	58	117
History of Asia	58	58	58		175
Sociology/Philosophy			58		58
Economics			58		58
Structures				117	117
Highway/Traffic Engineering				58	58
Ordnance Engineering				117	117
Rural/City Planning and Construction				58	58
Law			58	58	117
Contemporary Foreign Governments				58	58
History of Military Art				58	58
	1003.5	1062	1062	1003.5	4131
B. MILITARY TRAINING SEASON					
Military Subjects	612	412	422	506	1952
Grand Total					6083

lasted 42 weeks and consisted of two phases. Phase I lasted 12 weeks and was devoted to basic combat and advanced individual training. Phase II, which lasted 30 weeks, was devoted to small-unit tactics, topography, firepower, and general military subjects. During periods of unusual requirements such as in 1968 and 1973, this program was reduced to 32 weeks. During 1972 in particular, it was further shortened to a mere 24 weeks.

Prior to 1969, both phases I and II of the reserve officer training program were conducted at the Thu Duc Infantry School. To keep pace with the expanding force structure, however, it was decided in 1969 to turn over Phase I training to the Quang Trung Training Center. Phase I, therefore, was named Preparatory Officer Course. After completing this course with passing marks, students were transferred to the Thu Duc Infantry School where they continued with Phase II training. Those students who failed the preparatory (Phase I) course were sent to the NCO Academy to continue with Phase II of NCO training and graduated as sergeants but they were few. During the 3d quarter of 1970, for example, among 3,436 students attending the preparatory officer course, only 49 failed.

Reserve cadets who had special aptitudes (as determined by testing procedures) or who had held professional jobs or degrees, were allowed to attend service schools after completion of Phase I training in order to become officers in the service branch of their aptitude. Beginning in 1968, however, cadets were allowed to undergo specialization training only after completing both Phases I and II. This was intended to make every ARVN officer, regardless of service branch, available for combat as an infantry officer first and foremost.

From 1952 to 1955, cadets who successfully completed the reserve officer course received a commission as reserve second lieutenant and those who failed, the rank of aspirant. After 1955, however, all graduates received only the rank of aspirant while those who failed were made master sergeants.

Beginning in 1966, in addition to the regular courses, special officer courses were also offered as a means of self-advancement for

those qualified NCOs who did not have the required formal education. These courses were conducted either at the Thu Duc Infantry School or at the Nha Trang NCO Academy. To be eligible for special officer training, a NCO had to have at least two years in NCO rank; be able to read and write; not older than 38; physically fit; good military record; never been criminally convicted; holder of B1 Infantry Diploma, commanded an infantry platoon for six months, or have served as assistant platoon leader for 12 months.

The Special Reserve Officer training program was 16 weeks. Upon graduation, students received the rank of reserve aspirant and were assigned to infantry combat units. During 1966-1967, over 1,700 NCOs graduated as aspirants from this course.

Company Commander Course. The first Company Commander Course was conducted at the Dalat Inter-Arms Military School in 1953 to meet the requirements for infantry company commanders occasioned by the activation of commando battalions and the removal of French officers from Vietnamese infantry units. The course's objective was to provide student officers with the capability to command a rifle company, a general knowledge of command responsibilities and staff procedures at the battalion level, and a general understanding of the combat arms and service branches in the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The program of instruction was nine weeks and included subjects on company and battalion tactics, leadership, staff procedures, and the responsibilities of combat arms and technical services in support of infantry units.

To be eligible for company commander training, officers had to meet the following requirements: rank from 2d Lieutenant to Captain; age 20 to 36; served as platoon leader for at least two years or company commander or assistant company commander for one year. During the period of reorganization after 1954 this course was suspended and did not resume until 1962. Training responsibilities were then turned over to the Thu Duc Infantry School.

Tactical Command Course. During 1953-1954, the activation of Vietnamese infantry battalions and tactical mobile groups required the training of Vietnamese field-grade officers for command positions at

these levels. Therefore, the Tactical Training Center in Hanoi, later to become the Military Studies Center, was given the responsibility to conduct a 16-week course for this purpose. This Tactical Command Course was suspended in 1954 and did not resume until 1960 when it was renamed Command and Staff Course.

Staff Course. In conjunction with the Tactical Command Course, a Staff Course was also conducted by the Military Studies Center in Hanoi in 1953 to train Vietnamese staff officers at the battalion, tactical group, sector, and subdivision levels. This course was dictated by the need to replace French officers holding staff positions in Vietnamese units. The program of instruction was four months, half of which was devoted to on-the-job training in French mobile groups and battalions (artillery, armor, engineer, signal). Students of the Staff Course were selected from among Vietnamese company-grade officers.

After 1954, the Staff Course was continued with a modified program of instruction patterned after the U.S. Army's Advanced Infantry Course and part of the Command and Staff Course.

In 1969, the Staff Course was redesignated Intermediate Command and Staff in order to reflect its contents more accurately. Eventually, however, it was replaced by advanced courses conducted by ARVN service schools.

Command and Staff Course. This course was the successor of the Tactical Command Course first conducted in 1953. Officially named Command and Staff beginning with class No. 5 in 1960, this modified course was patterned after the U.S. Army Command and Staff Course. In 1969, it was redesignated Advanced Command and Staff.

This course was designed to provide field-grade officer students with the capability to command a regiment, sector, or higher-level unit or to assume staff duties at division, corps, or higher level. Depending on circumstantial requirements, the course might vary from 20 to 36 weeks in length. Its program of instruction included subjects on large unit (regiment, division, corps, and army) tactics in conventional and unconventional warfare, pacification and rural development, staff procedures and techniques, combined arms and joint operations, political warfare, and international and domestic politics.

In order to qualify for the Advanced Command and Staff Course, applicants had to meet the following requirements: minimum rank of Lieutenant-Colonel with two years seniority, or Colonel; age 27 to 45; graduate of battalion commander's or advanced infantry course, in-country or offshore.

Prior to 1966, the selection of students for the Advanced Command and Staff Course was entrusted with unit commanders or heads of agencies who were generally reluctant to release the most able officers for this training. As a result, students attending this course consisted mostly of undesirable or incompetent elements who were not even assigned to responsible jobs commensurate with their training upon graduation.

To remedy this shortcoming and also to enhance the prestige of this course, the Joint General Staff reserved for itself the right to designate students beginning in 1967. A list of designated students was disseminated a few months in advance so that units could arrange for replacements in time. Beginning in 1970, the JGS took a further step in encouraging greater attendance and enhancing the prestige of the course by making the Advanced Command and Staff Course a prerequisite for promotion to the rank of colonel.

National Defense Course. The RVN National Defense College was established in 1967 to respond to the need of training top-level executives in all areas of national defense and to conduct advanced studies related to national defense which lay beyond the scope of the Advanced Command and Staff Course. The National Defense Course was developed with the objective of preparing high-ranking military officers and GVN officials for responsible positions related to national security and providing them with a capability to study, plan, and develop national defense policies. Lasting one year, the program of instruction included ten courses and seven seminars related to three key areas of interest: international politics, national resources, and national defense policies. In addition, the program also provided for an orientation trip to several allied countries and required from each student an original research paper on a subject of his choice.

During the course of instruction, one day of each week was devoted to discussions on an important subject in which RVNAF general officers and high-ranking GVN officials were also invited to participate. The session began with a lecture given by a guest speaker, usually a high-ranking personality or scholar of established reputation. It was followed by discussions on the lecture subject in which both students and guests participated. Besides developing the student's capacity for knowledge, these discussions also gave the high-ranking guests the opportunity to reflect seriously on problems faced by the country and search for solutions that helped achieve national goals. Students of the National Defense Course were selected from among senior colonels and generals who had completed the Advanced Command and Staff Course and GVN ministerial officials of director's or director general's grade.

Specialized Training

In addition to the above regular courses, there were also specialized courses designed to train students in particular skills. These courses were made available to RVNAF personnel of all ranks.

Instructor's Course. The instructor's course was basically designed to train potential instructors in methodology and techniques, enabling them to prepare instructional materials and use training aids with effectiveness. The course also taught them the art of teaching, how to speak, make gestures in order to maintain the students' attention visually and aurally.

The first instructor's course was conducted in 1962 by the Thu Duc Infantry School for the purpose of training its own instructors. It was subsequently made an official course by the Central Training Command with a six-week program of instruction. The course was given both at the Thu Duc Infantry School and the Quang Trung Training Center as required by demands for instructors on the part of service schools and training centers. To be eligible for the instructor's course, students had to meet the following requirements: sincere desire to be an instructor; rank of 1st Lieutenant or Captain; graduate of the NMA or Thu Duc

Infantry School; two years of service in a combat unit; and at least 23 but not past 36 years of age.

Paratrooper's Course. This course was conducted regularly at the Airborne Training Center for the purpose of training paratroopers for the Airborne Division, Special Forces, and Airborne Ranger units. The program of instruction was four weeks and required two practice jumps. Upon graduation, paratroopers were entitled to a monthly air duty allowance whether or not they were assigned to an airborne unit providing that they made four jumps each year under the sponsorship of the Airborne Training Center.

Jungle and Swamp Warfare Course. This course was conducted at the Ranger Training Center at Duc My for the purpose of teaching fundamentals of jungle and swamp operations. During six weeks of training, students were exposed to the actual conditions of combat operations conducted in jungle or swampy areas. Students of this course included selected junior-grade officers, NCOs, and enlisted men from combat units. Instructors were selected from among graduates of the U.S. Army Ranger Course or the Jungle Warfare Course in Malaysia.

Long-Range Reconnaissance Course. This course was conducted at two places: the Ranger Training Center at Duc My and the Van Kiep National Training Center. Its objective was to train individuals and units in techniques of long-range reconnaissance patrol. At Duc My, the program of instruction was five weeks whereas at the Van Kiep Training Center it lasted eight weeks, including three weeks of supervised operations conducted with the assistance of an Australian training team.

Marksmanship Training. In order to train soldiers in rapid and accurate fire, a vital requirement of combat, a short marksmanship course was included in the individual training program for new recruits. This course was also conducted in units on the initiative and under the responsibility of unit commanders. To encourage participation in marksmanship training, a nation-wide competition was organized every year under the supervision of the Central Training Command.

Tae Kwon Do Course. Tae Kwon Do, a Korean martial art, became part of the RVNAF individual training program in 1965. It was introduced and taught as an effort to improve close combat tactics. Initially, all Tae Kwon Do instructors were provided by South Korean forces but they were gradually replaced by Vietnamese instructors. A special 20-week program of training Tae Kwon Do instructors was regularly conducted at the Thu Duc Martial Arts and Physical Training School.

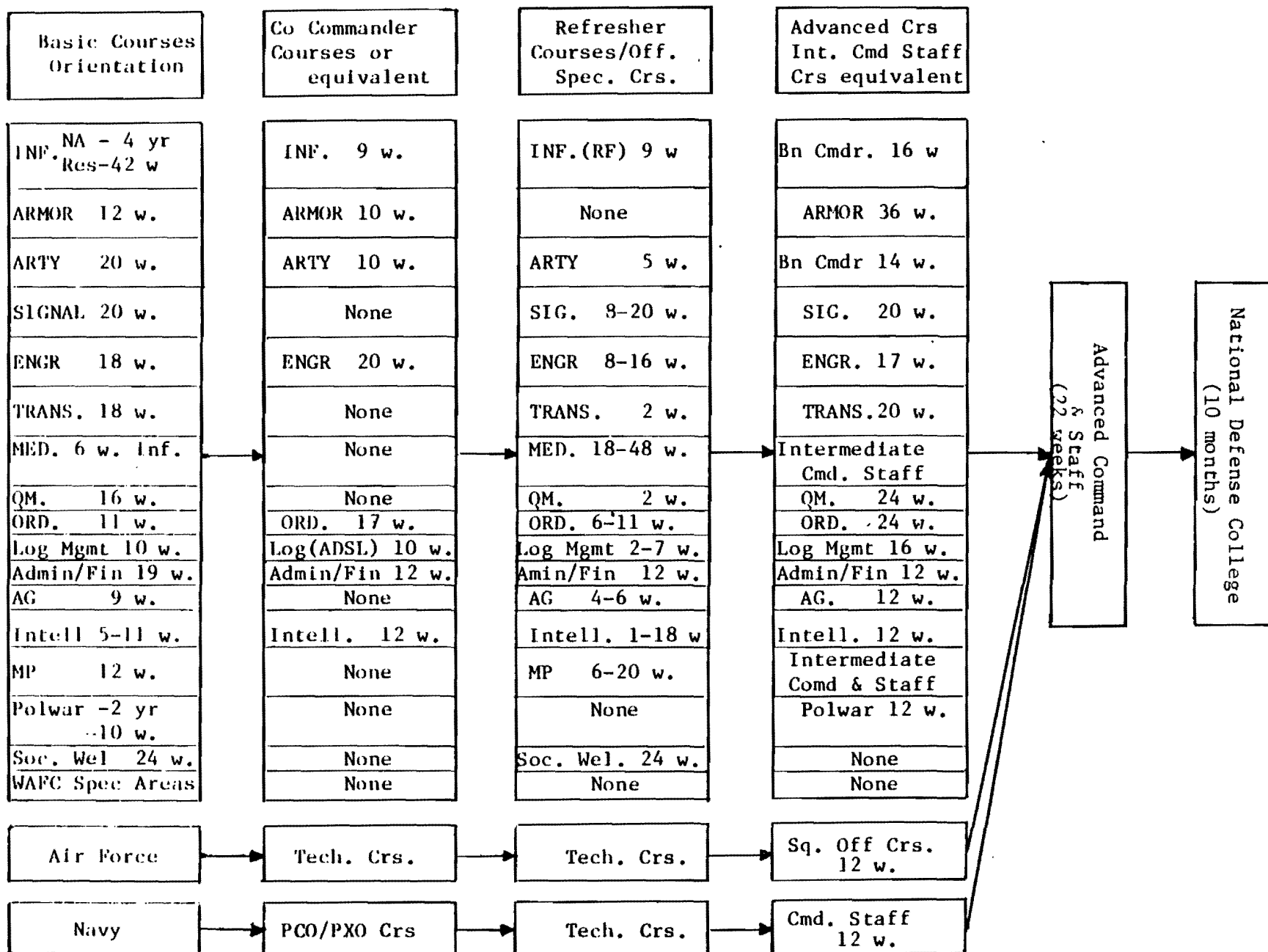
Combat Arms and Technical Services Specialist Courses. Specialist courses in combat arms such as Artillery, Armor, Engineer, Signal and Military Police, and technical services such as Ordnance, Quartermaster, Medical, Transportation, Finance and Administration, Adjutant General, Intelligence, Political Warfare were regularly conducted by respective service schools for the purpose of training officers, NCOs, and enlisted men as specialists for their own branch or for troop units.

For officers, specialization training progressed through three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced, a process similar to the career training program designed for infantry officers. After completing this process each officer had the opportunity to compete for selection to attend the Advanced Command and Staff Course and the National Defense Course, regardless of branch of service. (*Chart 7*)

Program Review and Analysis Course. In an effort to train middle-level managers for RVNAF programs, in 1967, MACV contracted Booz, Allen Applied Research, Inc. for the development of a training program. This program was eventually called PRAISE (Program Review and Analysis Improvement Systems Evaluation) which, in many respects, was similar to the PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) program conducted at the U.S. Army Logistic Management Center at Fort Lee, Virginia.

In March 1971, the program was approved and a seven-week PRAISE course was conducted for RVNAF officers earmarked as instructors. The first two courses were therefore taught in English by instructors provided by the contracting firm. The third course was conducted in Vietnamese by RVNAF officers with the assistance of American instructors.

The objective of this course was to train RVNAF officers with management responsibilities in modern techniques of establishing,



reviewing, and evaluating a program. Three such courses were given simultaneously at the Logistics School, the Transportation School, and the Signal School for students of advanced specialization courses with the cooperation of the contracting firm and under the supervision of the Central Training Command.

In 1972, the Logistics School was given the sole responsibility of conducting PRAISE courses. At the same time, the PRAISE course was also included in all middle and high-level management training programs taught by service schools.

Advanced Specialist Training. Beginning in 1970, several advanced specialist courses were initiated with the purpose of training ARVN officers and NCOs in highly-specialized areas of civil engineering and communications-electronics. This training effort was dictated by the need to take over the engineering, operation, and maintenance of U.S. support systems to be transferred to the RVNAF under the Vietnamization program.

An Engineer Technical College was therefore activated in early 1970 with faculty members selected from among ARVN officers with foreign engineering degrees and professors of the Phu Tho College of Engineering. Courses given at this college included advanced construction, public works, and bridge design. The first advanced engineering course was taught in August 1971 with 24 officer students; it was followed by a bridge design course with 14 students in September.

At the same time, several advanced courses in communications-electronics were also initiated, both in-country and in the U.S., for the training of specialists in microwave, tropospheric scatter radio, fixed plant carriers, and dial telephone exchanges who were required to operate and maintain the Intergrated Communications System (ICS). Initially these courses were taught at ICS terminals but they were gradually taken over by the Signal School at Vung Tau with instructional assistance provided by U.S. civilian specialists. In mid-1973, the entire ICS network was effectively managed, operated, and maintained by ARVN specialists with minimum assistance provided by U.S. contract teams.

Unit Training

During the period of force structure reorganization beginning in July 1955, which saw the activation of ARVN infantry divisions, a standard unit training program was developed with the assistance of U.S. advisers. This program consisted of three training phases:

Phase 1 (10 to 12 weeks): basic unit training for platoons, companies, and battalions (seven weeks for platoons and companies, five weeks for battalions).

Phase 2 (three weeks): field exercise at regimental level.

Phase 3 (three weeks): field exercise at division level.

Phase 1 of unit training was highlighted by movement exercises. During this period, all units were required to practice movements during day and night over increasing distances up to 30 km, and on every type of terrain. A backpack of 12 to 15 kg was mandatory for every soldier in movement practice. Field exercises of regimental level during Phase 2 were essentially command post-type exercises but divisional exercises during Phase 3 involved both CP and field maneuvers. Although this last phase of training began in the fall of 1956 for all divisions, it did not terminate until 1959 because of interruptions caused by enemy-initiated activities.

As the fighting escalated, ARVN units were increasingly committed in counter-insurgency operations. Field exercises of regimental and divisional levels, therefore, were temporarily suspended beginning in 1960. At the same time, unit training programs were revised to involve only the battalion and smaller units.

The revised unit training program consisted of two types, basic, for newly activated units, and refresher, for existing units. The basic program, which presupposed that all recruits and cadres had completed basic and advanced individual training, included seven weeks of training, of which five were devoted to company and two to battalion. The training of battalion headquarters and support elements took place at the same time as company basic training.

Refresher training for the company level lasted four weeks or 253 hours which included 85 hours of individual training, 29 hours of squad tactics, 29 hours of platoon tactics, and 90 hours of company tactics of which 20 hours were devoted to field exercises and 21 hours to guerrilla and anti-guerrilla tactics. For the battalion, refresher training also required four weeks and was undertaken cyclically every three years or whenever combat losses exceeded 50% of authorized strength. These four weeks of refresher training were primarily devoted to practical exercises, to include 40 hours of individual refresher training, 50 hours of squad training, 40 hours of platoon training, and 108 hours of company and battalion tactics. The program then culminated in a three-day battalion FTX conducted by a combined ARVN-U.S. testing team. During this period of refresher training, battalion officers received staff training for the first three weeks then joined the unit during the last week.

Basic and refresher unit training was conducted at national training centers for infantry and airborne units, at the Ranger Training Center for ranger units, and at the Armor and Artillery School for armor and artillery units respectively.

CHAPTER VII

Methods of Training

Formal Instruction

By far the most fundamental and effective method of training the individual soldier and the unit was formal instruction conducted at training centers and service schools.

Planning and programming for individual training were a major function of the Central Training Command which controlled the system of training centers and service schools. Training requirements, which were established each year through the personnel administration system, provided the basis for the CTC annual master schedule of courses. Amended as required to reflect changes, this schedule was disseminated about one year in advance to all training centers, service schools and units, giving them ample time for implementation. About three to six months prior to each course, the CTC published a memorandum which provided conditions for student admission, reporting and starting dates, and student quotas to be filled by recipient units. If no quotas were assigned, units would submit a request of attendance to the CTC depending on their requirements and ability to send students. As a matter of policy, unit commanders had the obligation to encourage school attendance, transmit applications for admission, ensure that each applicant met all conditions for acceptance, and finally, when personnel were approved for admission, that they reported to school on time.

With regard to unit training, there were usually two requirements: basic training for newly-activated units and refresher training for existing units. For newly-activated units, the CTC prepared a training schedule based on the RVNAF annual force structure plan. This schedule determined which training center or school would be responsible for

conducting the training and the date on which new units would report. Disseminated well ahead of time, this training schedule also provided a frame of reference for the activation of units for which corps commanders, service branch chiefs, and province chiefs were responsible.¹ A unit was usually activated with some trained manpower obtained from several sources. Cadre officers and NCOs were provided by existing units; they were obtained by reassignments within a corps, a service branch, or a province. The rank and file consisted of recruits and conscripts who had completed basic and advanced individual training and were assigned to each corps, service branch, or province by the J-1, JGS. After the unit had been assembled and equipped with individual weapons, it was moved to a designated training center or service school in accordance with the CTC training schedule. If for some reason, a newly-formed unit could not report to the place of training as scheduled, responsible authorities were required to request the CTC for a change of schedule well ahead of time. While the unit was receiving training, it also received its authorized equipment from the regional Area Logistic Command. Everything was coordinated on the basis of the CTC training schedule so that by the time a unit left a training center or school, it was fully prepared for immediate operational deployment.

As for refresher training, it was scheduled a minimum of once every three years for all units on the RVNAF force structure list. Each unit, therefore, was required to undergo refresher training at a training center as scheduled by the CTC. The annual schedule for unit refresher training was always developed in coordination with corps, service branches and provinces. Before departing for refresher training, a unit was usually assembled at its rear base to receive replacements in manpower and equipment. This was a prerequisite determined by the CTC training policy.

¹Corps commanders were responsible for the activation of infantry units, service branch chiefs for units of their branch of service, and province chiefs, for RF-PF units.

Unit refresher training was also mandatory for any unit which lost 50% of its combat strength. When this occurred, the unit was immediately withdrawn from the area of operation and displaced to a rear base for an emergency replacement of losses. After being refitted and brought up to strength, the unit was sent to a training center. In each case of scheduled and unscheduled refresher training, it was the JGS policy to ensure that the replacement and refitting process was duly carried out by the parent unit so that training could be as effective as possible. For this purpose, a JGS inspection team, composed of members of the CTC, J-1, J-3, and the CLC, made visits to training centers to inspect the strength and equipment status of every unit prior to commencing training and before departing the training center.

Personnel strength was the most common problem faced by combat units undergoing training. Therefore, to ensure the effectiveness of training and the combat readiness of units upon completion of training, the JGS established a mandatory strength level for battalions reporting to a training center.

In-Place Training

In-place training was the second most effective approach to training after formal instruction at a school or training center. Conducted by the unit itself, in-place training was a commander's responsibility, a continuous process of self-improvement by which the unit endeavored to overcome its weaknesses and develop its strengths in every area.

An in-place training program usually consisted of three parts, one of which was mandatory and prescribed by the CTC. Another part was the result of the unit commander's initiative; subjects of his choice were usually tailored to the unit's needs for self-improvement. Finally, the parent headquarters—division or corps—would require another part, which was generally designed to minimize losses and exploit gains in the specific area of operation to which the unit was assigned.

Because of the composition of this program, the objective of in-place training was always to enhance knowledge, foster mutual trust

between the commander and his subordinates, and develop leadership as well as combat and technical capabilities of the unit so that it could attain a high level of performance in every respect.

In-place training was usually conducted under five different forms. First, there were short-duration courses organized by the parent headquarters—corps, division, sector, service branch, or combat arms—and devoted to subjects related to intelligence, counterintelligence, political warfare, ambush, counter-ambush, raid, patrol, reconnaissance, weapon effectiveness, mine and booby-traps, artillery fire adjustment, request for air or naval support, fire coordination, and equipment maintenance. Second, there were field exercises, conducted separately by the infantry or in combination with armor, artillery and helicopter elements. Third, a commander might chose to give lectures or to hold seminars with his subordinates on selected subjects. Fourth, a parent headquarters might deploy mobile training teams to subordinate units to assist in the in-place training process. Finally, a parent headquarters might organize briefings or seminars concerning after-action reports and lessons learned during which the enemy's as well as our strengths and weaknesses were analyzed and discussed.

Scheduling for in-place training was usually kept flexible in order not to interfere with combat activities; normally rest and recuperation periods were partially devoted to in-place training. For example, a unit might take one day out of a three-day rest period, usually devoted to resupply and maintenance, for in-place training. By doing this, it was usually able to conduct in-place training at least 24 hours every month. A unit might also arrange for its subordinate components to take turns resting and training in-place in such a way that the entire unit went through the cycle within a specific period of time. Even when a unit was unable to suspend regular activities, a resourceful commander could always arrange for in-place training for at least six hours every week.

As a matter of policy, the CTC insisted that each unit should devote one full 24-hour period each month for in-place training. One half of that period was devoted to mandatory subjects, and the remaining

was equally divided between the unit commander's self-improvement program and that of the parent headquarters. (Table 17)

On-the-Job Training

As an alternate to formal instruction, on-the-job training was widely practiced in the RVNAF beginning in 1968. Its objective was to accelerate the training and qualification of specialists required by the expansion and modernization of the RVNAF, a process occasioned by the Vietnamization program. On-the-job training supplemented the formal training of specialists conducted at in-country or offshore service schools, which usually required a long time.

Within the RVNAF, the training process was undertaken by direct support units for the benefit of supported units especially in the areas of supply and maintenance. On a larger scale and more specialized level, on-the-job training was provided by U.S. logistic support units to ARVN counterpart units. This type of training was conducted under several forms over the years.

The most popular on-the-job training program was perhaps the "Buddy" project undertaken by the U.S. 1st Logistic Command under Major General Joseph M. Heizer, Jr. This project was designed to train ARVN logistic personnel in the use, maintenance, and supply of modern equipment items which were being or would be delivered to the RVNAF. Depending on the scope and program, the duration of this training might vary from two days to six months. If the U.S. and ARVN units were in close proximity, ARVN students reported daily to the U.S. unit for training as scheduled. If the training involved widely separated units, then designated ARVN students were detached on a TDY basis to the U.S. unit for the training period during which they were also administratively supported by the training unit. Upon completion of training, students were returned to their units for appropriate assignment. By the end of 1970, there were in excess of 9,300 ARVN specialists trained on the job by the Buddy program.

**Table 17 - In-Place Training Program (Mandatory)
for ARVN Units, 1971**

SUBJECT	TRAINING HOURS	TRAINING DOCUMENT
<u>GENERAL</u>		
Military Discipline and Military Justice	1/Quarterly	Military Justice Directorate, J1 & AG/JGS
Security for Communications & Documents	2/Quarterly	J2/JGS-AFSS-73-6A
Intelligence and Counter-intelligence	2/Quarterly	J2/JGS-AFSS-73-6A
First Aid	1/Quarterly	Army Medical Corps
Preventive Medicine	1/Quarterly	Army Medical Corps
Map Reading	2/Quarterly	CTC
<u>WEAPONS</u>		
Individual Weapon Training (incl. day/night firing)	4/Semi-annually	CTC
Maintenance and Cleaning of Weapons	2/Quarterly	CTC
Mines and Booby Traps	1/Monthly	CTC
M-72 Anti-tank Weapon	2/Quarterly	CTC
<u>POLITICAL WARFARE</u>	3/Monthly	GPWD
<u>TACTICS</u>		
Patrol	5/Monthly	
Ambush		
Offensive		
Defensive		
River-Crossing		
Search of Village		
Total	144 Hours	
<u>CADRE TRAINING</u> (Off and NCOs)		
Command and Leadership	8/Quarterly on each of three subjects	
Artillery Fire Coordination		
Heliborne Operations		
Maneuver Plans		
	96 Hours	

NOTE: This training program makes up only 50% of total hours for mandatory subjects; 25% are for review and critique, and the remaining 25% are for subjects prescribed by the parent unit headquarters. Minimum number of hours prescribed: 24 hrs for each individual soldier per month.

Another form of OJT involved the transfer of U.S. equipment or facilities to ARVN use; hence, it was designed to train ARVN personnel until they were qualified to take over the operation and maintenance of the U.S. facility being transferred. In this training process, ARVN students were first detached to a U.S. facility to learn their jobs through a period of OJT. At the end of this period, the students remained with the U.S. facility instead of returning to their units. They continued working side by side with U.S. specialists who were gradually phased out. When the transfer of responsibility took place, ARVN personnel were ready to take over and assume complete control.

This form of OJT was most extensively used by U.S. naval, engineer, signal and transportation units during 1970 for the purpose of transferring assets, facilities, and operational responsibilities to RVNAF counterpart units under several ACTOV programs. It was by far the most successful type of training; not only did it qualify a great number of ARVN specialists in a relatively short time, it also provided for a smooth transition which enabled U.S. units to redeploy without causing any interruption in support operations. The inventory, safeguard and transfer of U.S. assets were also rapidly and accurately carried out, precluding regrettable losses and pilferages.

On-the-job training was occasionally conducted in ARVN units by U.S. mobile training teams especially when a new weapon system was introduced for immediate ARVN use and there was no time for formal instruction. Such occasions arose in 1968 during a crash program to equip ARVN units with the M-16 rifle and M-72 rocket launcher, and again in 1972 when the TOW missile was hastily introduced in the midst of the enemy's Easter Offensive. Mobile OJT was an especially effective approach to refresher training for RF and PF units.

Finally, during the cease-fire period when U.S. military advisers were no longer available, an extensive OJT program was conducted by U.S. Army civilian specialists on TDY and U.S. civilian contractors. Under this program, U.S. specialists were assigned to work with ARVN units, assisting them in supply, maintenance and rebuild operations and training Vietnamese personnel at the same time. The Vietnamese Army Arsenal

and General Depot at Long Binh, for example, were assisted by civilian specialists assigned by the U.S. Army Materiel Command. While assisting both agencies in daily operations, these specialists also conducted OJT for Vietnamese military and civilian personnel.

Several companies on contract with the U.S. Army also contributed to this program. Pacific Architects and Engineers and Vinnell Corporation, for example, assisted and trained ARVN engineer personnel in the management of large bases, particularly in the operation, maintenance and rebuild of high-power generators and air-conditioning systems. Dynalectron, Inc. provided assistance to ARVN engineers in the operation of industrial sites while training ARVN specialists in the production of quarry rock and asphalt and in maintaining road-building machinery in support of the LOC program. AAEO, Inc. helped operate the ARVN calibration program and trained ARVN calibration specialists at the same time. Finally Computer Sciences Corporation assisted ARVN logistic organizations such as the National Materiel Management Agency and the Logistic Data Processing Center in their computer operations and trained managers, programmers, and analysts for both agencies.

Combined Operations

Combined U.S.-ARVN operations constituted a special form of on-the-job training for ARVN combat units which was both effective and unique. The basic concept derived from the belief that by operating alongside U.S. units, ARVN personnel would be able to learn valuable practices in a combat situation that were not always available in formal school training. When participating in combined operations with U.S. units, not only were ARVN commanders and staffs able to observe U.S. operational methods, use of firepower and mobility assets, and leadership in every tactical situation, ARVN units also benefited from U.S. support, especially in firepower, mobility and medical evacuation, which were not always available through the ARVN system. In a certain sense, a U.S. unit committed to a combined operation with ARVN units was not unlike a "demonstration" unit at a school or training center. Over the years,

this concept was implemented under several programs, at several levels, and in all four corps areas of South Vietnam.

In the I Corps area, the U.S. Marines initiated the Combined Action Program (CAP) in 1966 with a view to improving security and the effectiveness of Popular Forces. Under this program, U.S. Marine squads were deployed to villages where each of them combined with a PF platoon to form a CAP platoon. The U.S. squad assisted and trained the PF platoon in daily security activities until the platoon was capable of operating separately without assistance. From 79 CAP platoons in 1967, the program eventually expanded to 114 platoons in 1969 or a total of 20 CAP companies deployed to populated areas of all five provinces in I Corps area.

In the Capital Military District, the FAIRFAX operation, which was designed to restore security to three district areas adjoining Saigon, Binh Chanh, Thu Duc, and Nha Be, was perhaps the most typical of effective combined operations. Conducted from December 1966 to December 1967, it involved three U.S. infantry battalions and three ARVN Ranger battalions. The method of operation was a mixture of cross-attachment, pair-off, and integration. Since each U.S. and ARVN battalion had four organic rifle companies, a company from each battalion was placed in direct support of the other battalion and vice versa. This attached company was further integrated with the battalion it supported by exchanging platoons with the remaining companies of the battalion. On many occasions, ARVN, RF-PF, and U.S. squads worked together in combined platoons.

In II Corps area, the pair-off concept in combat operations was initiated in 1968 by mutual agreement between the U.S. I Field Force and ARVN II Corps. These pair-off operations were expressly designed to improve the combat effectiveness of ARVN infantry units so that they would be able to take over the primary combat responsibility from U.S. units in the years ahead. Several combined operations were successively conducted under the pair-off program such as DAN THANG-McLAIN on 1 August 1968 in which the U.S. Task Force South (two battalions and one armored cavalry squadron) joined forces with the 23d ARVN Division in the provinces of Binh Thuan and Lam Dong, and DAN SINH-COCHISE

conducted north of Binh Dinh Province on 22 August 1968 involving the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade and the ARVN 22d Infantry Division. During these operations, both Vietnamese and English were used in plans, orders, briefings, and reports. RF and PF units in the province were also attached to ARVN forces and operated hand-in-hand with U.S. units. Initially confined to infantry units, the pair-off concept soon gained wide implementation in artillery and other support units and proved especially beneficial for newly-activated organizations.

In III Corps area, similar efforts were undertaken in mid-1969 under the Dong Tien (Progress together) campaign. This combined campaign was designed by the U.S. II Field Force and III Corps to improve three ARVN infantry divisions and other combat elements assigned to III Corps in terms of combat effectiveness and pacification support. Although short in duration, the Dong Tien campaign effectively prepared ARVN units for taking over combat responsibilities from redeploying U.S. units. The Dong Tien campaign was extensively implemented throughout the III Corps area. In Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Binh Duong Provinces, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division (AM) and 1st Infantry Division operated along side the 5th ARVN Division and provincial territorial forces. In the Long Khanh-Binh Tuy-Phuoc Tuy area, the U.S. 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 1st Australian Task Force joined forces with the ARVN 18th Division and provincial territorial forces. In Long An, Hau Nghia, and Tay Ninh Provinces, the U.S. 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division and the U.S. 25th Infantry Division cooperated with the ARVN 25th Division and provincial RF and PF units.

During the Dong Tien campaign, ARVN and territorial force personnel proved enthusiastic when operating with U.S. combat units. In addition to receiving complete U.S. support in firepower and mobility during combat actions, ARVN commanders and staff officers were able to learn many valuable procedures and techniques from U.S. forces, especially as regards leadership, tactics, and firepower coordination. A lively and effective method of training in itself, combined operations were also a timely effort undertaken to enable the smooth re-deployment of U.S. combat units from South Vietnam.

Offshore Training

Offshore training was the type of formal instruction designed to assist the RVNAF in obtaining a pool of talent and skills that in-country training capabilities could not provide.

There were several forms of offshore training made available for RVNAF personnel over the years. First, there were formal courses conducted at various service schools throughout the United States. These included basic and advanced courses for officers and the U.S. Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. There was also formal education at U.S. universities and colleges which was available to a limited number of selected RVNAF officers both at the undergraduate and post-graduate level. Then, there was on-the-job training, coupled with a regular course at a U.S. Army service school or installation, which allowed RVNAF students to acquire both formal training and the opportunity to put this training into practice by working alongside U.S. personnel. RVNAF personnel might also receive training by observing certain operations or procedures at selected U.S. installations for a certain period without attending any formal course of instruction. Finally, orientation tours were periodically conducted for the benefit of selected RVNAF officers holding responsible positions with the objective of familiarizing them with U.S. Army doctrine, organization and methods of operation and enhancing their knowledge.

Prior to 1955, offshore training was restricted to French service schools in France or in her colonies. This training was available only for a small number of carefully selected Vietnamese personnel. Therefore, the results achieved during the five years of offshore training in France, from 1949 to 1954, were not very impressive. (*Table 18*)

Beginning in 1955, with the onset of direct U.S. military assistance, offshore training was conducted almost exclusively in the United States or at U.S. installations overseas. A wide range of regular and associate courses were made available for RVNAF officers and NCOs at U.S. Army service schools from specialist to high level management courses in every branch of service. There was some exception, however, in that the offshore MAP training program sometimes precluded, as a matter of

Table 18 – Offshore Training in France, 1949 – 1956

Schools	Number of Students
1. ARMY	
Etat Major de Paris	11
Coëtquidan (Infantry)	5
Chalon-sur-Marne (Artillery)	5
Angiers (Engineer)	11
Ecole Supérieure de Genie, Versailles (Construction)	7
Montargis (Signal)	10
Fontainebleau (Ordnance)	30
Ecole Supérieure d'Intendance (QM)	15
Montpellier (Administration)	15
ABC Saumur (Armor)	15
Tours (Transportation)	5
Lyon (Medical Administration)	5
Melun (Gendarmery)	2
St Maixant (Infantry)	12
Sorbonne (Psycho Test)	2
Bordeaux (Medical)	9
Polytechnique (Engineering)	1
TOTAL	160

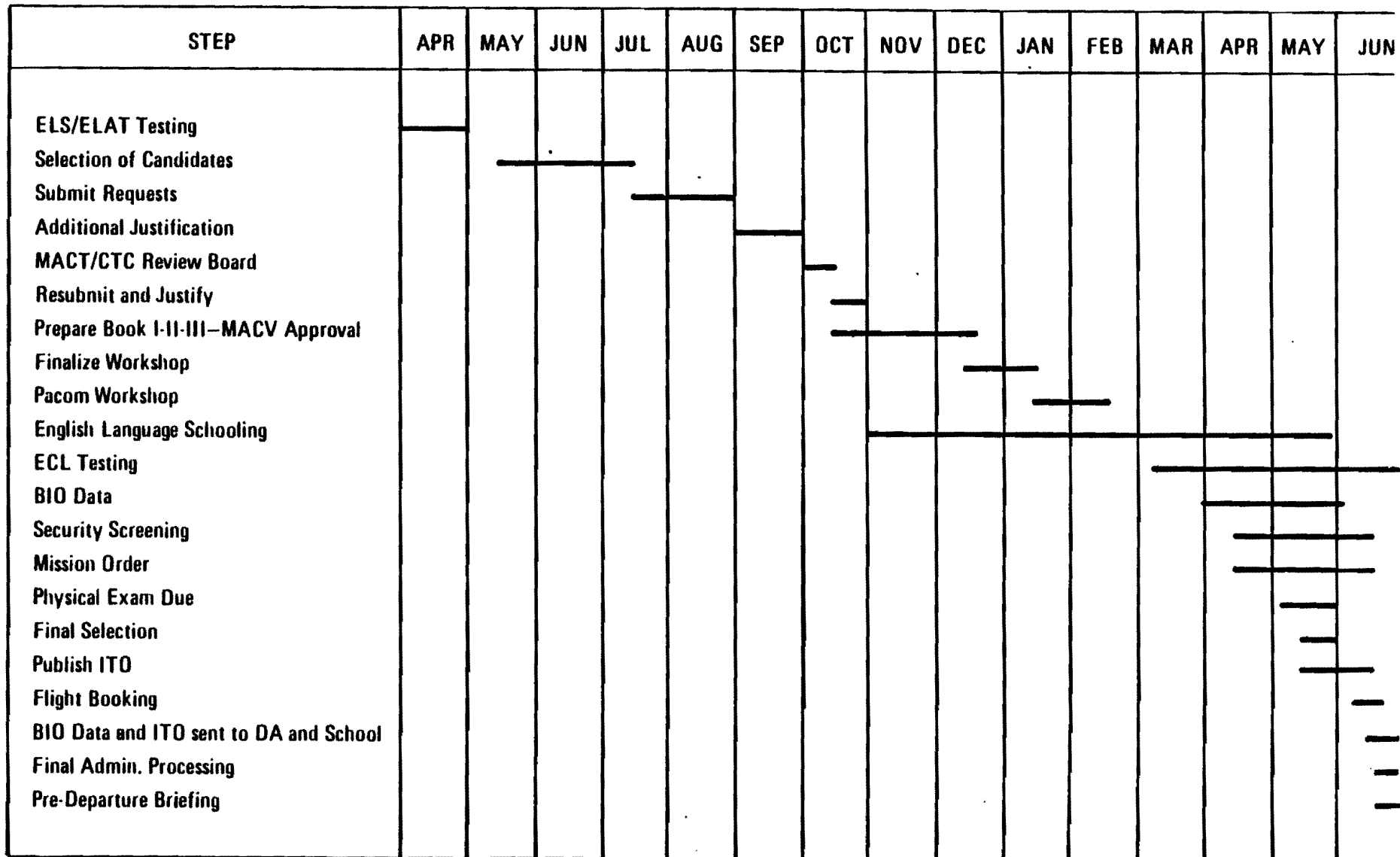
Schools	Number of Students
2. AIR FORCE	
Salon (Pilot Officers)	6
Salon (Mechanical Engineers)	5
Marrakech (Pilot Officers and NCOs)	87
Fez (Flight Radio)	26
Rocheport (Mechanics)	150
TOTAL	274
3. NAVY	
Ecole Navale de Brest (Command and Engineering)	6
Ecole Marine de Cherbourg (NCO)	4
Ecole Marine de Toulon (NCO)	4
Ecole de Fusiliers Sirocco, Algiers (NCO)	2
TOTAL	16

of policy, non-U.S. citizens attending "restricted" or "not appropriate" courses for reasons of security. Also, no course in the school system higher than the Command and Staff Course was ever made available for RVNAF officers. In addition to the U.S., Malaysia also offered two courses on territorial intelligence and jungle warfare to ARVN personnel during the early and mid-60's.

An annual offshore training schedule was developed every year through the coordinated efforts of MACV Training Directorate and the CTC, based on RVNAF requirements and the number of spaces available for each course. The time involved in preparing a student for offshore training was usually 15 months or longer, half of which was devoted to the English language. (*Chart 8*)

In order to qualify for MAP offshore training, students had to satisfy several basic requirements. They had to take the English Language Screening (ELS) and English Language Aptitude Tests (ELAT). The results of these tests were recorded on each student's application and served as a basis for complementary English language training. Each potential student had to pass an English Comprehension Level (ECL) test 45 to 90 days prior to the course starting date. Subsequently, he had to complete the mandatory medical examination and be determined physically fit for the type of course requested. Finally, he had to receive a security clearance from the MSS. In addition, there were other binding requirements that both the JGS and the individual students had to observe. For example, the JGS was required to assign students to appropriate jobs after the completion of training in order to ensure that their training was productive. Reserve officers willing to attend courses in the U.S. were required to stay in military service for an additional period from two to ten years depending on the length of the course. Such pledges were required in writing prior to departure for the U.S.. Also, no student was allowed to attend a second course in the U.S. if less than two years had elapsed since he returned home from the first course. Finally, those selected for offshore training had to be servicemen with good military records and ideologically motivated for the national cause.

Chart 8 – Steps for Military Assistance Training, ARVN



To maintain discipline and ensure assiduity among students while they were in school, the CTC designated a leader for each group having more than two students. Usually the highest ranking or most senior, this student was responsible for maintaining discipline, good deportment and esprit de corps among his fellow students. He was authorized to take corrective actions, recommend disciplinary measures and monitor the progress of each student. Every month, the group leader was required to send a progress report to the CTC in which he might also make recommendations concerning the course. Upon completion of a course, the CTC usually notified the AG, JGS and the parent units of the results achieved by each individual student which were provided by the MACV Training Directorate. Depending on his performance in school, a student might be officially commended or reprimanded by the JGS upon returning home.

The most serious problem encountered by the CTC in managing the offshore training program was the students' language capability. Although English language training was compulsory for all prospective students, the failure or rejection rate was always high. In 1970, for example only 818 students qualified for helicopter pilot training in the U.S. out of a total of 1,486 spaces authorized. As a matter of policy, therefore, the CTC always made it mandatory for units to nominate "stand-ins" beyond and above the number of students authorized. This mandatory "stand-in" rate was 50% for officers and 150% for NCOs and enlisted men.

Over the years, the U.S.-sponsored offshore training program contributed significantly to the improvement of the RVNAF. From FY55 to FY62, as many as 5,442 Vietnamese servicemen completed courses at various U.S. service schools; among them, the infantry accounted for 1,649, and the logistic branch, 2,278. The number of students declined afterwards to a mere 241 during FY64. However, as the RVNAF force structure expanded, offshore training also increased to 505 students in FY67 and kept growing at a steady pace. After Vietnamization was implemented to improve and modernize the RVNAF, the number of students rose sharply from 752 during FY68 to 1,599 during FY70, about one half of which consisted of helicopter pilots. (Table 19)

**Table 19 – ARVN Personnel Trained in U.S. Army Service Schools
and Installations, 1955 – 1970**

CONUS Schools and Locations	FY 55-62	FY 63	FY 64	FY 65	FY 66	FY 67	FY 68	FY 69	FY 70
Artillery – Ft Sill	487	401	10	6	31	24	32	29	52
Armor – Ft Knox	204	15	4	5	25	19	33	13	15
Air Defense – Ft Bliss	4						2		
Adjutant General – Ft Benjamin Harrison	100	10	1	3	20	13	25	23	18
Infantry – Ft Benning	1649	102	9	23	31	49	133	121	102
Aviation – Ft Rucker, Ft Walters	29	25	61	45	11	82	45	95	818
Chemical – Ft McClellan	34	8	8	4	4	6	6		
Command and Staff – Ft Leavenworth	91	11	11	13	26	26	26	7	8
Civic Action – Ft Gordon				19	9			10	
Engineer – Ft Belvoir	792	70	30	34	30	36	105	218	21
Finance – Ft Benjamin Harrison	83	2	3	2	3	4	32	7	7
Information – Ft Benjamin Harrison	36				4	3	6	8	4
Intelligence – Ft Holabird	2	4	2	30	9	18	16	12	10
Logistic Management – Ft Lee Rock Island		5	1	3	10	22	27	12	8
Medical – Ft Sam Houston	83	8	3	3	2	9	4	19	15
Military Police – Ft Gordon	89	52	9	8	11	5	26	23	20
Ordnance – Aberdeen PG – Redstone Arsenal	540	50	18	18	15	4	13	26	15
Quartermaster – Ft Lee	207	2	2	8	12	15	32	30	19
Signal – Ft Monmouth – Ft Gordon	534	83	20	9	22	66	52	60	70
Special Warfare – Ft Bragg	107	60	40	40	22	28	35	11	11
Transportation – Ft Eustis	88	11	2		5	29	38	98	360
Others (JAG, Chaplain, WAC, Music, Language)	283	5	7	4	10	47	64	30	26
TOTAL	5442	563	241	277	312	505	752	852	1599

Beginning with FY1972, as the RVNAF service school and training center system developed and improved, the requirements for offshore training also gradually decreased. During 1972, there were only 847 students attending U.S. service schools. This number was reduced to 404 for FY72, 502 for FY74 and finally 159 for FY75.

Observations

Under the U.S. military assistance program and advisory efforts successively undertaken by MAAG and MACV, the RVNAF training base constantly developed and improved over the years. When this military assistance program began in 1955, the Vietnamese Armed Forces had only one training center for recruits and ten service schools, which were enough to support a 150,000-man military force. As the RVNAF force structure increased, especially beginning in 1965, the RVNAF training base also expanded to 33 training centers and 25 schools in 1970. The total student capacity of recruit training centers and service schools, therefore, increased significantly every year. In terms of recruit training in particular, this capacity rose from 159,138 in 1966 to 333,777 in 1968 and ultimately to an all-time record of 503,740 recruits in 1970. The service schools, meanwhile, increased their total capacity from 59,826 students in 1966 to 102,126 in 1969. (*Table 20*)

For all this expansion in capacity, the RVNAF training base did not improve significantly until 1970 when U.S. Army military construction funds were made available for the rehabilitation of classrooms, sleeping quarters, firing ranges, and water and electrical systems. This improvement in facilities brought about a very positive increase in training efficiency. Despite this, training centers frequently ran into problems of overcrowding or underuse which were caused by unregulated inputs of trainees from the recruitment and draft system.

In general, the organization and scheduling of training courses responded satisfactorily to requirements dictated by tactical needs, the modernization of weapons and equipment, and the trends toward self-sufficiency. Duplications and overlappings still existed, however, especially in the area of specialist training for logistic support

Table 20 — RVNAF School Enrollments for 1970

In calendar year 1970, the RVNAF trained 503,740 recruits in 33 National, Regional and Popular Forces, and division training centers and 87,197 students in 15 technical services, 4 military and 4 combat arms schools.

Schools	Programed Input	Actual Input	Percentage
Adjutant General	5,210	4,959	95
Administration and Finance	1,270	921	73
Armed Forces Language School	11,236	9,622	86
Armor	5,225	5,605	107
Artillery	1,715	2,327	136
Band	475	342	72
Command and Staff College	1,000	843	84
Engineer	5,673	6,571	116
Infantry	10,762	11,929	111
Intelligence	1,523	2,199	144
Junior Military Academy	1,400	1,371	98
Logistics Management	810	873	108
Military Dog Training Center	310	308	102
Military Police	1,222	1,908	156
Medical	2,300	3,517	153
National Defense College	40	26	65
NCO Academy	20,960	16,522	79
Ordnance	2,918	2,570	88
Polwar	505	304	60
Quartermaster	1,539	1,436	93
Signal	8,931	5,702	64
Social Welfare	580	199	39
Transportation	8,894	11,029	124
Vietnam Military Academy	250	191	76
Women Armed Forces Center	1,400	1,025	73

Source: HQ, MACV - Command history 1970, II, V-11-56.

functions, not only among services but also among service branches. Efforts initiated in 1974 by the CTC and CLC to standardize and unify such courses were truly a significant improvement despite modest results.

The institution of special officer courses for the advancement of capable but less educated NCO's was also an excellent policy. Not only did it provide a large number of experienced and capable platoon leaders for combat units, it also helped dissipate criticisms of class and education discrimination within the RVNAF. Because of the selective process which was predicated on formal education and diplomas, for years the RVNAF officer corps had been considered an exclusive club for the rich, the influential and the educated. Public opinion was therefore critical of the system which they thought tended to perpetuate itself to the detriment of the poor. But by making upward mobility possible for the less-educated but highly capable NCOs, the RVNAF also depleted themselves of capable and combat-experienced NCOs whose ranks constituted the backbone of every combat unit and of the entire army in general.

Programs of instruction, it had to be candidly admitted, were almost exact copies of corresponding U.S. Army training courses, both basic and refresher. This came as unmistakable evidence of the U.S. Army doctrinal influence on the RVNAF which was exerted either through the advisory effort or U.S.-educated Vietnamese personnel. These programs of instruction differed from the U.S. originals only where there was incompatibility with the RVNAF organization and equipment.

Tactical training during the early years, therefore, was highly conventional with its emphasis on technological resources and maximum use of firepower to resolve a battle. Consequently, it was considered by many to be unrealistic since what had been taught was not always useful in a counter-insurgency war. Beginning in 1960, however, some innovations were brought into tactical training programs in an effort to cope with guerrilla tactics of Communist insurgency. Such new subjects as techniques of patrol and reconnaissance along water lines, searching Communist-held hamlets, and detecting booby-traps and secret hideouts were introduced and found to be most popular.

After U.S. combat forces entered the ground war in 1965 with their impressive array of helilift assets and powerful air and naval firepower,

the ARVN training programs were further enriched with new tactics of heliborne operations, eagle flights, and combined arms. Then, when pacification became a national endeavor in 1967, they were also complemented by subjects related to territorial security and rural development. In brief, what had been accomplished by the MACV Training Directorate and CTC to update POIs as required was indeed a most commendable effort.

Still, there was ample room for further improvement if the scope of every subject of instruction was scrutinized to provide better adaption to realities and the skills of the average Vietnamese soldier. For example, the average Vietnamese soldier needed to learn how to fire his individual weapon from every practical position depending on terrain features. He also needed to be taught to fire rapidly and accurately and how to maintain his weapon properly.

As far as instructional materials were concerned, our school and training centers did possess very comprehensive literature made available by the U.S. Army service schools and U.S. advisers. Vietnamese students returning home from U.S. training also brought back instructional materials which further contributed to the enrichment of this literature. However, very few of these materials were contributions of pure Vietnamese creativity. Most of our training literature consisted of unmodified translations from U.S. field and technical manuals. Even though these were useful for conventional training purposes, there was also a critical need for comprehensive literature on the special aspects of the war that somehow we failed to produce. Some of the materials of Vietnamese creative production such as anti-guerrilla operations, pacification and rural development, for example were criticized by our own students to be "incomprehensive, theoretical, unrealistic, and insubstantial." These were also considered inferior to materials developed by U.S. service schools. Occasional "lessons learned" materials, published by J-3, JGS, also did not contribute much to improving our training.

Our inability to formulate a military doctrine tailored to the specific conditions of the Vietnam conflict and our national ideology, goals, and resources was a constant source of disappointment. The CTC was at a great loss when in late 1974, in the face of U.S. military aid

cutbacks, it was ordered by President Thieu to formulate a doctrine and tactics designed to fight a "poor man's war." The rush of subsequent events made this undertaking impossible but this certainly was not a task that could be accomplished overnight.

Over the years, our training process was also hampered by the lack of demonstrations and practical exercises, especially during tactical instruction periods. Our infantry school and training centers never had a complete, up to strength demonstration unit commensurate with the large numbers of students. For security reasons also, demonstration units, when available, were more frequently required for defense than training purposes. Also, several military schools and training centers resorted to using security protection units for demonstration purposes but, lacking in training, they only produced a poor performance. Some schools, such as the Infantry and Armor Schools, even found their training areas constantly shrunk by the encroachment of industrial plants and agricultural development. Alternate training grounds were sometimes available but insecure. Consequently, training was seldom correctly implemented in full accordance with the prescribed programs of instruction.

In addition to these shortcomings, there was also the problem of instructors. The school and training center system was seldom assigned the best cadre available. Competent and good cadres always seemed to find their way into combat or newly-activated units which ranked higher in priority. A sizable part of those assigned to schools and training centers to serve as instructors often consisted of incompetent or undesirable elements released by other units. Naturally, they did not make a good impression on students or the school cadre. Many young officers, who never had any combat experience or command, were retained as instructors immediately after their graduation.

Combat and expansion requirements always seemed to take precedence over training. Therefore, schools and training centers were compelled to retain their old instructors as long as they could. On the other hand, deprived of new challenges and opportunities, these senior instructors became in turn self-complacent, easy-going and inefficient. Worse still, because of their long tenure, they were usually unfamiliar

with new trends and developments which tended to make their knowledge obsolete. Some schools attempted to remedy this by sending their instructors on an observation tour in combat units for one or two months every year but this apparently was not enough to improve them significantly.

In an effort to improve the quality of instructors, the JGS devised a rotation plan which would automatically reassign all officers and NCOs having held an instructor's job for more than four years to combat units and assign those with combat experience to schools, but somehow this plan did not work as expected. There were several reasons for this. For one thing, no field or tactical commander was cooperative enough to release his best officers, for obvious reasons of self-interest. For another, very few competent and combat-experienced officers ever desired to be assigned to schools as instructors even though this implied less hazards. Indeed, the majority of young and ambitious officers never considered a school assignment as a stepping stone for career advancement. Most of them rather despised the instructor's job which they regarded as "unrewarding" or simply "downhill." Indeed, the rewards were rare; an entire career as an instructor might be crowned with only a "Training Medal," and the opportunities for promotion were almost non-existent. The results were that only the old, the ones burdened with family problems or those who feared the hazards of combat desired to follow the career of an instructor. As a matter of policy, the majority of officers who graduated from U.S. service schools were assigned to our schools and training centers as instructors but most of them were not very happy with this assignment. They would welcome the first opportunity to be reassigned to more rewarding jobs. Beginning in 1970, the JGS, in a sympathetic gesture toward the plight of schools and training centers, authorized them to retain a few talented and experienced officers from each course as instructors. Again, this measure also failed because the schools could not compete with field commanders whose strong requests to get their officers back always prevailed.

As regards in-place unit training, it was rarely enforced completely despite repeated reminders to all unit commanders. Inspection

teams seldom found anything wrong with schedules and statistics charts that units used to show that they always complied with orders; in fact, commanders normally used any pause between operations for rest and recuperation instead of training. Mandatory unit refresher training formally conducted at training centers, therefore, became most important. In principle, every battalion was required to undergo refresher training at least once every three years or whenever its combat strength was down to 50%. However, even though training schedules were established and disseminated every year, they were rarely enforced since field commanders had myriad legitimate reasons to withhold their units or delay their scheduled training. There were even instances when battalions had to be hastily recalled in the midst of training because they were needed to respond to certain tactical emergencies.

To ensure that training was effective, the JGS required that each battalion should have at least 450 men when reporting to a training center for refresher training, and that any replacement or replenishment should be done prior to departure. However, very few battalions were up to this required strength when reporting to a training center. Delays and interruptions inevitably occurred when replacements kept arriving after the program of instruction had started. Of the four weeks spent at a training center, two were devoted to individual refresher training and two for unit tactics. For the first three weeks, the officers were trained separately; they only joined the battalion during the last week which included three days of field exercises. Although three weeks was not a long period of training, this time would have been better used if the officers, instead of receiving separate instruction, could have joined their men when they underwent platoon and company level tactical training. Since this was a unique opportunity for the entire battalion to train as a unit, the officers should have spent as much time with their men as possible in every phase of training. Because of these and other shortcomings, perhaps the best approach to unit training was the employment of mobile training teams. This was the only effective method when combat units could not afford to stay away from their assigned areas of tactical responsibility for any long period. For RF and PF units, in particular,

the mobile training concept proved the most appropriate and best method to improve their effectiveness.

Despite several shortcomings, over the years, the RVNAF training efforts produced remarkable achievements. This was largely due to the contributions of U.S. advisers and the U.S. military assistance program.

PART THREE

WELFARE AND SUPPORT

CHAPTER VIII

Pay and Welfare

The RVNAF Pay System

The General Directorate of Finance and Audit, Ministry of National Defense, was the agency responsible for all matters concerning pay and expenditures for the RVNAF. Under its control, there were 9 Regional Finance and Administration Services located throughout the country, each responsible for a defined area. In its area of responsibility, a finance and administration service managed pay and financial transactions with finance offices organic to infantry regiments, self-administered units and sector administration and logistic support centers. There were in total over 300 such finance offices in the RVNAF; 44 among them were responsible for the RF and PF.

Every month, each finance office (or section) established a blank payroll for the unit which was based on a personnel roster provided by the unit's personnel administration office (or section). This blank payroll was then forwarded to the regional finance and administration service which verified its accuracy and issued a pay order to the unit after endorsement by the Regional Bureau of Budget Obligation Controller and the General Directorate of Budget and Foreign Aid in Saigon. Upon receiving the pay order, the unit finance officer deposited it at a designated local (province) treasurer's office. Normally, both the verified blank payroll and pay order were returned to the unit before the 15th of each month so that the unit could begin payments on the 20th which was the regulation pay day. If for some reason, the pay order was not returned by the 15th, the unit was authorized to obtain a loan from the General Unit Fund which was managed by the regional finance and administration service.

Paying subordinate servicemen in the unit was a commander's responsibility. The unit commander determined which day of the month payments should begin but as a rule, pay day was usually on the 20th (prior to 1968, it was on the 29th or 30th) of the month. Since payments in the RVNAF were usually made in cash, it was the unit finance officer's duty to draw cash from the province treasurer's office against the unit's account. This was usually done one or two days before pay day. On this trip to the treasurer's office, the finance officer was always escorted by a security element provided by the unit commander whose responsibility it was to ensure that the money in transit would not be stolen, lost, or misappropriated.

On pay day, the disbursing officer or NCO made payments to individual servicemen in the unit based on the blank payroll and under the close supervision of the finance officer. When receiving his pay, each serviceman was required to sign his name or finger print on the payroll. In case subordinate elements of the unit were scattered, such as during an operation, payments were disbursed through pay agents. A pay agent was usually a company commander or a battalion staff officer who was given the responsibility to draw cash from the regimental finance office, sign for it on the payroll, then bring it back to make payments. After all payments had been made, the signed payroll and the amount of money left undisbursed because of absentees (AWOL, desertion or missing-in-action) were returned to the finance officer who deposited the left-over cash in the unit account at the province treasurer's office for future payments or disposal.

On a prolonged operation, a secondary unit (battalion or company) usually received in advance a food allowance in cash based on the duration of the operation, the unit payroll, and the current rate of food allowance. The unit commander used this money either to operate a field mess service or make cash payments to each soldier to subsist by himself for the entire duration of the operation.

A serviceman who was transferred to another unit was authorized to receive his monthly pay in advance if he departed after the 10th of the month. He was then issued a certificate of cessation of payment

which he submitted to the new unit's finance office for re-entry in the payroll. If he was a corporal or private, he was also issued a certificate of cessation of food which he could use as a meal ticket in any friendly unit he happened to stop by on his way. The unit which took him in for food issued him another certificate upon departure and was reimbursed by the unit of final destination.

In case of hospitalization, a serviceman continued to draw pay from his unit if hospitalization time was less than one month. Beyond one month, he was nominally transferred to the hospital and received pay from it for the duration of his hospitalization. Prior to 1966, hospitalization was free of charge if the illness or injury was attributable to official business. Otherwise, the hospitalized serviceman was required to pay for hospital fees (usually token) at a daily rate determined by his rank. After 1966, however, hospitalization was free for every serviceman regardless of the cause for it.

While undergoing training at a training center, all recruits received their pay from the recruiting unit, but draftees were paid by the training center until they were assigned to units. Servicemen whose functions were suspended because of disciplinary or poor performance reasons received only 40% and 60% of their basic pays respectively, but were still entitled to all allowances. Those who were under arrest for criminal violations received only one half of their pays and allowances while being detained. If acquitted, they could recover all withheld pays and allowances but had to reimburse the government for the cost of food during the period of detention if they were officers and NCOs. Popular force troopers had to forfeit pay if they were detained. Those servicemen who had been missing in action or captured by the enemy were entitled to all back pays and allowances during their absence after they came back and were reintegrated into the service.

Pay Structure

The monthly payment a Vietnamese serviceman received was for the most part made up of basic pay and 4 common allowances: technical

supplement, cost-of-living, family, and food. There were also special allowances paid to certain categories of personnel on the basis of their duties or functions or as a special incentive bonus.

Basic Pay. The military basic pay was aligned on a national pay scale with the index number 100 as base. This index number increased with rank (or grade) and rank seniority (echelon). Every three years of rank seniority entitled the serviceman to a higher pay index or pay echelon but the number of echelons allowable for each grade was limited. For each new grade, the basic pay was always echelon 1. Basic pay was computed by multiplying the index number by a pay rate then deducting 6% from the total.

Up to 1964, this pay rate was VN \$12.24 as determined by Decree No. 28/VN in 1954. The basic pay for index number 100 was considered then the vital minimum of subsistence for a lowest ranking civil servant. The 6% deduction was for pension contribution. As the cost of living kept increasing, in 1967, the GVN authorized an across-the-board increase of 30 for every index number.

In late 1971, a new pay system was introduced which greatly simplified computations of basic pay. The index system was discontinued in favor of a pay scale structured on rank and echelon (rank seniority). A second lieutenant just commissioned earned a basic pay of VN \$14,500 (1st echelon), and a colonel with 3 years of seniority in rank, VN \$28,400 (2d echelon). While the seniority required to move up one echelon was three years for all grades, the cash value of each echelon varied according to grade. (*Table 21*) Basic pay, of course, was but a part of the total payment each serviceman received every month.

Family Allowance. A family allowance was paid to married serviceman based on number of dependents. The age limit for children was 16, extended to 21 if a child attended school or was unable to work because of physical infirmities or health reasons. Birth certificates, marriage licenses, school certificates, and medical certificates were required to substantiate payment of family allowance.

Family allowance was limited to the first or legitimate wife but not to the number of children, including adopted children. Prior to 1964, there were different rates of family allowance which varied

Table 21 — Regular and Regional Forces
Monthly Basic Pay Schedule

	1 9 6 4			1 9 7 1		
	Basic pay (1st echelon) VN\$	Pay Index	Number of echelons (1st echelon) allowable	Basic pay (1st echelon) VN\$	Echelon value VN \$	Number of echelons allowable
Private	1,100	N/A	5	7,800	200	5
Private 1st cl.	1,200	N/A	5	8,000	200	5
Corporal	1,300	N/A	5	8,200	200	5
Corporal 1st cl.	1,392	110	6	8,500	200	6
Sergeant	1,519	120	8	9,500	200	8
Sergeant 1st cl.	1,772	140	8	9,800	200	8
M/Sergeant	2,025	160	8	10,000	200	8
M/Sgt. 1st cl.	2,278	180	8	10,500	200	8
Aspirant	2,784	220	8	12,500	200	8
2d Lieutenant	4,050	320	3	14,500	600	3
1st Lieutenant	4,683	370	4	16,300	600	4
Captain	5,569	440	5	18,500	800	5
Major	6,708	530	4	21,400	1,000	4
Lt. Colonel	7,847	620	4	23,400	1,000	3
Colonel	9,112	720	5	27,400	1,000	5
Br. General	12,276	970	1	31,400		1
Maj. General	12,656	1,000	2	33,400	1,200	2
Lt. General	13,922	1,100	2	37,400	1,200	2
General	15,187	1,200	1	41,400		1

Note: Except for Brigadier General, all figures concerning General Officers' basic pay in 1971 are estimates.

according to grade groups: general officers, field-grade officers, company-grade officers, and enlisted men. The rate of child allowance increased from the first through the fifth but leveled off beginning with the sixth child.¹ In 1964, to bring about some measure of equality, only two rates of family allowance were enforced, one for officers and NCO's and the other, slightly lower, for corporals and privates.

In 1971, with the institution of the new pay system, the rates of family allowance were also substantially increased. (Table 22) At the same time, to encourage family planning and to cut down on family allowance payments, the GVN made plans to limit allowance to the 4th child effective in 1974, a move recommended by U.S. advisory authorities. But these plans were never implemented in view of the economic plight faced by the RVNAF serviceman and the need to maintain troop morale.

Cost-of-Living Allowance. In addition to basic pay and family allowance, the RVNAF serviceman also received a cost-of-living allowance, which was in essence a form of compensation for increasing inflation. The cost-of-living allowance was paid to the serviceman himself, his wife, and all eligible children. Beginning in 1964, however, payment was limited to the 5th child. In 1971, plans were made to further limit payment to the 4th child but were never enforced.

The amount of cost-of-living allowance paid depended on rank and location. There were two rates, one applicable to officers and NCOs, and the other, to corporals and privates. As to location, South Vietnam was divided into two economic zones for the purpose of allowance computation. The "high" cost-of-living zone comprised all provinces of MR-1 and MR-2, the provinces of Phuoc Long, Phuoc Thanh, and Binh Long of MR-3, and four cities: Hue, Da Nang, Dalat, and Cam Ranh. The rest of the country made up the "low" cost of living zone. (Table 23) Popular forces were not eligible for this cost-of-living allowance.

¹Prior to 1964, the RF and PF were not eligible for family allowance.

Table 22 — Family Allowance Monthly Rates

Year	Grade	Wife	Each Child
1964	Officers and NCOs, Regular and RF	\$VN 350	\$VN 250
	Enlisted men, Regular Forces	262.50	187.50
	Enlisted men, RF	196	140
1971	Officers and NCOs, Regular and RF	700	600
	Enlisted men, Regular and RF	600	500
	Popular Forces	300	600

Table 23 — Cost-of-Living Allowance Monthly Rates

(VN piasters)

Rank	Year	Member		Wife		Each Child	
		High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
1. Officers and NCOs (Regular and RF)	1964	1,400	1,200	420	350	420	350
	1972	4,600	4,300	600	500	600	500
2. EM, Regular Forces	1964	1,050	900	315	262	315	262
	1972	4,350	4,050	500	400	500	400
3. EM, RF	1964	787	675	236	196	236	196
	1972	4,350	4,050	500	400	500	400

Technical Supplement Allowance. The technical supplement allowance was instituted with the purpose of encouraging enlisted men to improve their professional (technical) ability. This monthly allowance was paid to NCOs who held the B1 or B2 diploma and corporals and privates holders of the CC1 or CC2 Certificate at the following rates:

B1 Diploma: 35 index points, or \$VN 1,050 as of 1971

B2 Diploma: 60 index points, or \$VN 1,800 as of 1971

CC1 Certificate: \$VN 400 in 1965 and 700 as of 1971

CC2 Certificate: \$VN 600 in 1965 and 1,000 as of 1971

Regional Forces were eligible for the technical supplement allowance only beginning in 1968.

Food, Supplemental Food, and Firewood Allowance. All single corporals and privates were required to take their regular meals at the unit's mess. The cost of these meals was deducted from their monthly pay at a fixed daily rate, which in 1964 was \$VN 26.50 and \$VN 33 for low and high cost of living zones respectively. This money was used by the unit food service to purchase administrative food (rice, salt, sugar, tea) from a quartermaster depot and fresh food from the local market. All the money that was left after purchases contributed toward a food surplus fund. The unit commander might use this fund either to purchase cooking utensils or to improve food rations for special occasions such as national holidays or the unit commemorative day. Such expenditures were tightly controlled by the regional finance and administration service.

In addition to food allowance which was built into each serviceman's basic pay, the GVN also authorized a firewood allowance for each unit for the cooking of meals. This allowance was VN \$1 per man/day but was increased to VN \$4 after 1967. To improve food intake for certain categories of servicemen whose physical health was required by their duties, the GVN also authorized a supplemental food allowance at the following rates:

Recruits and draftees at induction centers: VN \$6.5/day

Cadets at Thu Duc or NMA: VN \$17.50/day

NCO cadets at the NCO Academy: VN \$15.00/day

Recruits undergoing basic training:	VN \$4/day
Navy personnel on ship duty:	VN \$48/day
Flight crew members at recuperation centers:	VN \$36/day
Flight crew members on duty:	VN \$30/meal

The issue of combat rations during operations was subject to pay deduction at the prevailing rates of daily food allowance (VN \$36.5 and VN \$43 in 1968). One combat ration (3 meals) was equivalent to a daily food allowance.

In addition to family, cost-of-living and food allowances which were generally referred to as common allowances, the RVNAF pay system also instituted about 20 special allowances which were paid to servicemen performing specialized or hazardous duties and those holding important functions. These were:

Air Duty Allowance. This allowance was paid to ARVN personnel serving in airborne and special forces units and to VNAF flight crew members on a monthly basis.

Enlistment and Reenlistment Allowance. This was an incentive-type bonus which was intended to induce voluntary enlistment and to encourage reenlistment upon termination of contract or draft service. In order to be eligible for a reenlistment bonus, a serviceman had to reenlist for at least two years, up to a maximum of five years.

The enlistment-reenlistment bonus consisted of two payments: a basic payment, which was made to all new recruits and reenlistees regardless of service or branch of service, and a proficiency payment, which was made to those holding a technical diploma or certificate, civilian or military. The rate at which these payments were made increased with the length of the enlistment or reenlistment period. Prior to 1965, the enlistment bonus was paid at one time together with the first month's pay, which made it possible for many new recruits to desert after receiving the money. To prevent this, the bonus was subsequently paid in three installments. The first installment was paid at the same time as the first month's pay at a training center. The second installment was paid when the recruit received his first monthly pay from a unit to which he was assigned and the remainder was

paid to him three months later. The Regional Forces were not eligible for this bonus until 1968.

Frogman's Allowance. Instituted in 1962, this monthly allowance was paid to those servicemen who graduated from a frogman's course, actually served in a frogman unit, and performed scuba diving for at least 40 hours per year.

Function Allowance. Suspended after 1963 apparently because of budget limitations, the function allowance was reinstated and made wider in scope in 1966. It was paid monthly to all officers holding a responsible command, staff, or training position at every level of the RVNAF hierarchy from the JGS, central agencies, and schools to combat, combat support and logistic units. The highest function allowance, worth VN \$4,000, was paid to the Chief of Staff, JGS, and the lowest, VN \$300, to every platoon leader.

Hazardous Duty Allowance. This allowance was payable monthly to all those servicemen who performed duties deemed hazardous to their lives or health, such as X-ray technicians, anesthetists, firemen, ordnance disposal specialists and grave or burial attendants.

Housekeeping Allowance. Created in 1953, the housekeeping allowance was available only to the Chief of the JGS, the JGS Chief of Staff, and corps and division commanders. It was paid monthly.

Clothing Allowance. This allowance was paid only once to newly commissioned officers who graduated from military schools or were promoted from NCO ranks in order to purchase dress uniforms.

Judge Responsibility Allowance. This allowance was paid to RVNAF officers serving as military judges in the judge advocate corps or gendarmery on a monthly basis.

Marine Corps Allowance. This allowance was paid monthly to marine privates and corporals only.

Military Attache Allowances. When appointed to serve in a military attache office overseas, officers and NCOs were entitled to a one-time settlement allowance paid before their departure to assist them in defraying costs involved in moving their households. While on duty, a military or assistant military attache received three kinds of monthly

allowance in addition to basic pay and family allowance: country separation allowance (7/10 of basic pay), representation allowance and housing allowance. NCOs serving overseas were entitled only to the country separation allowance since they were not allowed to bring their families along. All personnel serving overseas drew their pay in U.S. dollars which were converted from VN piasters at the fixed rate of 35 VN piasters to a U.S. dollar, regardless of prevailing exchange rates.

Military Intelligence and Collection Allowance. This allowance was paid to all ARVN personnel serving in military intelligence and field collection units on a monthly basis.

Ranger Allowance. This allowance was paid monthly to all ARVN personnel serving in the Ranger Corps.

Per Diem Allowance. Per diem payment was made to personnel of all grades on TDY in country at a full daily rate if the TDY duration was one month or less. During the second month, this rate was reduced by one half. Beyond two months, TDY became permanent reassignment and no per diem was allowed. Per diem rates varied according to rank and the availability of official accommodation.

Representation and Field Inspection Allowance. This monthly allowance was payable only to the following authorities: Chief of the JGS; corps and deputy corps commanders; air force and navy commanders and deputy commanders; special forces commander and deputy; CMD commander and deputy, division commanders and deputy commanders; brigade, air wing, or special tactical area commanders.

Responsibility Allowance. This allowance was paid either monthly, quarterly or annually to servicemen responsible for the custody of funds, supplies, and warehouses.

Sea Duty Allowance. All navy personnel were authorized sea duty allowance during the periods of time they served onboard ships at sea.

Soap Allowance. This allowance was available only for corporals and privates to buy soap. Prior to 1966, soap bars were issued monthly by the Quartermaster Department.

Differential Pay. A monthly differential pay was authorized all civil servants drafted in the military service either as officers or NCO's to make up for the difference between civil servant pay and military pay, which was usually lower.

Tet Loan or Gift. As a custom, every year before Tet, each serviceman was eligible for a cash loan for Tet shopping. This loan was paid back in four monthly installments beginning with the month of March through pay deduction. On some occasions, the GVN waived payments on Tet loans.

Discharge Allowance. This allowance was paid at one time for all servicemen honorably discharged on the basis of five days of pay per year of service but not to exceed 90 days.

Gratuities and Pension

Gratuities were compensations paid to or on behalf of RVNAF servicemen who were disabled by combat wounds or diseases, killed, or listed as missing in action. There were two kinds of gratuity: disability and death or missing in action.

Disability Gratuity. Upon entrance in a military hospital for treatment of combat wounds, each serviceman was immediately paid VN \$500. After treatment, the patient was examined by a medical board which determined his degree of disability. If his disability resulted from combat wounds or a disease attributable to military duties, he was discharged from service and qualified for a disability gratuity and a lifetime pension. The disability gratuity was a one-time payment which amounted to one month's pay if the serviceman was 10% to 60% disabled, and two months' pay if he was more than 60% disabled. His lifetime pension as a disabled veteran varied according to grade, seniority (pay echelon) and the degree of disability (10 to 100%). It was payable every quarter at the local treasurer's office upon presentation of a disabled serviceman's pension book issued to the beneficiary by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs.

In addition to his lifetime disability pension, which was similar to basic pay, the disabled veteran was also entitled to other allowances depending on his condition and family situation. If he had children under 18, he qualified for a family allowance which varied according to his disability degree. If he was unable to work or care for himself, he also qualified for a helper's allowance. A serviceman who was more than 85% disabled usually qualified either for a temporary allowance

for the severity of his disability or a permanent mutilation allowance in case he was heavily amputated. For those servicemen affected by tuberculosis, a tuberculosis treatment allowance was available if they underwent treatment at home. Eligibility for this allowance was reviewed every six months by an official medical board.

Death and Missing-In-Action Gratuity. Death and missing cases might be attributable or non-attributable to the performance of official duties. A serviceman was considered killed or missing in action if he was carrying out official business or attempting to save other people's lives or if his death resulted from injuries related to official business as certified by his unit commander or medical authorities.

The amount of gratuity payment made on behalf of a serviceman who died or was missing in action was equivalent to 12 times his last monthly pay or a minimum of VN \$24,000 if the pay was less than VN \$2,000. If death or missing could not be attributed to official duties, the gratuity amounted only to twice the last monthly pay. In either case, the gratuity was payable to the serviceman's direct beneficiary as determined by the following order of inheritance: Legal wife; Underage children eligible for family allowance; Children over 21; Parents; Grandparents or other relatives.

Payment of death and missing gratuity was a responsibility of the unit which administered the ill-fated serviceman. As required by regulations, this payment should be made, within five days if the serviceman belonged to the regular forces and seven days if he belonged to the RF, to his beneficiaries in the presence of his unit commander. In case the beneficiaries were unable to travel, the unit was required to pay them by check upon completion of all necessary paperwork. If the beneficiaries could not be located, the administrative unit had 15 days to prepare a gratuity file based on existing records and forward it to the regional administration and finance service. This service kept the file and decided on payment when claims by beneficiaries were later made.

In addition to this one-time gratuity, the dependents and relatives of a serviceman who died in action also qualified for lifetime pensions

payable by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs. The serviceman's legal wife would receive a widow's pension, the amount of which depended on the grade and seniority of her husband; this pension was paid every quarter by the local treasurer's office. If the widow remarried, she lost the right to this pension which was then transferred to the deceased serviceman's children if they were under 21. In that case, the pension was called orphan's pension. Orphans under 21 whose widowed mother died also qualified for this pension.

A deceased serviceman's parents were also eligible for a lifetime pension if they were of Vietnamese nationality, over 60 years of age, and exempt from income tax payment because of disability or debilitating illness. This parent's pension was the same for every serviceman and payable every quarter.

Retirement Pension. There were three kinds of retirement pension in the RVNAF: full seniority, partial seniority, and mixed. Only career servicemen were eligible for retirement pension. Full seniority pension was payable to all servicemen having completed at least 25 years of active duty in the military or civil service. This seniority included periods of civil service with the GVN under a permanent status, service in French regular forces, and service in the RVNAF beyond mandatory retirement age.²

In addition to the years of normal service, a serviceman might accumulate seniority at twice or three times the normal rate during periods of combat operation, detention by the enemy, or training in a service school overseas. Periods of service in hardship areas or at sea also accounted for 1.5 times the normal rate of seniority. With each combat injury, a serviceman earned an additional year of seniority but could do so only once a year.

Partial seniority pension was payable to servicemen having completed at least 15 years of service and being at least 33 years of age, upon request. It was also payable to career officers with over 15 years

²Under the 1968 General Mobilization Law, all RVNAF career servicemen were retained in the service even after reaching retirement age.

of service who were discharged for reasons of discipline, incompetence, or poor health. Enlisted men and servicewomen having reached 33 years of age and completed at least 15 years of service were also eligible for partial seniority pension if they were discharged because of poor health or upon request.

Mixed retirement pension was especially designed for and payable to servicemen of all grades having completed at least five years of active duty who were discharged because of disability. This pension was paid in addition to gratuities and allowances described earlier.

All three kinds of retirement pension, full seniority, partial seniority, and mixed, were computed by the following formula:

$$\text{Monthly Pension} = \frac{\text{Undeducted Basic Pay} \times 2 \times \text{Years of service}^3}{100}$$

Thus a serviceman retiring after 25 years of service would receive a monthly pension roughly equal to one half of his last basic pay. A corporal received a retirement pension equal to 80% of a sergeant's pension at equal seniority of service, but a private's or private's first class pension was only 75% of that amount.

A retirement pension file was kept and updated for each officer beginning with his 2d lieutenant's commission. For enlisted men, retirement pension files were not prepared until after five years of service.

To receive retirement pension payments, a serviceman was required to apply for it some time before his discharge from service. His unit then forwarded his application and retirement pension file to the Ministry of Veteran Affairs which issued a decree giving pension rights to the applicant. This decree was signed by the Prime Minister after endorsement by the General Directorate of Budget and Foreign Aid. It served as the basis for the Directorate of Military Pension, Ministry of

³Including seniority accumulated through combat duty or injuries, up to maximum of 40 years.

Veteran Affairs to establish a retired pension book and issue it to the applicant. Regulations required that this retired pension book should be issued within three months after a retired serviceman applied for pension. Pension payments were thereafter receivable every quarter at the local treasurer's office upon presentation of the retired pension book.

In addition to his individual pension, a retired serviceman was also authorized a monthly allowance for each of his eligible children. There was no limit to the number of eligible children provided that the youngest was born within 300 days of the serviceman's retirement. The 1965 rates of annual allowance for each child were: VN \$2,400 for officers, VN \$1,440 for NCOs, and VN \$1,080 for corporals and privates. Mixed pension earners were not entitled to child allowances.

When a retired serviceman died, his pension rights were automatically transferred to his wife provided that she was legally wed at least two years before his death. If the widow was a common law wife, she had to prove that she had cohabited with him for at least 6 years prior to his death or had borne him a child in order to earn pension rights. A transferred pension was worth only half the regular payment and was terminated when the widow died or remarried. Mixed pension rights, however, were not transferrable; they terminated upon the retired serviceman's death.

Career servicemen might lose their rights to retirement pension if they were dishonorably discharged because of a criminal conviction (treason, corruption, misappropriation of funds, manslaughter, etc.)

While only career servicemen were eligible for lifetime retirement pension, reserve servicemen upon retirement were simply refunded what had been withheld from their pay over the years, which amounted to 6% of their basic pay. The refund of retirement contributions was paid at one time, based on a value interpolated between initial and last basic pays and the length of service. The RF were also eligible for a similar refund of retirement contributions by virtue of new regulations but no official computation basis was yet established.

The Lost Battle Against Inflation

For the majority of RVNAF servicemen, monthly pay was the unique source of income. The average serviceman therefore depended almost exclusively on this income for his living. Over the years, he had found his and his family's prospects for the future increasingly darkened by the rising cost of living.

The real economic plight of the RVNAF serviceman began in 1960 when prices started to go up as a result of deteriorating security in rural areas. Military pay, meanwhile, remained the same as it had been six years earlier. To help the serviceman meet the steadily rising cost of living, in 1964, the GVN gave him a 10% raise on his basic pay. This seemed to feed inflation and give rise to speculative price fixing because within just one year, the retail price index of rice had risen to 124 and the average consumer price index to 119 over the base index of 100 in 1964. During 1966, the retail price of rice rose another 108 index points while the consumer price index rose 80 points. Again, a provisional pay increase was authorized, averaging from 20 to 30%. (*Table 24*)

Table 24 — 1966 Provisional Pay Increase for RVNAF Servicemen

Pay (base pay + family and cost-of-living allowances)	Percent of Increase or amount after increase
Below VN \$5,000	30%
From VN \$5,001 to 5,200	VN \$6,500
From VN 5,201 to 10,000	25%
From VN \$10,001 to 10,417	VN \$12,500
Above VN \$10,418	20%

The following year, 1967, the price of rice rose another 303 index points. To help the serviceman offset the rising price of rice, which was the basic food staple, the GVN instituted a rice allowance as a new

pay component. This rice allowance was worth VN \$200 for the serviceman himself and each of his dependents.⁴

Also during 1967, to assist the serviceman in stretching his monthly pay, the GVN authorized free distribution of combat rations worth VN \$35 each for those who participated in operations. This helped the combatant save a little money for his dependents' use. In addition, the RVNAF commissary service sold basic commodities for the serviceman and his dependents at below market prices. This was made possible by a U.S. grant of 42 million dollars for the import of sugar, cooking oil, canned food, and condensed milk. These items were resold to the serviceman at prices 20 to 30% below market. To keep supplies replenished after U.S.-provided items had been exhausted, the commissary service was authorized to purchase, free of taxes, some local products such as cigarettes, sugar, and condensed milk and import other basic food items such as canned meat and fish, cooking oil, and instant noodles.

All of these measures helped the serviceman to some extent. However, inflation was rampaging and prices kept rising. In 1969, the retail price of rice rose 536 index points compared to 1964 or 233 points compared to 1967. Rice was becoming not only more expensive but also scarce in local markets, especially in I and II Corps areas. Paper currency was shrinking in value to the point that most servicemen became weary of pay increases which only seemed to feed inflation. Aware of this predicament, the GVN authorized the free supply of rice to enlisted men on the monthly basis of 21 kilos per man. This came as a tremendous boost in morale for the underprivileged private soldiers who were thus made immune from the inflationary cost of rice and guaranteed a steady supply. The equally hard-pressed officers and NCOs asked for the same benefit but their request could not be met because this would cause a prohibitive budget drain in addition to problems of distribution.

Joining forces with the GVN to combat inflation and ensure an adequate food intake for the RVNAF serviceman, the U.S. extended a

⁴At 1967 prices, VN \$200 bought 21 kilos of rice, the average monthly consumption of an adult.

most helping hand when it authorized a 3-year free supplementary food program worth U.S. \$42.7 million. This program provided 100% of basic requirements for the first year, 70% for the second year and 30% for the third year. As a result, each serviceman received a free monthly supply of 7.7 lbs of cooking oil and canned meat and fish during the program's first year.

In conjunction with the free rice and canned food programs, the JGS initiated the military farming program to promote private food production by military units and dependents. Designed to improve food intake and provide an additional income for the serviceman and his dependents, the program became an instant success as vegetable planting and chicken and pig raising gained popularity among military households.

Despite its success, the military farming program did not solve the serviceman's economic plight as prices kept skyrocketing. According to official figures compiled and published by the National Institute of Statistics, which many people believed did not truly reflect the actual cost of living, the price of rice in 1971 rose 833 index points compared to the base year of 1964 or 297 points compared to 1969. Consumer prices, in the meantime, were up 591 index points compared to 1964 or 263 points compared to 1969. Again, the GVN resorted to raising pay by authorizing a daily allowance of VN \$100 for combat troops and increasing the serviceman's family allowance by VN \$100 for each dependent.

In August 1971, MACV recommended a 28% raise in basic pay for each serviceman and a fixed allowance of VN \$4,500 for each of the combat troops serving in infantry, ranger, marine, and airborne battalions, or VN \$2,000 for a RF trooper serving in a mobile battalion. Three months later, the GVN chose to raise the monthly cost-of-living allowance by VN \$1,200 for each serviceman and allowed the additional VN \$4,500/month for each combatant of the regular forces or VN \$2,000 for each RF soldier as recommended. To further adjust military pay to the ever-increasing cost of living, in 1972, the GVN increased both basic pay and allowances by approximately 30%.

In spite of these increases, the RVNAF serviceman's income always lagged far behind the cost of living. The fact was, as revealed by statistics, income rose only less than 3 times for officers and 5 times for enlisted men during the period from 1964 to 1972 while consumer prices rose 8.5 times and the price of rice, 14 times. (*Tables 25 and 26*)

Military Dependent Housing

The family was the foundation of South Vietnamese society. By tradition and customs, the Vietnamese patriarchal family depended on its male head for subsistence. The husband in a typical household had the obligation and responsibility to feed his family which usually included old parents as well. His wife prepared food, raised children, helped in farm work, and occasionally supplemented family income by doing a full-time or part-time business. In a serviceman's household, the wife and children depended almost exclusively on military pay for a living. Before the war, this income was fairly adequate to ensure a decent living for the entire family, to include housing.

Beginning in 1960, the rural people of South Vietnam lived under the constant threat of Communist subversive activities. As security deteriorated, road communication became difficult and hazardous; many villages and hamlets were practically isolated. Military dependent households living in rural areas found themselves targets of enemy propaganda and proselyting actions. As fighting stepped up, most of them had to seek safety by moving to district towns or cities; many chose to live near where the servicemen's units were located. Dependents and their housing needs gradually became a major problem not only for the individual servicemen but also for unit commanders, and by extension, the government.

As refugees fleeing war hazards and the Communist grips, military dependents naturally gathered where they could find protection and a living. The rank-and-file servicemen found that the best and most economical way to accommodate their dependents was to let them live

Table 25 — Monthly Take-Home Pay, 1964 and 1972

Grade	1964 (base: 100)	1972	Index of Increase
Brigadier General, married 5 children	VN \$17,620	VN \$42,000	238
Colonel, married 5 children	VN \$14,012	VN \$38,400	270
Captain, married 4 children	VN \$10,049	VN \$28,400	280
Sergeant, married 3 children	N/A	N/A	N/A
Private, married 1 child	VN \$2,712	VN \$13,750	500

Table 26 — Rice and Consumer Price Increases

Year	Rice retail price index	Consumer * price index
1964 (base)	100	100
1965	124	119
1966	208	180
1967	403	265
1968	431	360
1969	636	428
1970	820	614
1971	933	691
1972	1,403	849

* Source: National Institute of Statistics, Index without rent, working class.

near or on the unit premises. In this way, they could live together in security and reduce expenditures in spite of occasional hazards caused by enemy attacks. Therefore, the spectacle of makeshift shelters erected near or inside a company's or battalion's perimeter of defense in which lived the soldiers' parents, wives, and children gradually became a familiar sight and a way of life.

In time, dependent accommodation became a serious problem as civilian housing near military bases was scarce and rent increases, unaffordable. Because the military construction program provided only for barracks and bachelor's quarters, unit commanders had to find ways to erect dependent quarters on the base with labor and materials contributed by participant servicemen. In most cases, this type of housing was rudimentary and primitive, built with logs, bamboo trees, thatch or whatever materials nature provided. Occasionally, more permanent construction materials were obtained from local charity organizations or from U.S. units and contractors through the efforts of U.S. advisers, especially as of 1966.

To assist the servicemen with family burdens, the GVN initiated two large-scale construction programs: dependent housing and military villages. The dependent housing program began in 1962 under the responsibility of the Social Welfare Directorate, Ministry of National Defense. For four years this program was implemented through the issue of construction materials such as lumber, boards, roofing sheets and hardware to individual units at the rate of 50 buildings of ten 3m x 9m units every year. With the construction materials issued, unit commanders were free to build where they saw fit. Inefficient control gave rise to many misuses and irregularities.

As housing requirements kept increasing, the program grew beyond the Social Welfare Department's management capabilities. In 1966, therefore, it was placed under the responsibility of the Central Logistics Command. An inventory and inspection of existing housing units revealed that their numbers did not match the amount of materials issued. A sizeable part of these materials had no doubt been pilfered or misappropriated because several units which had neither the

capabilities nor land to build were also issued materials. Those buildings that had been erected were devoid of sanitary installations; many had deteriorated and needed major repairs. Several others were left vacant or unfinished because the units in charge had moved elsewhere.

To improve the dependent housing program, the CLC initiated a new construction plan which required that buildings should be of a permanent type with cement floor, ceiling, plumbing, and sanitary installations although the old floor plan was retained. It also required that recipient units should make land available and that construction work be undertaken by local contractors. For the next few years, however, the program progressed at a snail's pace, providing only from 100 to 120 buildings per year, because of limited budget (VN \$300 million annually). Each year, therefore, the program provided housing for a mere 1,000 to 1,200 dependent families, a rate far below growing requirements.

A new step was taken in 1969 when the JGS requested MACV to provide MAP funds for the construction of dependent housing on a larger scale. Such an effort was deemed necessary to enhance troop morale as U.S. forces began to redeploy. A joint JGS-MACV committee was established to study the dependent housing problem in depth as it related to requirements, in-country building capabilities, funding, models and construction methods. The committee determined that the RVNAF ultimately required 400,000 housing units, of which 80,000 were needed for the immediate future. With aggregated military and civilian construction capabilities, these 80,000 units could be completed in about three years at the rate of 25,000 to 30,000 units per year. A decision was made to procure construction materials with U.S. funds and pay labor costs out of the RVN defense budget. To stretch the budget made available, the housing model was modified in order to reduce construction and maintenance costs. Each 10-unit building would have brick walls, a tin or fibro-cement roof, and sanitary installations, but no ceiling, cement floor or plumbing. Instead, a deep well with cement reservoir was planned; electricity would be provided where

available. The cost of such a building was estimated at approximately U.S. \$600 for materials and VN \$72,000 for labor. Construction was to be undertaken by civilian contractors in secure and accessible areas, and by engineer units elsewhere.

As a result of direct intercession by President Nguyen Van Thieu, President Nixon approved funds for the construction of 100,000 housing units. The JGS-MACV survey committee then turned into a program management committee; it decided that construction was to be completed in four years or by late 1973. Plans were made to turn over 10% of the completed units to the Air Force and the Navy and the remaining, to ARVN combat units and RF battalions. The first thousand units would be built at Dong Tam Base for the 11th Regiment, 7th ARVN Division, a unit with the highest desertion rate, in order to test housing as an anti-desertion measure. Other units would be allotted housing units as land was made available but construction would be predicated on two criterias: the housing site had to be in the vicinity of the division's or regiment's rear base and the land had to be large enough to build at least 300 housing units with space for communal facilities such as dispensary, school, children's playground, and capability for future developments.

The new housing program started with great expectations amidst the elation of combat troops, especially those serving in infantry, airborne and marine units, who felt grateful for the care the RVN and U.S. governments bestowed on them. All divisions actively looked for sites and prepared them for construction. They found land readily available due to the transfer of large U.S. bases. Only the 21st Division in Bac Lieu ran into some difficulty because its inundated land needed filling and grading. In III Corps area, contractors and engineer units began work with abundant supplies of cement blocks produced by the Hoc Mon plant, a PA&E facility now turned over to the 5th Engineer Construction Group. At the same time, the Engineer Department built 35 manually and electrically-operated machines for the production of cement blocks. All problems related to construction materials were effectively solved by MACV and the CLC.

Despite enemy activities and natural disasters, the construction program progressed nicely. During 1970, the first 1,000 units at Dong Tam Base were completed as scheduled. However, the actual occupation of these quarters by dependent families took as long as six months because of relocation problems and a certain reluctance on the part of many families to move into an area frequently subjected to enemy shellings. Work at other construction sites also progressed as scheduled but full occupation of completed quarters was not as rapid especially in areas already subjected to enemy shellings once or twice.

The enemy's Easter Offensive of 1972 caused extensive damage to a number of dependent quarters already completed or being built. The construction program was virtually suspended after contractors abandoned work because of insecurity and slow delivery of materials. Engineer units were all reassigned to more urgent tasks in support of combat operations while transportation facilities were diverted to resupply missions. Construction work, therefore, did not resume until the fourth quarter but met with serious difficulties in materials as a result of military aid cutbacks. The necessary funds to complete the program, estimated at U.S. \$11,200,000, were programmed in FY75 but when only U.S. \$700 million were appropriated, the program had to be suspended. Despite this, the program had provided 75,000 new housing units, a significant and realistic contribution toward improving welfare for the combat soldier.

In addition to the dependent housing program which was designed to provide free quarters for married enlisted men serving in combat units, there were also plans to provide housing for officers and NCOs on active duty who neared the end of their careers.

The concept of "military villages" or communities was initiated in 1964; it was intended to provide career officers and NCOs the chance to become homeowners. Plans were made to ask the government to set aside large reservations in the vicinity of economic development areas for the construction of military villages. On these sites, single houses would be built and sold to eligible officers through a lease-purchase plan which required a 25% down payment and the balance to

be paid off in 12 years. Revolving funds for construction projects would come from government loans. A program management group, designated "Military Village Committee", was officially created in 1965 by a decree of the Minister of Defense. The commander, CLC was appointed chairman of this committee. Several selected sites for military villages, mostly on public lands, were subsequently approved by the government such as those near the Thu Duc industrial zone, the Long Binh area near the Bien Hoa industrial zone and the Binh Thuy area near the Can Tho industrial zone.

In 1966, by order of the Prime Minister, a VN \$180 million loan was authorized to start work on the Thu Duc Military Village. Despite the GVN approval, site preparation works such as road building, land filling and grading, and lot parceling met with violent opposition from some people living in the area and landowners, several among them holding key positions in various governmental activities. Therefore, work had to be suspended and the loan was temporarily blocked.

In the face of these difficulties and in anticipation of similar troubles, the Military Village Committee submitted two alternative projects which were both approved by the Ministry of Defense. The first project was to ask the General Directorate of Housing to allot a certain quota of housing units built each year to military officers under a lease-purchase plan. As a result, a number of duplexes, single houses and townhouses in the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh area were sold to eligible RVNAF officers during 1966, 1967, and 1968. The second project was also a lease-purchase plan to sell government-owned military quarters located outside military bases and camps in the Saigon area. Built and left behind by French forces, most of these quarters were in a poor maintenance condition, and used as temporary housing for RVNAF officers assigned to the Saigon-Cholon area. The sale project was in part dictated by the fact that it was nearly impossible to recover these quarters for reallocation even after the occupants had been transferred. Therefore, a number of officer quarters and mixed officer-NCO quarters were sold to eligible occupants during 1967-1968. The proceeds of this

sale contributed to the funds formerly earmarked for military villages.

By 1971, these funds had risen to nearly VN \$300 million, including the 1966 loan of VN \$180 million. With these funds, the Military Village Committee implemented four separate housing projects. The first one was 90 apartment houses in Go Vap which were completed in 1972 and sold to eligible officers. The second project involved road building and lot parceling for the Tien Sa housing area near Da Nang. Of 150 square meters each, 350 such lots were ready for building. The third project was undertaken for a housing area in Dalat where 150 lots of 600 square meters were prepared for construction. However, work on this project was suspended because the engineer company in charge was reassigned to the LOC project on Route QL-20. The final project involved road building and lot parceling at the Go Vap housing area, a site formerly occupied by the 531st Ammunition Depot. Five hundred lots of 150 square meters were planned for this site.

The construction plan for the last three projects was to be implemented in two phases. During phase 1, lots would be assigned to eligible officers and NCOs. In phase 2, construction of housing units would begin either to be undertaken by the individual recipients themselves or by the General Directorate of Housing and resold under an installment lease-purchase plan. Surveying work on these sites was in progress when it had to be suspended in March 1975 as a result of events in Ban Me Thuot, Pleiku and Kontum.

The Veterans

The Ministry of War Veterans was created as a separate governmental department in 1965 in order to alleviate increasing burdens placed on the Ministry of Defense by the administration of veterans affairs. This ministry managed two vital long-range programs designed to provide care and welfare for the veterans: the Veteran Pension and Allowance Program, and the Rehabilitation and Job Program.

The Veteran Pension and Allowance Program sought to achieve two basic objectives: to adjust veteran pension and allowance payments

to the rising cost of living every year, and; to simplify and speed up the process of reviewing and issuing individual retired pension books.

Beginning in 1966, all retired servicemen benefitted from the same raises and rice or cost-of-living allowances as authorized RVNAF personnel on active duty. As a result, the basic disability and other allowances for veterans increased substantially from 1966 to 1970.

(Table 27, 28, and 29)

In addition to raises in pension and allowances, veterans also benefitted from commissary services and medical care just as when they were on active duty. Despite this and other GVN efforts, the lot of veterans, especially those who were disabled, was one of hardship and privations because they were afflicted by the same economic predicament that plagued the serviceman.

Pension and allowances were not payable to the retired, the disabled, and beneficiaries of the deceased until they were issued appropriate documents such as the retired pension book, the disability allowance book, and the widow's allowance book. Prior to 1966, procedures were complicated and the beneficiaries had to wait months, even years before receiving the first payment, which caused widespread complaints and frustrations. Since the Ministry of War Veterans was established, however, a joint effort by this ministry and the JGS was undertaken to simplify procedures of document issuance, making life easier for pension and allowance recipients.

A joint JGS-Ministry of War Veterans Committee set up for this purpose soon found two major shortcomings in the system, one involving personnel administration during the period the serviceman was still on active duty, and the other concerning the processing of applications for benefits at the ministry. The committee discovered in the first place that in most cases, individual service records were not always updated, birth certificates and marriage licenses sometimes missing, and circumstantial reports concerning the serviceman's injury or death not clear or detailed enough to constitute a basis for decision. Most beneficiaries, it was apparent, did not know what benefits they were entitled to and never received any guidance as to what procedures they

Table 27 — Basic Annual Disability Allowance

% of Disability	(VN piasters)									
	Private		Sergeant		2d Lt.		Captain		Colonel	
	1966	1970	1966	1970	1966	1970	1966	1970	1966	1970
10	1341	1743	1359	1766	1476	1918	1782	2315	2484	3229
30	4014	5218	4059	5276	4419	5744	5337	6938	7452	9687
60	8019	10424	8118	10533	8829	11477	10665	13864	14895	19363
80	10692	13899	10818	14063	11772	15303	14220	18486	19845	25810
100	13365	17374	13527	17885	14715	19129	17775	23107	24822	32268

Table 28 — Allowance for Children of Disabled Veterans

disability % Year	Annual Rate per Child				
	10%	30%	60%	80%	100%
1966	VN \$80	VN \$240	VN \$480	VN \$640	VN \$720
1970	VN \$104	VN \$312	VN \$624	VN \$832	VN \$932

Table 29 — Mutilation Allowance

Degree of Disability	Annual Rate	
	1966	1970
85% disability	VN \$2,040	VN \$4,170
90% disability	VN \$2,444	VN \$6,255
100% disability	VN \$4,076	VN \$10,420
Arm amputated at forearm	VN \$876	VN \$4,794
Arm amputated at elbow or leg at knee	VN \$1,186	VN \$6,661
Amputation of entire leg or arm	VN \$1,752	VN \$9,370

had to go through to receive them. The medical board, which was responsible for evaluating the disability condition of injured servicemen, usually took too long to decide on each case.

When the Ministry of War Veterans was created, there were over 30,000 outstanding files waiting for decision. Most of these files were piled up in disorder, many of them had not been processed for years. Being a newly created organization, the ministry was seriously short of trained personnel and office machines, especially typewriters. Many applications could not be processed because substantiating documents were missing and when files were returned to originating units for verification, some of these units no longer existed.

The JGS and Ministry of War Veterans, therefore, embarked on two programs to remedy these shortcomings. One was short-term and designed to expedite or dispose of dormant files within six months to one year. To achieve this, the ministry not only had to recruit and train additional personnel but was also reinforced by 100 military personnel and 30 typewriters along with typists, all on loan from the JGS for six months. In addition, students of the AG course were assigned on TDY to assist the ministry for two weeks before their graduation. An AG field-grade officer was permanently attached to the ministry as liaison officer to solve all problems related to military personnel administration. The results achieved through all these expedient measures were encouraging and somewhat restored faith and confidence among veterans. These measures were subsequently repeated during 1969 and 1973 when there were great surges of benefit applications.

The other long-range program sought to improve the management of veteran's files. The first objective was to stop the flow of incomplete files to the Ministry of War Veterans. To achieve this, the JGS required that all administrative units continually updated individual service records and kept them completely valid at all times. When a soldier was discharged or when a beneficiary applied for benefits, the related file was first forwarded to the AG, JGS for verification before being sent to the Ministry of War Veterans. The second objective was to simplify the composition of veterans' files. Affidavits issued

by an administrative unit, for example, could be used in lieu of original birth or death certificates and marriage licenses as long as these documents had been filed with individual service records. All circumstantial reports of death, injury, or accident were replaced by the standardized casualty report, Form QD-830. Finally, the program provided for computerization of the entire administrative process with initial support provided by the Data Processing Center, AG, JGS. In 1973, this service support was completely taken over by the central data processing center of the Office of the Prime Minister.

The second major program undertaken by the Ministry of War Veterans was to rehabilitate the disabled veterans and provide them with vocational training and jobs. Prior to 1966, all disabled servicemen who were classified as Category 3 by a medical board after treatment were automatically discharged from service. After discharge, these servicemen had to apply for orthopedic rehabilitation or vocational training at the National Rehabilitation Institute like other citizens. Waiting periods were long and years might have passed before the disabled veterans received any treatment or care.

Because of this poignant situation, the disabled servicemen who were likely to be classified as Category 3 all feared the day of final judgement and discharge. They sought ways to procrastinate or simply went into hiding when called before a medical board, attempting to prolong the time they remained in the service as long as they could. Commanders of administrative units which took them in charge usually looked the other way and never forced them into discharge, anxious not to affect the morale of other servicemen. The RVNAF actual strength was therefore depleted by thousands of such disabled servicemen. The strength of combat units, as a result, suffered from these living casualties because they could not be replaced until removed from the unit's control list.

To solve this thorny problem, in 1966, the Ministry of Defense implemented a new policy concerning the administration of Category 3-servicemen which suspended their discharge until they were rehabilitated and vocationally trained. Under this policy, disabled servicemen

were transferred to recuperation centers to undergo an orthopedic rehabilitation period at one of the several rehabilitation centers operated by the Ministry of War Veterans in Saigon, Da Nang, and Can Tho. While undergoing rehabilitation, they also received vocational orientation and training for a skill commensurate with their physical and mental abilities.

During the same year, the Ministry of Defense also transferred to the Ministry of War Veterans a facility at Cat Lai, formerly built and equipped to operate as a small-arm ammunition production plant, to be used as a vocational training center. Under the co-sponsorship of both ministries, this vocational training center began to function in mid-1967 with 138 students selected from among the disabled servicemen and veterans. Eight courses were conducted at the same time: tailoring, supply, mechanic, carpenter, bricklayer, electrician, sheet metal, and typing. Six months later, 95 students completed training, the remainder having dropped out because of transportation problems. Finding jobs for these trainees proved not easy initially but through the intercession of the Ministry of War Veterans and a U.S. education consulting firm, all eventually became wage earners. The center was to have an eventual capacity for 1,200 students per year.

A veteran's production center was next established in 1967 in an effort to provide jobs for the disabled veterans and support the vocational training program. With non-budgetary loans obtained from the GVN, this production center was designed to operate as a government-owned business and a preferred supplier for the government, especially the armed forces. After several years of endeavor, the center functioned with a shop producing medals and decorations for the armed forces, a plant making uniforms for the Quartermaster Department, a bakery which supplied bread to military hospitals, schools, training centers and induction centers in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area, and a facility to produce instant rice for the Quartermaster Department. Over 300 disabled veterans, widows and orphans were employed by the center. Despite its success, the Veteran's Production Center met with capital difficulties and criticism. Its very existence as a government-run

business enterprise was viewed with increasing disapproval by U.S. and Vietnamese political and economic authorities. They felt that such business operations should be undertaken by the private sector and that the government should not be involved in unfair competition with private business.

In 1968, in a letter addressed to the Ministry of Defense, General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, affirmed his concern for the employment of disabled servicemen upon their discharge. During a discussion of the veteran's problems, he asserted that MACV had the obligation to advise and assist the Ministry of War Veterans in implementing a 4-point program: treatment, classification, training, and job. As a result, a joint committee with representatives from MACV and the ministries of Defense and War Veterans was established to plan and manage the RVNAF Disabled Servicemen Program. Additional rehabilitation facilities under the Ministry of War Veterans were set up in Saigon, Da Nang, Can Tho, and Qui Nhon. A RVNAF Rehabilitation Center was also created in 1970 to assist in orthopedic treatment and to produce orthopedic equipment. At the same time several courses on orthopedics methods and technology were conducted for the benefit of medical officers.

In addition to the vocational training center at Cat Lai, the Ministry of War veterans also conducted several skill training courses at rehabilitation facilities in Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Can Tho. In the RVNAF, similar courses, especially motorcycle mechanic, typewriter repair, radio repair, and typing, were conducted at recuperation centers to train disabled servicemen while they underwent orthopedic treatment. Vocational training, it was realized, was not a difficult process for the disabled. The major stumbling block that interfered with training was primarily psychological, deriving from complexes of inferiority and total dependence that affected most disabled servicemen. Several efforts were therefore made to encourage participation and enhance morale among trainees.

Another difficulty was finding jobs for those who successfully completed skill training. Through intercession and recommendations by

the joint committee, each year beginning in 1968, from 1,000 to 1,500 trained disabled veterans found jobs in private U.S. and GVN-operated companies. Employment for the disabled veterans became difficult in 1971 as the bulk of U.S. combat forces was redeployed. A project to employ disabled veterans as security guards in GVN-operated companies was initiated with modest success. Despite GVN directives to give priority to employing disabled veterans, very few of them were actually recruited by governmental agencies because of budget limitations.

Then in 1973, when the land reclamation and resettlement program was initiated, the Ministry of War Veterans was allotted several reservation areas which could be transformed into farmland. A plan was worked out to use disabled veterans in agricultural development projects but it ended in failure for lack of leadership, resources, and security. However, a number of determined disabled veterans were individually authorized to participate in the resettlement program along with refugees.

The last major problem faced by the GVN was housing for the disabled veterans. In 1966, after the Ministry of War Veterans was created, a project was planned for the building of Disabled Veterans' Villages and a home for the lonely disabled veterans. Patterned after a JGS plan, this project was designed to provide housing for the disabled veterans and their families. The idea of assembling them into communities was to facilitate care and assistance. Several areas had been selected and earmarked for that purpose and a master plan with housing models similar to those being built for military dependents had been approved. However, construction funds were lacking and the plan was left dormant until 1971 when disabled veterans went on a squatting rampage, claiming housing rights. Not until then did the GVN begin to implement the original housing project. In Saigon-Gia Dinh alone, 500 housing units were hastily erected at Thu Duc, on lands earmarked for a military village project. In other provinces, similar housing units were built under the personal supervision of province chiefs. This effort seemed to cool down the angry disabled veterans for some time.

For those disabled veterans without a family or relatives, there was still no home to spend the rest of their lives. A home for

the lonely disabled veterans, which was patterned after a Nationalist Chinese institution, had been planned for several years but never became a reality because of its low priority. In 1974, the Ministry of War Veterans asked the Republic of China to help finance the building of such a home. A piece of land in Vung Tau was surveyed and secured for future construction but the project remained just an idea until the final days of South Vietnam.

Observations

The management of pay and allowances in the RVNAF was well organized and efficient. It enabled all administrative units to disburse pay and allowances to the individual serviceman efficiently and timely. Our system of fund custody, control, and audit effectively prevented misappropriations by finance officers. Only neglect on the part of unit commanders ever made it possible but there were only a few such instances over the years.

The biggest difficulty in our pay administration was to make payments to servicemen serving in secondary units —infantry battalions, RF companies, PF platoons— who, for reasons of security and transportation, were unable to personally come to an administrative unit —regiment or sector ALS center— to draw their pays. The solution that we adopted, which relied on the intermediary of a pay agent from the recipient unit, was logical and expedient. However, it was difficult to control the pay agent's integrity with regard to unclaimed pays, -- those belonging to personnel listed as AWOL, deserters and MIAs. During 1974, for example, a joint strength and pay control committee set up by the AG, JGS and General Directorate of Finance and Audit discovered many payrolls with signatures of servicemen who had been reported as missing or deserters.

The structure of salary, which was built on basic pay and several different allowances, was indeed a complex system of pay computation, but in view of social traditions and continued inflation, it perhaps afforded us some measure of flexibility, incentive, and justice. Over

the years, there were several attempts to reform this pay structure — primarily by removing family allowances and modifying certain special allowances — with a view to simplify pay computation and bring about equality and fairness, but no reform project was ever implemented. This was because the GVN was deeply convinced that as long as income kept lagging far behind the cost of living and no substantial pay raise was possible, any change in the system would adversely affect the morale of troops and upset the established social order.

With regard to welfare and other forms of benefits that the RVNAF servicemen, the disabled veterans, and their families received over the years, it had to be admitted that the GVN and the U.S. government did make serious and laudable efforts. From pay raises and rice allowances to free distribution of combat rations and canned food, commissary services, and free housing, every affordable measure had been taken to provide a decent living for the average soldier and his dependents. Unfortunately, all this was not enough.

The poignant fact was that monthly salary payments, the only source of income for the majority of servicemen, rapidly decreased in purchasing power beginning in 1963 to the point that ten years later no serviceman was able to subsist on his salary alone. From 1964 to 1972, the serviceman's salary increased only by a modest margin, to a maximum of 500 index points for a private. In the meantime, the price of rice, the basic food staple for every Vietnamese and a fair indication of the cost of living, increased 14 times, and consumer prices, almost nine times. But these were only official figures which many people believed were far below the actual costs of living. How could a serviceman make ends meet in such a situation?

To illustrate the economic plight of the RVNAF serviceman, dollar values are perhaps more indicative. In 1964, a colonel, for example, made approximately US \$400 a month (at the official exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 35 VN piasters); in 1972, he only made US \$82 (rate: 1 US dollar = 465 VN piasters). During the same period, an army captain found his monthly salary shrinking from US \$287 to US \$61, and a private, from US \$77 to US \$30. If we compared a private's pay with that of a

minimum-wage earner, we found that he made only about half as much as a laborer in 1969 (VN \$4,594 versus 9,113).

As an inevitable result, most RVNAF servicemen and their families had to live in privation and hardship. To make ends meet, they had to cut down on everything from food to clothing; many of them did not eat meat for months and did not go to a movie in years. The economic grip was such that many soldiers in combat units ate only a small part of their daily combat rations, just enough to live. They saved these rations and sent them home, for their wives and children. I saw several instructors at the Thu Duc Infantry School pack a piece of plain bread or a ball of sticky rice in their sacks at the start of a long day of field exercise. That was all they could afford for breakfast and lunch with a lieutenant's salary. I knew of major and lieutenant colonel households buying rice by the kilo after the 10th of each month when all salary was gone. Many went into heavy debts just to keep their families fed. The common anxiety among officers and enlisted men alike was how long they could go on like that before collapse.

Those who worked in Saigon and other cities managed to earn some extra income by driving taxi cabs, riding taxi motorbikes, teaching school, and doing other moonlighting odd jobs during off-duty hours. Their spouses, the traditional housewives, also took jobs or did some peddling business to supplement the family income. Those households living in suburban areas raised chicken and planted vegetables, eking out a meager living off their tiny gardens. By all possible means, the RVNAF servicemen struggled for a living but very few were able to make ends meet. Many felt humiliated when they had to ask for financial support from their parents or relatives. Others were ashamed when they had to misappropriate some military supplies or use military vehicles for their private purposes. They knew that it was wrong, yet their quest for survival seemed to be stronger than any sense of moral uprightness.

Because of economic hardship, many servicemen took to desertion, changing their names in the process to get lucrative jobs in the private sector. Some did illegal businesses or became corrupt, stealing or

taking bribes. But the majority remained honest or struggled with themselves to remain incorruptible. They were resigned to their fate and fought on with high hopes for a better future.

Strange as it might seem, the RVNAF servicemen in general never felt envious or jealous of their American, South Korean or Thai comrades-in-arm whom they knew had much higher salaries and a much better life. They did not feel embittered by this economic disparity but rather looked on it as an incentive to keep struggling for a better future. This reminds me of a visit I made to the 5th Ranger Group during which I asked some of its troops how they felt about the days they lived with American troops of the 199th Infantry Brigade during combined operations. Without exception, they all said: "If we had a standard of living comparable to that of our American comrades, we would fight until death without a single worry about our families."

Then during the seminars I held in 1969-1970 on how to develop the RVNAF combat effectiveness, I heard many officers and NCOs from different infantry divisions express their views like this: "We know that the government and our superiors have done many things to help us and our families alleviate our miseries but that was not enough. We have been tightening our belts to make ends meet but there is only a limit to what we can do. We thoroughly understand the government's difficulties and the cause for which we keep fighting, but how can we fight with an empty stomach? As our centuries-old wisdom has it: To be able to practice the 'Correct Way,' one must have enough to eat first."

CHAPTER IX

Medical Support and Combat Equipment

The RVNAF Medical Treatment System

The RVNAF medical service was created in February 1951 as a technical branch of service directly controlled by the Ministry of National Defense. When the Medical Directorate began to function, the General Staff of the National Armed Forces of Vietnam was yet to be created. In August the next year, three regional medical services were activated in Saigon, Hue, and Hanoi, each with the mission to exercise control over field medical treatment and evacuation facilities and to provide medical support services to Vietnamese units and organizations located in a military region. Both functions were performed in coordination with counterpart regional medical services of the French Expeditionary Corps. A fourth regional medical service was established in Ban Me Thuot at the same time as Headquarters, 4th Military Region in 1953.

As the Vietnamese Armed Forces went through reorganization under direct U.S. military advisory assistance, the four regional medical services were deactivated in 1957 and control of field hospitals and medical units came under military region headquarters. When Area Logistics Commands (ALC) were activated in 1961, they not only took over this control but also coordinated medical support for combat units within their areas of responsibility. The role of the Medical Directorate was thus reduced to one of technical supervision and its command responsibility encompassed only the 70th Medical Depot and the Cong Hoa General Hospital. With the activation of the Central Logistics Command (CLC) in April 1964, the Medical Directorate became one of the CLC's subordinate departments and severed its ties with the Ministry of Defense.

In 1969, in an effort to make medical support coordination and supervision more effective at the field level, four corps medical groups

were activated, one for each corps area, relieving the ALC's from this responsibility. With command responsibility over field hospitals, field medical depots, and sector hospitals in the corps area, each medical group provided all medical services in support of corps and other units, to include medical evacuation and preventive medicine. Also in 1969, divisional medical elements were grouped into medical battalions to provide consolidated medical support for all divisional units. This organization of the RVNAF medical service was to remain unchanged until the collapse of South Vietnam. (*Chart 9*)

Hospitals. Prior to 1954, the Vietnamese Armed Forces had only three military hospitals, each with a capacity of about 400 beds: Vo Tanh in Hanoi, Duy Tan in Hue, and Phan Thanh Gian in Can Tho. These were supplemented by garrison dispensaries or station hospitals of 50-150-bed capacity each, generally located in large cities. During that period, the modest Vietnamese medical treatment facilities were substantially augmented by the larger French counterpart system.

After 1955, French forces gradually turned over their medical facilities to the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Part of these facilities was turned into civilian hospitals and the remaining integrated into the military medical treatment system. By 1957, the RVNAF medical treatment system included the following facilities:

The 400-bed Nguyen Tri Phuong hospital in Hue City providing support for the sectors of Quang Tri and Thua Thien;

The 600-bed Duy Tan Hospital in Da Nang, providing support for the sectors of Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai;

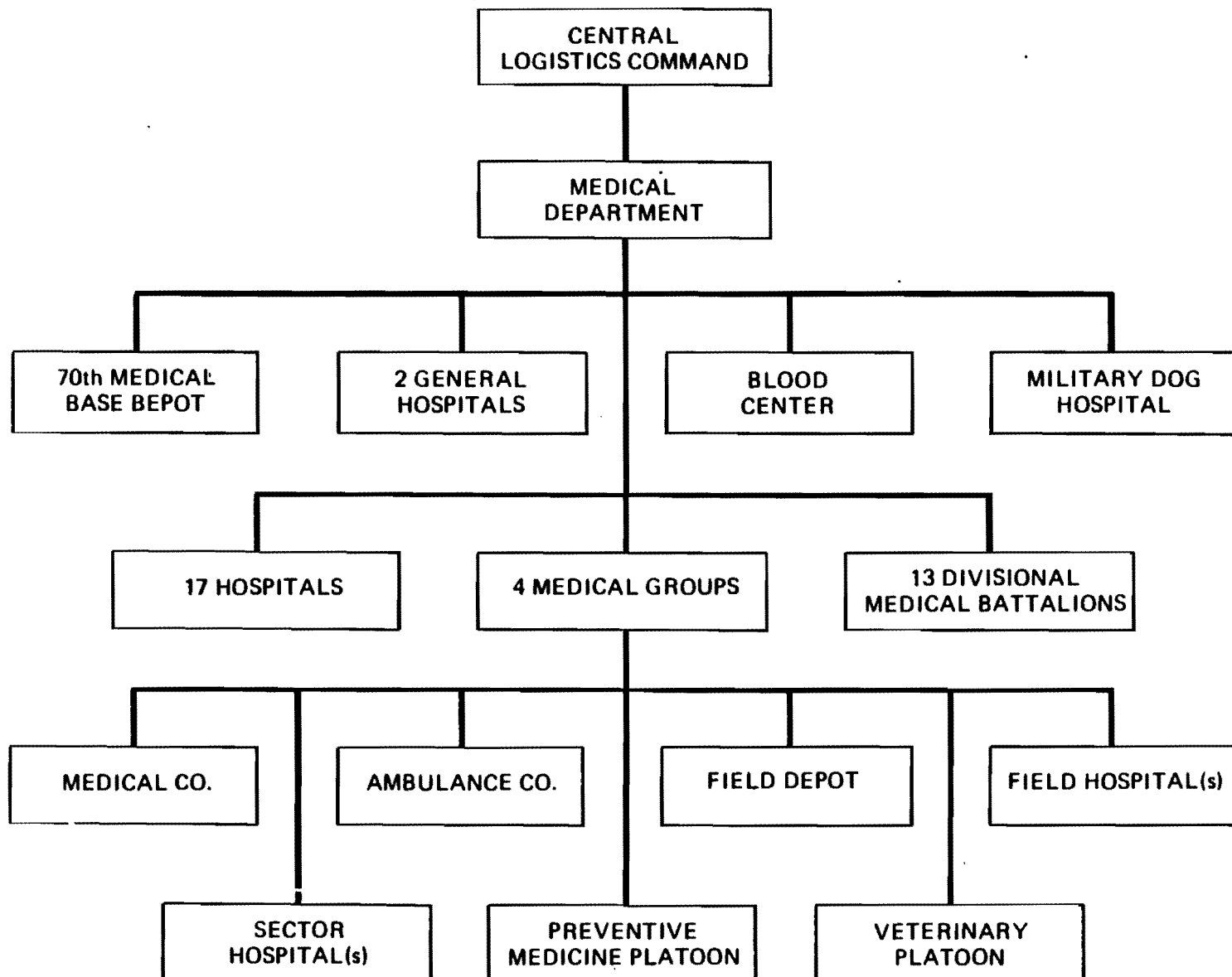
A 100-bed share in the Pleiku Provincial Hospital, providing support for the sectors of Pleiku and Kontum;

A 100-bed share in the Ban Me Thuot Provincial Hospital, providing support for the sectors of Darlac and Quang Duc;

The 400-bed Nguyen Hue Hospital in Nha Trang, providing support for the five coastal sectors of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, and Binh Thuan, and the two highland sectors of Lam Dong and Dalat;

The 800-bed Cong Hoa General Hospital in Saigon, providing support for units in the Saigon metropolitan area and those located in the 11 surrounding sectors;

Chart 9 — Organization, RVNAF Medical Service, 1974



The 100-bed 3d Field Hospital in My Tho, providing support for the sectors of Kien Hoa, Kien Tuong, Dinh Tuong and Go Cong;

The 400-bed Phan Thanh Gian Hospital in Can Tho providing support for the 12 sectors of the Mekong Delta.

During 1961, to meet increasing requirements, additional military hospitals were built: the 400-bed Pleiku Hospital, the 350-bed Qui Nhon Hospital, and the 400-bed Phan Thiet Hospital (later renamed Doan Manh Hoach). The addition of these hospitals alleviated the heavy patient load on the Nguyen Hue Hospital in Nha Trang, reduced evacuation distances, and restored the shared facilities to civilian use. A 400-bed tuberculosis sanatorium was also built at Thu Duc to provide consolidated treatment for increasing numbers of servicemen affected by this communicable disease.

As requirements kept increasing with the tempo of the war, in 1963, two additional hospitals were built to make medical treatment support more effective. These were the Tay Ninh and the Ba Xuyen Hospitals, each with a 400-bed capacity. Two years later, still more hospitals were constructed: the 400-bed 1st Field Hospital at Quang Ngai which supported the 2d Infantry Division and the sectors of Quang Ngai and Quang Tin; the 400-bed 2d Field Hospital at Kontum; the 400-bed Nguyen Van Nhut Hospital at Vung Tau, and; the 400-bed Long Xuyen Hospital in An Giang Province.

Despite the addition of new hospitals, the aggregated bed capacity seemed to lag behind growing requirements as the war intensified. The integration of the RF and PF into the RVNAF also placed added support burdens on the medical service whose treatment facilities were taxed to the limit of their capabilities. As a result, in 1967, an effort was made to expand the bed capacities of major hospitals. The Nguyen Tri Phuong Hospital in Hue received 200 additional beds while the Duy Tan Hospital in Da Nang boosted its capacity to 800, then 1,800 beds and eventually became a general hospital. Both the Nguyen Hue and Phan Thanh Gian Hospitals also expanded their capacities to 600, then 800 beds. Finally, the Cong General Hospital gradually expanded to 1,000, then 1,800, and eventually 2,400 beds after the addition of a modern 500-bed ward.

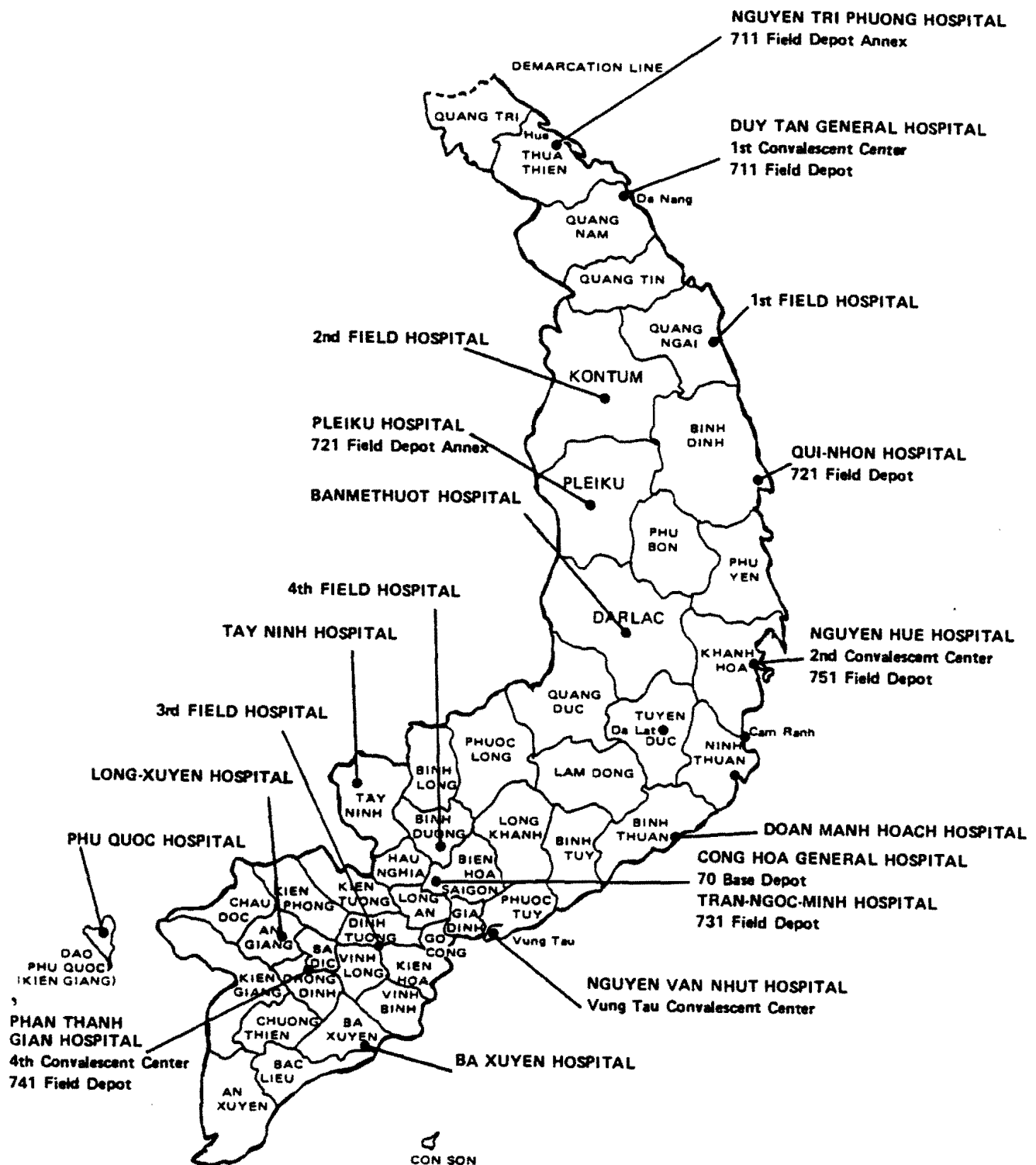
During the three years beginning in 1967, to facilitate the accommodation of RF and PF troopers, a total of 27 sector hospitals of 100 beds each and 193 district dispensaries of 20 beds each were added to the RVNAF medical treatment system. At the same time, a civilian military medical cooperation program was initiated to fully utilize provincial medical facilities for the support of both military and civilian patients. Under this program, ARVN doctors, nurses, and technicians joined in the operation of 10 provincial hospitals and 86 district dispensaries with the support of the Ministry of Public Health in medicine supplies and equipment. At these jointly-operated facilities, RVNAF servicemen were hospitalized or treated entirely free of charge.

In 1970, two additional hospitals were built: the 4th Field Hospital at Phu Cuong, Binh Duong Province, and the Tran Ngoc Minh Hospital in Saigon. Due to land problems, however, the construction of the 4th Field Hospital was limited to a 100-bed ward. The Tran Ngoc Minh Hospital, which shared part of the Medical School building complex at Phu Tho, greatly alleviated the burdens placed on the Cong Hoa General Hospital. (*Map 1*)

Over the years, the total bed capacity of the RVNAF hospitalization system increased at a steady pace. From a mere 2,500 beds in 1955, this capacity rose to 11,400 beds a decade later. In 1968, it nearly doubled to 21,000 beds and ultimately reached 24,547 beds by the time of the cease-fire. Bed occupancy over the entire period was continually at a high level, varying from 95 to 98% of total capacity. During periods of intense fighting such as enemy offensives or cross-border operations, hospitals had to install additional cots to handle the great influx of patients. The Easter Offensive of 1972, in particular, kept the three RVNAF major hospitals, Duy Tan (Da Nang), Cong Hoa (Saigon), and Phan Thanh Gian (Can Tho), constantly overflowed with patients. At one time during that year, a record high of 31,000 fully occupied beds was reached. To provide the extra space required, these hospitals had to release recovering patients for temporary 29-day periods of treatment at home.

In 1973, 1,796,000 U.S. dollars from MASF/MILCON funds were made available for the construction of a model 450-bed hospital, intended as

Map 1 - RVNAF Hospitals and Medical Depots, 1974



a gift-souvenir to the RVNAF from U.S. forces. This hospital was half-completed when the RVN collapsed in late April 1975.

Convalescent Centers. As adjuncts to the hospital system, four convalescent centers were built in 1961 at Da Nang, Nha Trang, Vung Tau (later relocated to Go Vap, near the Cong Hoa General Hospital), and Can Tho. Available on the basis of one for each corps area, these centers accommodated patients going through the convalescent stage or awaiting accommodation at the RVNAF recuperation center after full recovery.

Although built with a capacity expandable to 600 beds each, no convalescent center ever had more than 200 beds equipped and much less fully occupied. This seemed to derive from the ARVN servicemen's usual aversion to living in such a facility while undergoing convalescence. They much preferred the freedom of living outside or in the homes of friends and relatives, returning to the center only occasionally for checkups or monthly pays.

During 1972, all four convalescent centers were required to accommodate patients undergoing medical treatment at hospitals in order to make space for the seriously wounded. The 1st Convalescent Center in Da Nang, for example, took in 1,200 patients transferred from the Duy Tan General Hospital. A makeshift convalescent center was hastily put together at Vung Tau to accommodate 1,500 patients unloaded by the Cong Hoa General Hospital and other hospitals in MR-3, particularly those evacuated from An Loc after the siege on this city was lifted on 18 May 1972.

The Vung Tau Paraplegic Hospital. Not authorized by the MAP-supported force structure, the Paraplegic Hospital at Vung Tau was an unusual institution set up by the ARVN Medical Department for humanitarian and expedient reasons. The fact was that at all times there were from 400 to 500 paraplegic patients occupying beds in permanence at military hospitals who needed perhaps more care than treatment. Although most had been discharged from service, for several reasons these paraplegic ex-servicemen had nowhere to turn to but military medical facilities which had provided them treatment. Despite continued persuasion, they did not want to leave the hospitals; they adhered to the beds they considered

the last hope of their lives. Many had tried to leave but most invariably returned after just a few weeks. The tragic fact was that they did not know where to go. The Ministry of War Veterans, which was responsible for their care and well-being, had no facilities to accommodate them. It was under these circumstances that the Paraplegic Hospital came into being in 1972.

The hospital had an initial capacity of 200 beds and began to take in paraplegic patients in mid-1972. This was a time when the Cong Hoa General Hospital, with well over 100 beds permanently occupied by these patients, and other facilities in MR-3 needed to clear their paraplegics for more urgent cases. Their removal by ambulance trucks from these hospitals, despite explanations by medical authorities, provoked a truly empathetic commotion. Most paraplegic patients being transferred cried in desperation thinking that perhaps authorities would dump them somewhere en route to get rid of them.

The 200 beds at Vung Tau were fully occupied almost overnight, a clear indication that more beds would be needed. But since the Medical Department had about exhausted its capabilities, it was decided by mutual consent to turn over the facility to the Ministry of War Veterans in 1974. This was done with the hope that, as a civilian institution, the paraplegic hospital could obtain humanitarian aid more readily from allied countries. Although officially transferred, the hospital continued to be staffed by ARVN medical personnel and received support from the Medical Department in medicine. In early 1975, the Republic of China and West Germany indicated their willingness to provide aid for the hospital.

Medical Treatment for Prisoners of War. Enemy troops detained or wounded during combat were evacuated to RVNAF or U.S. medical facilities where they underwent treatment until recovery. During the period of treatment, they received the same care and food rations as RVNAF or U.S. troops with the only exception that they were confined to a separate ward under heavy guard because of security reasons.

For normal treatment, enemy prisoners in detention camps were supported by the nearest RVNAF hospital. On Phu Quoc Island where over

30,000 prisoners were detained, medical support was provided by a 100-bed hospital built in 1968 at the same time as the prisoner camp. This facility was operated by the ARVN Medical Department.

Medical Treatment in the U.S. Medical treatment in the U.S. was available to RVNAF patients only when in-country facilities were unable to provide proper treatment and when recommended by RVNAF medical authorities. Each individual case of prospective treatment in the U.S. was carefully reviewed by the RVNAF Medical Department and the MACV Surgeon. When final approval was given by the Ministry of Defense, MACV arranged for the transportation of the patient by medical evacuation jets to the continental U.S. or the Tripler General Hospital in Hawaii.

Medical Evaluation

Until 1961, the evacuation of patients from the combat zone or from unit dispensaries to military hospitals relied entirely on roads. By litters or hammocks and by small boats, patients were carried from the first-aid station to a rendezvous point where they were picked up by the unit's organic 1/4-ton or 3/4-ton ambulance. This transportation process took from 4 to 6 hours or sometimes even a whole day in case of road sabotage or interdiction before the patient arrived at a medical treatment facility. Therefore, interim emergency treatment in the combat zone or en route was usually required because it meant the difference between life and death for the seriously wounded.

With the activation of the VNAF's first H-34 helicopter squadron and the assistance provided by the U.S. Army's 57th Medical Detachment (helicopter ambulance), beginning in 1962, the helicopter gradually replaced the ambulance truck in the evacuation of the seriously wounded. This cut down substantially on evacuation time which was reduced to 2 or 3 hours after a request was transmitted. Although still slow and limited, aeromedical evacuation came as a great morale boost for the ARVN combat soldier. This support was further enhanced by the deployment in 1964 of the U.S. 82d Medical Detachment with its six UH helicopters stationed in the Mekong Delta.

Several U.S. air ambulance units subsequently arrived in South Vietnam as the first U.S. combat units were deployed in 1965. Within 4 years, the buildup of U.S. forces had brought in a total of two helicopter ambulance companies and 11 separate medical detachments scattered across the country. In the meantime, by 1968, the VNAF also increased its H-34 fleet to five squadrons which were used for both tactical and medical evacuation missions. As a result, and with the activation of a grid network of station and field hospitals, evacuation flight time was drastically cut back to an average of 35 minutes. The seriously wounded, therefore, spent only 1 or 2 hours at the most from the time he went down to the time he arrived at a hospital or surgical facility. About 97.5 percent of those evacuated were thus saved from death.

Radio communications, the number of helicopters available, and the devotion of U.S. advisors were three factors that accounted for this life-saving success. In addition to their organic radio systems, ARVN combat units could always depend on the effective U.S. adviser's network. And helicopters in increasing numbers seemed always available for medical evacuation, including those earmarked for tactical purposes. But above all, it was the unequalled devotion of U.S. advisers and helicopter pilots who made all this possible, regardless of the time of the day. If anything remained engraved forever in the hearts of the ARVN servicemen, it surely was the image of the U.S. adviser who stayed by his radio or telephone late into the night requesting an helicopter ambulance or of the U.S. helicopter pilot who braved weather and hazards to pick up a wounded however remote the place could be or what time it was.

Indeed, U.S. helicopters performed most of the medical evacuation missions for the RVNAF after 1965, accounting for 70-80% of daytime and 100% of nighttime missions. It was a period during which the incipient VNAF helicopter fleet could not cope with the requirements of stepped up fighting. Reliance on U.S. medical evacuation, however, caused some administrative drawbacks. Because U.S. helicopter pilots were not familiar with RVNAF hospitals, they frequently brought ARVN patients directly to U.S. medical facilities, making it difficult for units to

keep track of their personnel. Occasionally, patients even ended up in some U.S. hospital offshore and their whereabouts remained unknown for some time.

Beginning in 1969, Vietnamization trends brought about some modernization and expansion to the VNAF helicopter fleet whose obsolescent H-34's were gradually replaced by the UH-1's. Each year saw new helicopters added to this fleet which eventually expanded to 16 squadrons. And increasingly, despite their mixed use, VNAF helicopters took over medical evacuation missions in replacement of redeploying U.S. units. In preparation for this gradual take-over of responsibility, 83 medevac pilots, 21 crew members and 28 flight nurses received specialized training in the U.S. during 1971-1972. Because of this, the phasing out of U.S. Army medevac helicopters took place without causing any interruption or decline in medical evacuation. During the 5 months following the outbreak of the 1972 Easter Offensive, VNAF helicopters evacuated a total of 31,600 patients compared with 1,200 patients evacuated by U.S. helicopters. This was a remarkable achievement highlighting the coming of age of RVNAF aeromedical evacuation.

The drastic cutback in U.S. military aid in 1974 seriously affected the operation of VNAF helicopters. Flight time during the second half of the year was reduced to a mere 20% of the first half. Medical evacuation, which depended largely on the VNAF helicopter fleet, suffered accordingly despite the high priority assigned to it by field commanders. The impact was most acutely felt by combat units in the Mekong Delta which depended almost entirely on helicopters for medical evacuation. In remote areas, therefore, units reverted to the old evacuation means of the mid-50s: litters, hammocks, boats, and vehicles, which were slow and unreliable. Troop morale sank perceptibly as a result. In addition to their being grounded by limited operating funds, helicopters on medevac missions also ran into greater hazards posed by the enemy's expanding anti-aircraft system which included the deadly SA-7 missile. Many evacuation missions were therefore aborted, giving rise to all sorts of harsh criticism against VNAF helicopter pilots.

The evacuation of patients from station or field hospitals to the rear, however, almost never occurred routinely because patients usually received treatment at these places until complete recovery. Only a few cases of specialized treatment ever required the re-evacuation of patients to general hospitals. In those instances, fixed-wing aircraft or 3/4-ton ambulance trucks were used.

During 1972, the enemy's Easter Offensive forced three instances of patient evacuation, one among them ended in tragic failure. This occurred during the process of evacuating patients from the Quang Tri Hospital to Hue City. From 30 March to mid-April, the evacuation took place by 1/4-ton and 3/4-ton ambulance trucks with the purpose of clearing this hospital for the combat wounded. When road traffic became hazardous during the last week of April, the evacuation continued by helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. On 28 April, the remaining patients, about 300 in total, boarded the return convoy of the 1st ALC toward Hue. As the defense of Quang Tri City collapsed, the convoy was stranded on Route QL-1 amidst other military vehicles, battered troops, and refugees fleeing south. During the slaughter by enemy artillery fire that followed, the entire contingent of patients perished along with hundreds of civilian refugees. The other two evacuations of patients, however, took place without any incident. From Hue, 350 patients were successfully airlifted to Da Nang while another 400 from Pleiku also made it safely to Qui Nhon and Nha Trang during a period of most intense fighting around Hue and Kontum.

In early 1975, the rapid unfolding of events engulfed the majority of patients and left most of them stranded. The fall of Ban Me Thuot on 11 March occasioned the helpless loss of a 400-bed hospital with patients. It was followed by the 2d Field Hospital in Kontum and the 600-bed Pleiku Hospital whose patients were unable to evacuate in time with the hasty redeployment of II Corps forces toward Tuy Hoa. After these unexpected setbacks, expedient measures were taken to evacuate the three major hospitals along the coast: Nguyen Tri Phuong in Hue, Duy Tan in Da Nang, and Qui Nhon in keeping with President Thieu's strategic redeployment plans. On 20 March, all patients from Qui Nhon were evacuated uneventfully

toward Nha Trang, Saigon, and Vung Tau. Then, the majority of patients in Hue was directed toward Da Nang due to reasons of family attachment. When Hue City was hastily evacuated on 25 March, however, no one knew exactly what happened to the Nguyen Tri Phuong Hospital staff and those patients still remaining there. How many finally made it to Da Nang along with the 1st Infantry Division troops, it was impossible to ascertain.

In Da Nang City which became increasingly crowded with refugees after the evacuation of Hue, about 1,000 litter-case patients at the Duy Tan General Hospital awaited evacuation toward Saigon on 26 March. Only 300 were successfully picked up by 4 VNAF C-130 flights during that day. The next day, the flights had to be cancelled because not only was the airport mobbed by panicky refugees, it was also impossible to move the patients through the jammed roads leading to the airport. Over 5,000 patients and staff personnel of the Duy Tan General Hospital therefore became stranded when I Corps forces boarded naval ships to withdraw south during the night of 28 March.

Other military hospitals south of the main resistance line drawn at Nha Trang eventually met with the same fate as this city and others successively fell after 2 April.

Medical and Blood Supply

ARVN units were all authorized a 30-day supply of medicine but the types of medicine a unit was authorized to stock were limited if there was no medical doctor in charge. Hospitals and general hospitals were authorized a 60-day supply of medicine which was replenished by field depots on request.

The ARVN medical supply system consisted of a base depot, the 70th Medical Base Depot in Saigon, and 5 field depots: the 711th in Da Nang, the 721st in Qui Nhon, the 731st in Saigon, the 741st in Can Tho, and the 751st in Nha Trang. Up until 1969, all 5 field depots were placed under the control of respective area logistic commands. Each depot

provided support in medicine supplies to all units and hospitals in a logistic area. After 1969, these field depots became subordinate to corps medical groups.

Almost all medicine and medical supplies used in the RVNAF were provided by U.S. Army medical depots based on requisitions prepared by the 70th Base Depot and approved by MACV. Supplies delivered to Saigon were stocked at the 70th Base Depot for subsequent distribution to the 5 field depots for replenishment purposes. In 1966, to alleviate the congestion of Saigon port and cut down on transportation time, a joint U.S.-ARVN study was made to determine the feasibility of direct shipment to field depots from the U.S. or Okinawa. As a result, about 280 items comprising nearly 70% of total tonnage and requisition objectives were subsequently shipped to the ports of Da Nang, Qui Nhon and Cam Ranh. Despite some initial confusion over code addresses of ports and field depots, direct shipment continued smoothly until the end of 1972. During the post-cease-fire period, this practice was suspended and all shipments from the U.S. were directed to Saigon.

To regulate the flow of medical supplies efficiently, continuous efforts were made to improve stock control at the 70th Medical Base Depot. With the assistance of U.S. medical advisers, in 1966 the depot conducted a complete inventory of items in stock and stock levels at field depots; it found and returned a surplus worth U.S. \$182,045 to the 32d U.S. Army Medical Depot in Cam Ranh. In keeping with modernization trends, the 70th Medical Base Depot began to use electronic accounting machines in most of its supply operations and was able to establish requisition objectives in dollar values which were required for the annual programming of U.S. military aid. As a result of this improvement, the fill rate of requisitions rose significantly, from 78% in 1966 to 90% in 1969. Indeed, as compared to other technical services, the medical supply system always topped the scale with the highest requisition fill rate (90 to 95%).

In 1972, the consolidation of all army materiel management functions under the National Materiel Management Agency (NMA) and the concomitant standardization of supply procedures under RAMMS (Republic of Vietnam

Automated Materiel Management System), which was operated by NMMA, required that the 70th Medical and other base depots relinquished their stock control operations. After a complete inventory, the medical supply system also computerized its operations and became part of the RAMMS system as of August 1974.

The Medical Department, however, did not welcome this consolidation of supply functions. It maintained that since medical supply was closely linked to the delicate function of medical treatment, it should come under the department's exclusive control. As a compromise, the Medical Department was authorized to have constant and direct access to management information concerning medical supplies and act as technical adviser to the NMMA. Despite the uneventful functioning of the system, time did not permit a full evaluation of its merits.

Like other branches of service, the medical service was seriously affected by the drastic cutback of FY-75 military aid. Of 497.1 million U.S. dollars earmarked for the ARVN, only 12.1 million were allotted to the medical program. This represented a shortfall of 5.8 million, most of it required for life-saving treatment. (*Table 30*)

Despite the realization that life-saving was vital to sustaining the war effort, it was impossible to cut back on other expenditures to fill this shortfall. As a result, hospital staffs resorted to unusual measures to make do with reduced supplies. Such disposable supplies as bandages, syringes, needles, surgical gloves and intravenous sets had to be washed, cleaned and sterilized for re-use.

On 1 January 1975, the shortfall in medical supplies stood at 9.1 million U.S. dollars or 68% of requisition objectives (13.3 million). It was estimated that by the end of FY-75 (30 June 1975), this shortfall would have risen to 10.9 million or 82% of total requirements; by that time also, 548 out of 865 supply items would have reached the zero balance level. The consensus among knowledgeable medical authorities was that the death rate as well as the number of treatment days for each case would rise sharply as a consequence.

Whole blood, which was essential for the life-saving process, was provided by the RVNAF Blood Supply Center, which adjoined the

Table 30 — Medical Program Funding, FY-75

CATEGORY	Requirements (million)	Fund Ceiling (million)	Shortfall (million)
Life-Saving	15.2	10.6	4.6 (30%)
Preventive Medicine	2.6	1.4	1.2 (46%)
Other Support	.1	.1	0
TOTAL	17.9	12.1	5.8

Cong Hoa General Hospital in Saigon. This center was the sole agency supplying blood for the RVNAF medical treatment system. Prior to 1965, because of difficulties in transportation, most of the whole blood collected, processed, and stored at the center was primarily used for transfusions at the Cong Hoa General Hospital and certain other civilian hospitals in the Saigon area. As requirements for whole blood rose after 1965, the center expanded its facilities and equipment with U.S. assistance to increase its capabilities to collect, process, store, and distribute whole blood to military hospitals in the field. Helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft were normally used for the transportation of preserved blood.

In 1967, the RVNAF Blood Supply Center established an annex in Da Nang, close to the Duy Tan General Hospital, for the collection and distribution of blood in I Corps area. In Saigon as well as in Da Nang, blood was collected from volunteer donors, most of them local servicemen, students of service schools and training centers, civilian personnel, and military dependents. All of these donors were not motivated by profit since they gave their blood free. There was also no coercion, and any publicity was kept in low profile. Still, the number of donors always seemed to exceed the center's capability to handle. To regulate the blood donation program, therefore, the JGS had to publish a quarterly schedule for all units and organizations located in Saigon and III Corps area.

On schedule, and in coordination with the blood collection staff, units transported the donors to the center where they first signed their names on a collection register. After giving his blood, each donor was treated to a nutritious meal and received a small souvenir. Those who donated blood several times were awarded a recognition certificate or the Live-Saving Medal upon recommendation by the center. The center also sent mobile teams to remote areas to collect blood and ship it back by helicopter. During the entire war, the RVNAF Blood Supply Center and its annex always provided adequate supplies of whole blood to meet every requirement even to support civilian hospitals in emergency cases. During the 1972 Easter Offensive, nearly 44,000

wounded servicemen received blood transfusion within a 5-month period and there was not a single instance of death caused by shortage of blood. During that period, an average of 8,000 blood units was collected each month.

The problem of blood wastage caused by outdated storage (beyond 21 to 31 days) was almost non-existent. Whenever there was an excess of whole blood, it was immediately converted to plasma by the freeze-dry vacuum system.

Preventive Medicine

Preventive medicine was a subject of continuous education in the RVNAF. In fact, it was considered not only a command responsibility but also the responsibility of each individual serviceman. Education sessions were regularly held in all units on preventive medicine. There were also pamphlets, posters, and documentary films on personal hygiene and collective sanitation available at every military camp and installation. The "Preventive Maintenance" magazine published monthly by the CLC also carried special features and issues on preventive medicine. Preventive medicine was also the subject of illustrated comic stories printed by "Chien Si Cong Hoa" (The Republican Combatant), the official semi-monthly military magazine. Each logistic area was supported by a preventive medicine platoon with ample supplies of medicine used for this purpose, from cloroquine tablets to insecticides.

The RVNAF preventive medicine program covered the usual communicable diseases but focused most of its attention on malaria, a widespread disease transmitted by the anopheles mosquito. The prevention of this disease, however, depended on the individual servicemen's self-discipline and the enforcement of preventive measures by unit commanders. Regulations required that each serviceman had to sleep under a mosquito net if in camp or with a head net and insect repellent rubbed on his body and limbs when in field bivouac. Each week, it was mandatory for each serviceman to take a cloroquine-primaquine tablet. In high risk areas such as Long Khanh and Duc My, servicemen were also required to take a dapsone tablet daily in addition to the weekly cloroquine tablet.

The second target of preventive medicine was diarrhea which usually occurred in May-June, a transition period between the rainy and the dry season. Diarrhea was mostly caused by the consumption of unsanitary food and drinking unsafe water during combat operations. Although water purification tablets were regularly available, many servicemen failed to take them along or use them in the field. Another disease, usually contracted by trainees at the Quang Trung Training Center in Saigon and the Chi Lang Training Center in Chau Doc Province during the hot and dry season, was meningitis. Medical doctors attributed this to overwork, exhaustion, malnutrition, and lack of fresh air in cramped sleeping quarters. Once every year, RVNAF servicemen also received inoculations against cholera, bubonic plague and typhus.

The Medical Department and corps medical groups devoted most of their efforts in preventive medicine on service schools, training centers, induction centers and military hospitals where large numbers of servicemen lived concentrated. Unannounced inspections were frequently made at these places to check on sanitary conditions in living quarters, the preparation of food, latrines, and garbage disposal. It was at these places that preventive medicine activities proved the most positive and efficient.

Observations

Over the years of its existence, particularly during the years of intense fighting, the RVNAF medical service performed its duties well and with distinction. During the initial period after the hasty departure of the French, this service was plagued by personnel and administration problems. But these shortcomings were gradually overcome with the assistance provided by the U.S., the mobilization of civilian medical personnel, and the training process.

In addition to well-equipped hospitals, the ample availability of medicine and medical supplies from U.S. resources kept medical treatment in the RVNAF on a high standard of performance. The well regulated medical supply system also excelled over other technical services in

operating standards. Medical evacuation was timely and effective most of the time, owing to the support provided by U.S. ambulance helicopters and subsequently, by the VNAF helicopter fleet. Speed and the courage of helicopter crews accounted for thousands of lives saved. The adequate supply of whole blood never impeded the life-saving process and rarely had to rely on U.S. resources.

The biggest problem faced by the RVNAF medical service which affected medical treatment to some extent was perhaps the shortage of personnel and facilities. Despite substantial increases during 1969, 1970 and 1971, hospital medical staffs were seldom adequate for the number of beds installed. There was progress, however, in the staff/bed ratio which rose from 1: 4 in 1965 to 1: 1.5 by 1971.

Medical doctors, nurses, and civilian helpers were the 3 most critically needed categories of personnel. Although most civilian physicians of draft age were inducted into service, only 80 to 85% of requirements in medical doctors were met. The primary reason seemed to be one of resource limitations. According to statistics, in 1966 South Vietnam had only 1,000 medical doctors; 700 of them were already serving in the RVNAF. As a result, medical doctors were assigned to hospitals and medical units down to the regimental level only. There were no medical doctors at the district or battalion level, except for the Airborne and Marine Divisions.

Not until 1971 was a serious effort made to assign doctors to a score of district dispensaries serving a large population of territorial troops and civilians. To solve the nation-wide shortage of physicians, reserve medical doctors were authorized to conduct private office consultation during off-duty hours. Many, however, abused this privilege and neglected official duties, which gave them a bad reputation among servicemen.

Despite personnel shortages, the Medical Department had to assist the Ministry of Public Health with medical doctors and other personnel to help operate the perennially under-staffed civilian hospitals. By 1972, 2,193 medical personnel had been detached for civilian duties, of which 393 were medical doctors.

Another problem concerned the command and leadership capabilities of medical doctors, few of them were truly apt for command jobs. Yet, all hospitals and medical units were commanded by medical doctors. The administrative jumble found in several hospitals and medical units testified to this shortcoming.

Medical treatment at military hospitals was also affected by the lack of a professional corps of nurses. The supervision and training of nurses were usually a responsibility of ward physicians but very few could spare the time for this task. To overcome this shortcoming, a nurse corps was activated in 1971 and courses were conducted to train officers and NCO's in nursing duties. Subsequently, each hospital ward was assigned a nurse officer who shared treatment responsibilities with the physician. Still, requirements far outgrew the availability of trained nurses.

The shortage of civilian personnel affected to a considerable extent the operation and maintenance of hospitals and medical depots. For some time, recovering patients were used to clean wards and toilet facilities but most were unwilling to cooperate in the performance of this chore. The shortage of civilian personnel was a common problem that affected the RVNAF as a whole.

With regard to facilities, most hospitals needed repair and rehabilitation. Except for the new 500-bed ward built for the Cong Hoa General Hospital, most field hospital wards built after 1963 were of the semi-permanent type with roofs and walls made of corrugated iron sheets and devoid of ceilings. Running water and sanitation were two permanent problems. Several major improvement and repair projects were approved but they never seemed able to compete with other high-priority programs for the necessary funds.

Combat Equipment and Supplies

Being an under-developed country with an economy ravaged by continuous war, South Vietnam almost totally depended on U.S. military aid to equip, supply, and maintain its armed forces. Despite conscious

efforts to achieve some degree of self-sufficiency, the RVN had never been able to provide the RVNAF with supplies other than food, clothing, and some expendable items. U.S. military aid, therefore, was the lifeline that sustained the RVNAF in combat throughout the war.

Since their inception in 1949 under French control, the Vietnamese National Armed Forces had been equipped with a mixture of French and American MDAP materiels. During these formative years, infantry armament consisted basically of French-made weapons such as the MAS-36 rifle, the MAT-49 submachine gun and the 24-29 automatic rifle, and small quantities of U.S.-made weapons such as the Garand M-1 rifle, the cal .45 "Thompson" submachine gun, the M-1 carbine, and the Browning automatic rifle (BAR).

Beginning in 1957, under the Military Assistance Program, the RVNAF standardized their equipment with U.S.-made and supplied materiels, all of World War II vintage. In armament, the RVNAF continued to use the same types of U.S. infantry weapons as before and communicated with radio sets such as the SCR-300, SCR-694, SCR-193, and SCR-399. Their vehicles consisted of the 1/4-ton "Willys Jeep" truck, the 3/4-ton "Dodge" truck, and the 2 1/2-ton "GMC" truck. Names such as Jeep, Dodge, and GMC popularly stood for different categories of truck. The RVNAF armament then proved adequate and powerful enough to subdue bands of Communist insurgents.

During 1959-1960, the RVNAF received the new AN series of radio equipment such as the AN/PRC-10, AN/GRC-34, and AN/GRC-26 field radio sets in replacement of the obsolescent SCR series. These radio sets provided more effective and longer range communications, which tremendously helped in counter-insurgency operations. During the same period, the World War II vintage vehicle fleet was completely replaced by a new series of Japanese-made trucks which became popularized in the RVNAF as the OSPJ (Off-Shore Procurement, Japan) trucks.

The counter-insurgency war in South Vietnam entered a new phase in 1964 with the introduction of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regular units and the Communist bloc-produced AK-47 assault rifle which proved more powerful and effective than our Garand M-1, M-2 carbine and cal .45

submachine gun combined. The AK-47 was soon followed by the deadly RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) light anti-tank weapon, known as the B-40 and B-41. All RVNAF field commanders agreed that Communist small arms were superior to ours and they pressed the JGS for an improvement.

As a result of MACV intercession, the RVNAF began to receive two new weapons: the anti-personnel Claymore mine which was light, portable, and extremely effective in defense, and the M-79 grenade launcher which was both light and easy to maintain. The M-79 also provided an effective range in excess of 400 meters and enabled an infantry soldier to carry as many as 35 grenades in combat. At the same time, a few hundreds new "Armalite" AR-15 automatic rifles were made available to ARVN paratroopers for test purposes. The AR-15 proved perhaps the ideal individual weapon for the short and lightly-built ARVN soldier. It was light, accurate, and effective. In the hands of the combat-proven and audacious ARVN paratrooper, it was indeed a deadly weapon. Understandably enough, the Airborne Brigade insisted on keeping the AR-15 after the test period.

In the fall of 1965, General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, informed the JGS that an emergency request for 170,000, later adjusted to 100,000, AR-15's— now officially designated M-16 —had been approved by the U.S. Department of Defense. This news brought about an excitement among ARVN soldiers; every combat unit longed for the day the M-16 arrived in country. The M-16 did arrive finally but in the hands of U.S. combat troops because the buildup of U.S. forces in South Vietnam had pre-empted all priorities for RVNAF equipment. The decision to postpone delivery of the M-16 stemmed from the fact that by mutual agreement, the RVNAF were to assume the lesser role of supporting pacification against local enemy forces while U.S. units conducted search-and-destroy operations against enemy main forces. The ARVN desire for the M-16 persisted, however; it was perhaps more ardent than ever now that even enemy local forces were uniformly equipped with the AK-47.

Not until March 1967 were the 100,000 M-16's earmarked for ARVN combat battalions reinstated for delivery and the first shipment arrived a few months later. But by year's end, quantities delivered were just enough to equip airborne and marine battalions. Then the enemy's

1968 Tet Offensive broke out in Saigon and across South Vietnam during which the sharp automatic bursts of the AK-47 seemed to overpower the feeble single shots of the Garand M-1 or M-1 carbine. To face the critical situation, MACV made an emergency effort to airlift M-16 rifles to Saigon and Da Nang around the clock. ARVN logistic units stood vigil day and night, receiving, processing, and issuing. Hastily assembled mobile training teams, both American and Vietnamese, went into ARVN combat units to provide crash training in the use and maintenance of the new rifle. At the same time, ARVN personnel queued up around the clock at U.S. ammunition depots, drawing initial issues for combat units. In rapid succession, all infantry battalions in III, I, IV and II Corps area, and rangers units completed their reception of and initiation to the M-16 rifle by mid-1968. The speed with which U.S. and ARVN authorities moved to put the M-16 into the hands of the ARVN combat soldier stunned the enemy. When Communist forces in Quang Ngai initiated the second phase of the offensive by attacking the provincial city, they were completely surprised—and overwhelmed—by the deadly firepower put up by defenders of the ARVN 2d Division. It was only the day before that this unit had taken delivery of the M-16's; several battalions did not even have the time to zero them for accuracy.

During this same period, ARVN infantry battalions also received the new M-60 machine gun in replacement of the BAR and cal .30 machine gun. Then they were further reinforced with new issues of the LAW anti-tank rocket and the 90-mm recoilless rifle, both of which proved extremely effective against enemy fortifications. By mid-1968, therefore, the new family of weapons had placed ARVN divisions on an equal basis with U.S. combat units in terms of infantry firepower. Soon, additional new armored vehicles such as the M-41A1 tank, the M-113 APC, and the V-100 commando car arrived to further modernize ARVN armor units which were becoming obsolete with their M-24's and M-8's. Field radio communications were also improved after the introduction of the AN/PRC-74 and the AN/PRC-25 radio set which replaced the trouble-ridden AN/PRC-10. Finally, the entire OSPJ truck fleet was phased out and replaced by the newer and better M-600 series of trucks.

The U.S. decision to Vietnamize the war in 1969 resulted in several improvement and modernization programs intended to enable the RVNAF to gradually assume the major combat role. These programs provided the necessary equipment both to activate new units and to modernize the existing force structure. During 1969-1970, most of this new equipment came partly from U.S. stocks in South Vietnam and partly from turnovers by departing U.S. units. With this bonus, the JGS was able to equip Regional and Popular Forces with the same modern infantry weapons and communications gear as their ARVN counterparts.

In the fall of 1971, after the conclusion of the lower Laos cross-border operation, the U.S. added extra punch power to ARVN artillery and armor units by making the self-propelled 175-mm gun and the M-48A3 tank available for the first time. Then in May 1972, it followed up the RVNAF improvement and modernization process with the "Enhance" program, intended to boost South Vietnam's capabilities to resist the enemy's Easter onslaught. Since the objectives of this program were to accelerate the delivery of FY-72 and FY-73 equipment and to replace the unusual losses incurred by ARVN forces during 1972, an uninterrupted airlift by C-130's, C-141's, and C-5A's kept pouring equipment day and night into the three major airports at Saigon, Da Nang, and Pleiku. During this period of combat emergency, ARVN forces also received the sophisticated TOW anti-tank missile to cope with enemy T-54 tanks. At the same time, twin 40-mm antiaircraft guns, M-102 howitzers, radar sets such as the AN/MPQ-4, and modern tactical vehicles such as the 1/4-ton M-151 and 2 1/2-ton M-35A2, came to expand and modernize the RVNAF equipment inventory.

The Enhance program was being implemented when prospects of an imminent cease-fire in October 1972 hastily ushered in the "Enhance Plus" project. Seeking to pre-empt the limitations of a peace agreement which was in the making, the U.S. quickly set about to bring the RVNAF firepower and mobility up to such a level that they could defend themselves effectively against an enemy offensive of 1972 proportions. The Enhance Plus program, therefore, provided for the filling of TOE's up to the authorized level, an acceptable attrition and maintenance

float, and a high inventory of assets which would turn the one-for-one replacement provision into a South Vietnamese advantage.

The last quarter of 1972 thus saw the hectic shipments of war materiel proceed at an accelerated pace, an effort designed to beat the cease-fire deadline. Most significant among the new arrivals were the necessary assets to equip 2 M-48 squadrons, 3 SP 175-mm artillery battalions and 2 C-130 squadrons (32 aircraft), and enough F-5A's to both equip new fighter squadrons and exchange for the more advanced F-5E's later on. On the eve of cease-fire day, therefore, the RVNAF found themselves in possession of a substantial inventory of war materiel and equipment. (Table 31)

The Impact of Reduced Aid

Peace never came to South Vietnam on 28 January 1973 as provided for by the Paris Agreement. Never for an instant did North Vietnam renounce to its ultimate conquest of the South. Repeated and increasingly blatant violations of the cease-fire by the Communists compelled the RVNAF to react in self defense for the protection of the South Vietnamese people and to ensure territorial integrity. In spite of the ICCS and all appearances of self-control by both sides, fighting continued as viciously as ever.

With funds remaining from FY-73 appropriations, the RVNAF were able to replace expendable items of equipment as war losses. The one-for-one basis was enforced as required by the Paris Agreement. For the fiscal year ahead, however, it was not clear whether military aid would continue to be dispensed as MASF appropriations or revert to the MAP system. Months passed amidst uncertainty but high expectations. In the meantime, the JCS and the U.S. Defense Attache Office, which replaced MACV in the management of the Security Assistance Program, continued to process requisitions for supplies and equipment within provisions of the FY-74 program which had been submitted for approval in early 1973. It was expected that final appropriations would be in the acceptable range of 1.4 to 1.6 billion U.S. dollars.

**Table 31 — Summary of Selected Items of Equipment Approved
in Support of RVNAF Improvement and Modernization
Program (as of 15 December 1972)**

ITEMS	QUANTITIES	ITEMS	QUANTITIES
GRENADE LAUNCHER, M-79	63,621	TRUCK, CARGO, 2½-t, M-35A2	19,339
HOWITZER, LT, 105-mm, M-101 A1	1,624	TRUCK, CARGO, 5-t, M-54A2	1,240
RIFLE, M-16 A1	895,308	TRACTOR, FT, L-5, MED.	810
MACHINE GUN, M-60	17,465	SEMI-TRAILER, STAKE, 12-t, M-127A2C	1,517
GUN, SP, 175-mm, M-107	85	ARMOR PERSONNEL CARRIER, M-125A1	1,973
		CARRIER, MORTAR, 87-mm, M-125A1	219
HOWITZER, MED, 155-mm, M-114 A1	474	TANK, LT, M-41A3	580
GUN, SP, TWIN, 40-mm	108	TANK, MED., M-48A3	329
RADIO SET, AN/PRC-25	51,371	HELICOPTER, UH-1H	1,153
RADIO SET, AN/VRC-12, -46, -47	8,866		
TRUCK, UTILITY, ¼-t M-151 A1, A2	25,693	HELICOPTER, CH-47 A	79
TRUCK, 1-t, M 601; ¾-t M-37, SERIES	16,063		

Not until January 1974 did the JGS learn from Major General Murray, the U.S. Defense Attache, that the FY-74 program was running into difficulties and that the U.S. Congress would most likely reduce appropriations to 1 billion or 900 million. General Murray also advised the JGS to cut back on consumption of supplies, especially in ammunition, in order to keep expenditures within expected appropriations although the U.S. Department of Defense continued to push for the original 1.4 to 1.6 billion.

By this time, however, 820.5 million U.S. dollars had been expended. With the final appropriations eventually set at 945 million, there was not much the RVNAF could do except to tighten their belt. Since 51% of expenditures went for ammunition, this meant that the RVNAF no longer afforded harassment or interdiction fire even in the face of stepped up enemy violations and infiltration. A drastically reduced ammunition supply rate was imposed but in spite of voluntary curtailment in consumption, the available stocks of certain critical items at the end of FY-74 reached a dangerously low level compared to that of cease-fire day. (*Table 32*)

The significance of all this lay in the fact that if the RVNAF were forced in July 1974 to battle the enemy at the 1972 offensive level, they would have expended all their ammunition within less than 10 weeks without resupply. By July 1974, there was also a considerable accumulation of war-damaged major items of equipment which could not be replaced for lack of funds. (*Table 33*)

In anticipation of further cutbacks for the fiscal year ahead, in May 1974 the U.S. Department of Defense requested that an analysis be made of the impacts on RVNAF operational effectiveness at various funding levels, from 1,126 million to 600 million. The resulting study, jointly conducted by the JGS and the U.S. DAO, is summarized in *Table 34*.

From this analysis, it was evident that if FY-75 appropriations were kept at the 1,126 million level, the RVNAF would be able to defend South Vietnam against Communist activities at the 1974 scale and level of fighting to include "high points," but in no way could they contain a sustained major offensive. Any level below the 1,126-million mark, therefore, would seriously affect both the capabilities and morale of the RVNAF. It was estimated that at the 750-million funding level, for example, the RVNAF would no longer have the capabilities to defend the

Table 32 — Status of Stock Levels, Critical
Ammunition Items, End of FY-74

Type of Ammunition	On Hand (rounds)		Days of Intense Combat Rate (ICR)
	January 28, 1973	July 1974	
105-mm HE	1,931,700	1,527,600	52
155-mm HE	481,800	262,000	70
5.56-mm Ball	193,328,000	127,100,000	48
Frag Grenade	2,226,100	945,900	66
66-mm HEAT	208,600	67,000	57
40-mm Rkt, HE	4,093,000	779,000	37

Table 33 — Non-Replaced Major Items of Equipment,
July 1974

Type of Item	Total Losses	Called Forward (Requested by phone)	Received (actually delivered)
Tactical Wheeled Vehicles*	8,514	2,466	843
Armored Tracked vehicles	240	143	95
Artillery pieces	165	143	51
Rocket Launchers/Mortars/ Recoilless Rifles	7,684	7,566	2,175
Machine guns	2,377	2,260	267
Small arms	35,829	30,756	5,100
Commo-Electronics	7,976	7,256	1,804
Water Craft	97	88	11
Aircraft	281	N/A	8

* Not including 1,861
OSPJ vehicles

Table 34 — Analysis of FY-75 Funding Impacts

	1,450 MILLION	1,126 MILLION	900 MILLION	750 MILLION	600 MILLION
A. COMBAT LEVEL					
FY74 Level	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Siagon Delta Only
Country-wide Hot Spots	Yes	Yes	?	No	No
Offensive	?	No	No	No	No
B. EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT					
ARVN	1 for 1	<1 for 1	Essential Weapons	None	None
VNN	<1 for 1	None	None	None	None
VNAF	<1 for 1	Essential Aircraft	None	None	None
C. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE					
POL	<Full*	49%	45%	38%	33%
Ammo	<Full*	69% Reduction In Training	75%	62%	55%
Commo-electronics	Full	Inter Regional Commo Impact	Tact. Commo Impact	Ineffective	Ineffective
QM	<Full	Impair Maintenance	Only Critical Supply	Non Supportive	Non Supportive
Medical	Full	Full	Curtail Prev. Med.	Reduce CBT Med. Support	Non Supportive
A/C Engines	Full	Full	Full	Ground Some A/C	Eliminate Conus Overhaul
Contracts	Full	Full	Full	Reduce Flying Hours By 36%	Reduce Flying Hours By 55%
In Country Rebuild	<Full*	Lose 34% Of FY76 Rebuild	Lose 55%	Lose 75%	Non-existence
Offshore Rebuild	Full	Lose Heavy Engine Reb.	Eliminate APC, Reduce TK	Non-existence	Non-existence
Construction	<Full*	Eliminate Minor Const. Material	Reduced 50% All Construction Materials	Eliminate U.S. Support For LOC	Road And Facilities Deteriorate
Offshore Training	Full	Full	Full	Curtail	Further Curtail

*Reduced Procurement due to inflation.

entire territory under GVN control even if fighting continued at the same level of the previous 12 months. At that level of military aid, there was no doubt that the GVN would be compelled to reduce substantially the extent of its territorial control, which, in terms, of bargaining power, would represent a serious setback. Both the JGS and the U.S. DAO therefore advised the U.S. Department of Defense that 1,450 million was the funding level required for South Vietnam to defend itself effectively.

During the first quarter of FY-75, pending approval by the U.S. Congress, the RVNAF subsisted on a continuing resolution authority (CRA) which disbursed funds based on 1 billion for the entire year. At the end of September 1974, however, the JGS was notified by the U.S. DAO that only 700 million had been approved for FY-75.

News of U.S. military aid cutbacks propagated through the RVNAF hierarchy with the effect of a gigantic concussion bomb. Fears and doubts began to set in as JGS and U.S. DAO authorities sat down to figure out how to make the most of what was available. All agreed that priority should be placed on the RVNAF ability to "move, shoot, and communicate". Of the 700 million available, nearly 120 million had been set aside to meet obligations: 74 million for PCH-T, 36.2 million for U.S. DAO's operating funds, 2.3 million for the carried-over FY-75 training program, and 3.3 million for payback to South Korea on F-5A's already transferred.

Less than 580 million were thus left for the entire RVNAF, barely enough just for operation and maintenance. This meant that, except for ammunition, no war losses could ever be replaced on a one-for-one basis as authorized by the Paris Agreement.

The VNAF not only saw its F-5E program shattered beyond any hope but also found its operating funds so drastically reduced that it had to ground a total of 224 aircraft. This included 61 A-1 fighter-bombers, the entire C-7 fleet (52 aircraft), all of its 31 O-2 observation planes, 31 UH-1 helicopters, and 34 AC-47 and AC-119 gunships. To operate the remaining fleet of aircraft, the VNAF found that the only alternative to grounding was to cut back on flight time. Compared to FY-74, therefore, flight time was reduced 30% for fighter-bombers, 50% for transports, and 80% for helicopters, which

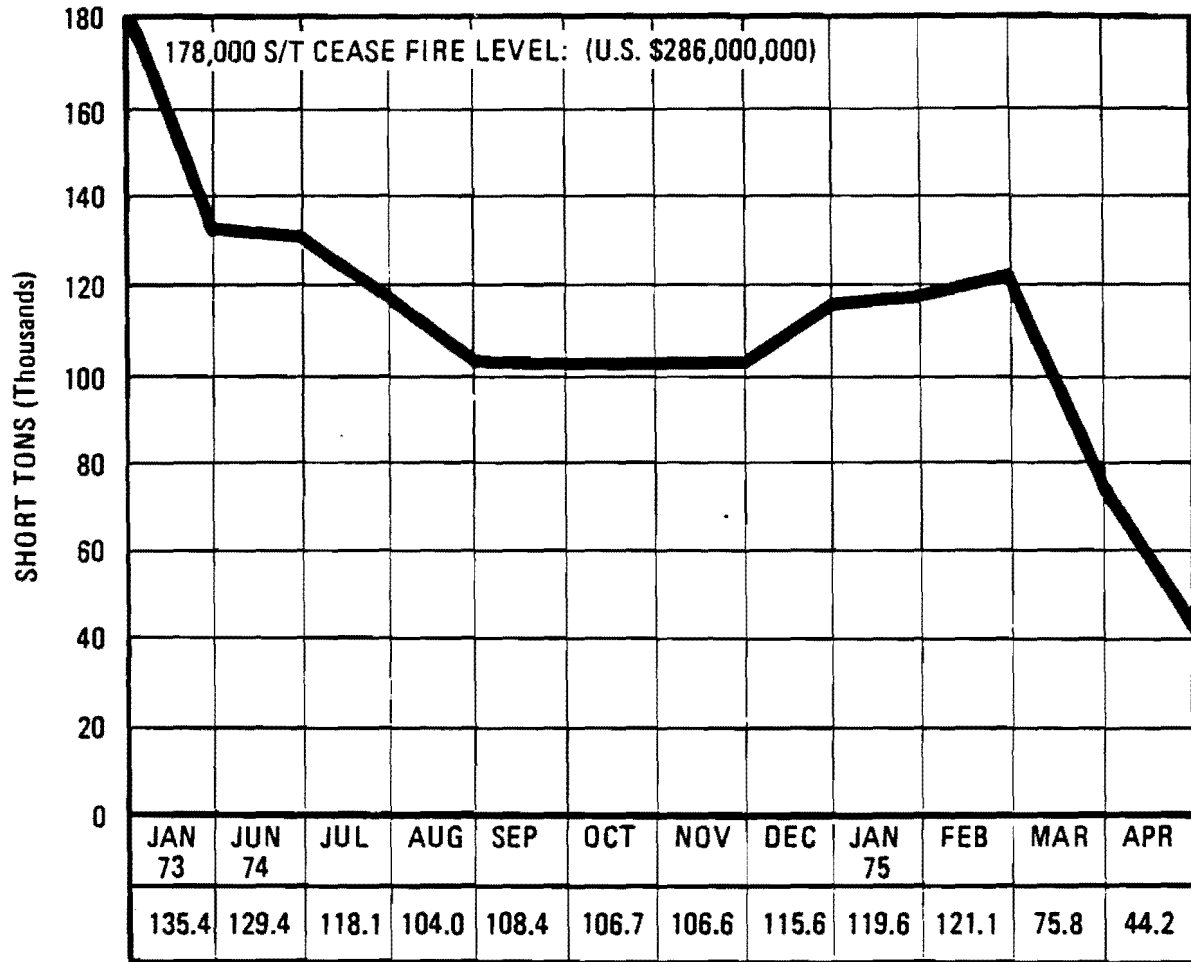
critically affected medical evacuation. The VNN also found itself in the same predicament, having to remove 21 out of 44 river groups from active duty.

Despite restrictions placed on the consumption of ammunition, the ARVN saw to its dismay that ammunition expenditures alone (239.2 million) accounted for over one half of its available funds (407.1 million). More critical was the fact that ARVN corps' monthly requests for additional ammunition above the reduced ASR could only be filled up to an average of 41.4% and that the overall ammunition stock level was constantly far below the cease-fire mark. (*Chart 10*)

As a result of the RVNAF inability to replace expended ammunition, combat units found their initial issues increasingly depleted. The situation was far worse among RF/PF units of the Mekong Delta where in late 1974, no soldier participated in an operation with an adequate issue of ammunition. Critical items of ammunition such as hand and M-79 grenades became trade commodities changing hands between territorial and regular forces, which prompted Communist propaganda to dwell on the subject of U.S. abandonment and call for RF and PF units at remote places to desert or surrender.

Other areas of activity were equally affected, which drastically reduced the RVNAF ability to move and to communicate. In addition to grounding aircraft, the RVNAF were also compelled to mothball about 50% of their 1/4-ton and 3/4-ton trucks for lack of gasoline despite curtailed consumption and tight control. In February 1975, the entire RVNAF gasoline stock level stood at 443,962 barrels to include 250,400 barrels on hand. This meant that at the intense combat rate, this level would drop to zero some time in May and even at the actual consumption rate of 84,000 barrels per month, it would dwindle to a mere 7-day supply by the end of FY-75. The same situation affected diesel fuel which, given a stock level of 1,301,523 barrels in February 1975 (of which 504,100 barrels were on hand), would be exhausted at the same time as gasoline at the intense combat rate or reduced to 4 days of supply by the end of June if expended at the actual rate of consumption (254,000 barrels per month). In any event, even if they had

Chart 10 – Ground Ammunition Stock Status, FY-75



been able to stall the NVA 1975 invasion, the RVNAF would have found themselves completely immobilized some time in May if no additional appropriations were available.

In early 1975, the supply of dry batteries for the basic infantry radio set AN/PRC-25 was also reduced by one half as compared to 1972. Communications were therefore affected by this reduction. Because of this and other cutbacks, the RVNAF eventually became an underdog in the face of an ever-stronger enemy. To redress this desperate situation, in January 1975 the GVN requested an additional 241.7 million U.S. dollars to supplement the RVNAF needs in ammunition, fuels, medicine, and spare parts. But the U.S. Congress voted down this request in late April 1975.

Observations

Issued from a poor and small country, the RVNAF had always been totally reliant on U.S. military aid for their fight against the Communists. To accomplish their mission, the RVNAF naturally expected to have good weapons and equipment and adequate supplies.

Over the years, coordination between the JGS and the U.S. military assistance advisory organization —MAAGV or MACV— for the purpose of aid programming had been good. There were constant efforts to improve U.S.-supplied materiel, especially weapons, vehicles, and communications equipment. This was done through yearly military assistance programming. With resignation, the RVNAF always accepted what had been programmed for them and fought with whatever the U.S. chose to supply, never asking for what the U.S. could not make available because of its global obligations.

There was no other choice. For the RVNAF, it was simply a matter of more or less sacrifices depending on the quality or adequacy of their instruments of defense. At no other times was this fact of life more revealing than during the early phase of the 1968 Tet offensive. As a partner in war, the RVNAF never envied their American counterparts for their more sophisticated and powerful weapon systems because they realized that U.S. forces had a heavier combat burden. They were

only concerned with the types of weapon that the enemy used and how to match him and fight him on equal terms. After all, they could always rely on the support of the powerful U.S. forces. This was the reason why the RVNAF fought with determination and effectively stalled the NVA 1972 Easter invasion.

Without U.S. backing, the morale of RVNAF troops began to waver in 1974. They fought on uneasily, stunned by the complete U.S. indifference in the face of flagrant enemy violations. Their will to resist was finally shattered by the U.S. unwillingness to continue supporting their efforts no matter how hard they had tried to tighten their belt.

PART FOUR

POLITICAL WARFARE

CHAPTER X

Deportment and Conduct

Since their inception, the Vietnamese Armed Forces always had an organization devoted to troop morale. This organization evolved throughout the war and its role eventually expanded to include efforts to win over the people and the enemy.

During the early years, responsibility for troop motivation was delegated to a staff organization composed of G-5 divisions at the General Staff and Military Region Headquarters and S-5 sections at recruit training centers. This staff organization produced and disseminated information for use by units and service branches. It also organized and supervised troop entertainment festivities performed by professional artists. However, these activities were incohesive and not very effective.

Not until 1955, did the national cause gain prominence with the establishment of the First Republic; concurrently, motivation efforts developed significantly. After the activation of the Psychological Warfare Directorate under the Ministry of Defense in 1956, the RVNAF received advisory assistance from Nationalist China and expanded the psywar organization throughout the hierarchy, down to the sector and regimental level. Under the ideological influence of Nationalist Chinese advisers, this organization developed into a separate service branch in 1964 with the creation of a General Political Warfare Department (GPWD) under the Joint General Staff. The political warfare branch had three missions:

- (1) to create and maintain the loyalty of the RVNAF toward their leaders, nation, and national ideology;

(2) to gain and maintain the support of the civilian populace in both friendly and enemy controlled areas, and;

(3) to break down the loyalty of enemy soldiers toward their leaders, nation, and national ideology.

To achieve these objectives, the GPWD patterned its organization after the Nationalist Chinese; it consisted of five functional departments: Psychological Warfare, Political Indoctrination, Military Security, Social Welfare, and Commissary, and three chaplain directorates: Roman Catholic, Buddhist, and Protestant. Under its control and supervision, there were the Political Warfare College and five Polwar Battalions, one for the JGS and one for each corps area. Polwar staffs were also incorporated into service commands, technical services, and corps, division, and sector headquarters.

In 1966, the polwar system reached further down the hierarchy to the squad level. At the regimental, battalion, company, and platoon levels, the assistant commander or leader also served as polwar officer or NCO. At the squad level, the leader was assisted by a polwar cadre, who was elected by fellow soldiers in the squad.

The RVNAF political warfare organization employed several techniques for the conduct of its activities including face-to-face contact, leaflets, posters, magazines, radio, and TV. Its efforts were devoted to winning the hearts and minds of the RVNAF soldiers, the civilian population, and the enemy. These efforts are discussed and analyzed in the following two chapters which make up Part Four.

Relations with the People

For many generations, Vietnamese rulers had been taught to hold the general populace in high esteem and respect. Almost all leaders of Vietnamese history upheld the Confucian principle of "People First, Government Second" and their policies were accordingly devoted to the welfare and peace of the populace. The people were a major force that enabled Vietnam to survive as a nation despite foreign invasions and domination.

It was the Vietnamese people who helped the Viet Minh win the War of Resistance against the French. In fact, their strategy was built on a popular base and with the solid backing of this base, guerrilla warfare thrived and developed until conditions for victory were finally attained in 1954.

With the same strategy of people's war, the Vietnamese Communists set out to conquer South Vietnam in 1959. The conflict was basically ideological and both sides realized that the ultimate victor would be the one who won over the people to his side.

But winning over the people of South Vietnam was not an easy mission for either side. The fact was, having lived and suffered in war for over a quarter of a century, most of the people became weary and noncommittal. They just wanted to live in peace and recover from the ravages of the past. They feared and loathed whoever brought trouble to their villages. In the contest between Nationalists and Communists, many desired a neutral stance, taking no sides and giving neither support. To be left alone, however, they accommodated both, waiting on the sideline to see who would be victorious. Years of listening to the attractive but hollow lines from both sides had made them sober, wary, suspicious.

To gain popular sympathy, therefore, both sides took precautions not to antagonize the people. This was the preliminary but important step because both sides knew that their soldiers and cadres were being closely watched and any misstep in their deportment or relations could cause adverse repercussions.

For the South Vietnamese government soldiers, winning popular sympathy was an uphill task, because in the people's eyes, they were the successors of the French Union forces. And the people's memory still agonized over mischievous acts such as looting, arson, rape that these forces had committed not very long ago.

For the Communists, this task was somewhat easier since they were still identified with the "Resistance" who vindicated the French and liberated the country. But the same slogans with which they waged this war—"national liberation," "stop American aggression," somehow sounded hollow and misleading. The magic of old-line propaganda, which once worked, seemed to be deteriorating.

In this contest to win popular sympathy and eventually, support, the RVNAF developed a code of conduct, which was mandatory for every soldier to memorize and recite. It consisted of six precepts, four of them related to personal behavior and relations with the people:

(1) I pledge to accept every sacrifice and hardship in the fight for the survival of the nation, of my family, and of my own person;

(2) I pledge to always obey and execute my commander's orders, and to be vigilant of the enemy's scheme to divide us;

(3) I love my compatriots and will always endeavor to protect their lives and properties and respect their religious faith. I respect elders, love children, and behave correctly toward women;

(4) I am aware that unpopular acts will push the people toward the Communist side and this amounts to giving a hand to our enemy and destroying ourselves.

To carry the battle of the hearts and minds a step further, in May 1969, the General Political Warfare Department initiated a "For the People" campaign, designed to achieve three objectives: (1) to remind servicemen of all ranks that the RVNAF was responsible for protecting the people; (2) to promote civic-action activities; and (3) to improve military deportment and discipline.

During a four-month campaign, the GPWD employed almost every resource and technique to inform and educate the troops. RVNAF units competed among themselves in conducting civic-action programs, giving medical care and dispensing medicine to civilians and assisting them in community development projects such as building schools, digging drainage and irrigation ditches, and improving public sanitation. "Discipline Weeks" were periodically observed to minimize discipline violations and improve military deportment with particular emphasis on military courtesy, uniform, personal appearance, and behavior in public places. These were coupled with "Traffic Weeks" which sought to correct bad driving habits, punish recklessness and reduce accidents and traffic congestions. Encouraged by remarkable results, the JGS extended the campaign until year's end and occasionally revived it during the following years.

One of the dilemmas of the Vietnam war faced by every field commander was how to destroy the enemy without causing casualties or damage to the civilian population. In many situations, the choice was not a happy one but justifiable because destroying the enemy and protecting our own forces seemed to be imperative, especially in contested areas. But our quest for popular sympathy and support dictated that certain rules should be observed and field commanders should exercise restraint and caution to minimize losses caused to the local population even when their loyalty was uncertain.

In search-and-destroy or pacification operations, therefore, several procedures were emphasized. The use of artillery or air strikes, for example, was authorized only after clearance by local authorities and if this support was absolutely necessary. For cordon-and-search operations, preparatory fire was usually banned even though the target might be under enemy control. During search activities, our troops were strictly forbidden from confiscating people's personal properties even if this only involved a lettuce head or a chicken. If it was necessary to procure food, our troops were instructed to purchase at a fair market price. Many tactical commanders took additional precautions by banning purchases altogether during operations and never allowed their troops to enter villages. As a result, night bivouacs usually took place far from villages and food purchases were made only by mess service personnel. Another strictly enforced rule required that every item borrowed from the people for expedient use should be returned after proper maintenance. Obviously, the enforcement of these rules depended on strict control by each unit commander.

To deter mischievous acts, the RVNAF military code imposed severe punishments against violators. Military courts were instructed to expedite criminal cases by holding on-the-spot trials. In 1969, a RF trooper convicted of rape was sentenced to death by a mobile military court held in Hau Nghia Province where the crime was committed. As a reminder to all servicemen, the JGS published a monthly pamphlet in which all offenses and punishments were publicized although the names of the culprits were withheld.

Damage to civilian properties was a subject of concern for all field commanders who usually exercised caution to prevent or minimize it. But damage was frequently inevitable because of tactical requirements or heavy fighting. Destruction of crops caused by defoliation operations around bases or of habitations caused by artillery fire or air-dropped bombs were two frequent types of damage. In such cases, the property owners received compensatory payments from a civic-action fund earmarked for that purpose and managed by the General Political Warfare Department. Provincial administrations had the responsibility to assist property owners in filing damage claims, provide substantiating evidence through investigation and make payment if the damage was less than VN \$200,000. Above that amount, claims were referred to the GPWD for decision and payment. The GPWD civic-action fund also provided for condoling visits to relatives of those who died because of war-related accidents.

The requisition of private land for military use was another delicate problem of public relations faced by the RVNAF during the war. Because of its litigable nature, the RVNAF only resorted to requisitioning as the last measure after public land had been fully utilized. The buildup of U.S. forces beginning in 1965, however, required the requisition of a sizeable amount of private land for the construction of airfields and military bases. All such uses of land were subjected to compensatory payments to owners. The price of land was determined by the local province chief and compensations included all crops or habitations located on that land.

The laws and regulations established by the GVN to protect the lives and properties of the civilian population were comprehensive and fair. The RVNAF also drove hard their efforts of educating and motivating personnel of all ranks to maintain discipline and abide by the laws. However, some shortcomings and mischiefs were inevitable in a war situation which made the GVN endeavor to win the support of the population even more difficult.

Complaints occasionally arose concerning mischievous acts committed by combat troops during operations. Petty larceny, threats, or extortions

indeed occurred sometimes but they were primarily confined to contested areas or areas under enemy control. More often than not, these were individual acts committed by mobile troops who were in the area for only a short time. Local troops operating in areas under GVN control were rarely involved. There were several reasons that accounted for these acts of improper conduct. First, few ARVN soldiers made a distinction between the enemy and the people who lived under his control. Their conduct toward these people was therefore driven either by indiscriminate hatred or the instinct of survival. During long operations, there was also a longing for fresh food and either because the owners were not there or the soldiers did not have the money, petty larceny of chickens, fruit, or vegetable sometimes occurred. But these acts happened only when control was lax or when the platoon leader chose to look the other way. Over the years, however, very few cases of improper conduct were prosecuted and brought to trial by military courts unless flagrant crimes were involved. While cover-ups were possible, this absence of indictment was perhaps an indication of indifference or passivity on the part of a population so accustomed to abuses and injustices of times past.

Although compensatory payments were mandatory in case of property damage or land requisition, they were not always satisfactory or timely because of the rigid procedures involved. For one thing, confirmation of the damage or actual land use, which involved investigation by several military and civilian agencies, was usually a time-consuming process that might take months or even years. In many instances, investigation and confirmation could not be made because either evidence no longer existed or the unit had redeployed or the unit commander involved was deceased. Information provided by the local population, on the other hand, was sketchy and usually unreliable. Many compensation cases, therefore, remained insoluble. Even when payments were finally made, the price paid by the GVN for private land was usually below current market.

No serious attempt, however, was made to simplify the procedures for fear it would give rise to abuses either by the people or local authorities. In 1965, the case of Phu Cat airbase served as a warning of the conse-

quences of land compensatory payment abuses for personal profit. The province chief, Lt. Colonel Tran Dinh Vong, and the local military property chief, were both sentenced to life imprisonment.

Because the battle for the hearts and minds was an effort pursued with equal avidity by both sides, it was interesting to know how Communist troops courted the people. From first hand accounts by people living under enemy control and intelligence reports, it was known that our enemy did almost exactly what we were doing, although the means and methods might be slightly different. Enemy troops also conducted civic-action activities such as free medical examination but without dispensing medicine, assisting in farm work, helping with sanitation problems, and cleaning the bivouac area before moving. They were expressly sympathetic toward losses incurred by the people, especially when these were caused by our side. Indeed, they seized upon these opportunities to drive home their anti-GVN propaganda and above all to incite hatred against our troops and regime. Hatred was our enemy's major instrument to turn the people against us. Our enemy achieved this by exaggerating the people's losses, fabricating stories of atrocity and setting up situations to bring more losses to the people. For example, Communist guerrillas usually drew retaliatory fire from our gunships and artillery by sniping at our aircraft, convoys or outposts. More often than not, it was the local people who were exposed to our fire because by the time it came, the guerrillas had fled or taken shelter underground. Our enemy also devised sophisticated ways to appropriate private properties for their own use, especially food. He did this primarily through econo-financial agents who made purchases with IOU's or collected rice as tax or "contributions" to several different kinds of voluntary help programs such as the "combatant's ball of rice."

The people who lived under GVN control seldom saw the true face of the enemy, they rarely realized how deceitful and conceited the Communists could be. When an enemy unit prepared for an attack against one of our military installations, it usually selected an avenue of approach far removed from the civilian population. Because the target was always well defined, the enemy's fire on it was accurate, hence

losses to the population were minimized. This was a definite advantage that the enemy enjoyed over our troops who usually found their targets in villages or hamlets where enemy troops hid among the local population. Also, the U.S. and RVNAF often employed air and indirect-fire weapons.

However, when the objective was a city or a provincial capital, the enemy faced the same situation. He could not hit our troops without also causing losses to the local population. The 1963 Tet offensive was a case in point. During the various phases of this offensive, the enemy's inaccurate 122-mm and 107-mm rockets caused considerable damage and losses to the urban population, especially in Saigon. This indiscriminate shelling coupled with the impressment of people into hazardous chores such as road digging, ammunition carrying, or even laying siege on outposts eventually backlashed against our enemy's efforts to win popular sympathy. The final popular verdict was rendered against the enemy when thousands of civilians were murdered in Hue City during his 30-day occupation. Since then, the South Vietnamese people were well immunized against enemy propaganda and there was little doubt as to which side they preferred. "Don't listen to what the Communists say," they repeated among themselves, "Just look at what they did."

Relations with the Enemy

Since South Vietnam became a constitutional republic in October 1957, it always regarded as inimical all those who committed acts of subversion, terror, and rebellion against the RVN and those who took part in Communist organizations or plotted with the Communists to overthrow the GVN by force. Laws promulgated by successive governments such as Ordinance No. 57 of 21 August 1956, Decree Law No. 10/59 of 6 May 1959, Decree Law No. 18/64 of 7 August 1964 and Decree Law No. 004/65 of 19 July 1965 all made this clear. To deal with the enemies thus defined, the GVN adopted two major programs, one offered the opportunity for them to rally to the nationalist cause and the other was designed to capture and prosecute them by virtue of national laws.

The Open Arms program, established by the Diem administration, represented a flexible and lenient policy which regarded Communists and

those siding with them as being misled. It offered them, therefore, the chance to correct their mistake by rallying to the RVN cause. All those who rallied or returned to the nationalist side were exempt from prosecution and allowed to begin a new life under the program.

The Ministry of Open Arms was the GVN agency responsible for the implementation of this policy. It made appeals to the enemy through mass media and leaflets guaranteeing safe conduct through friendly lines. To receive, process, and adapt ralliers to normal civilian life, many Open Arms centers were established throughout the country. RVNAF servicemen were also instructed to use Open Arms methods at every opportunity and to behave decently toward ralliers.

In addition to educating the RVNAF soldiers on the program and its requirements, the GPWD also cooperated with the Ministry of Open Arms in conducting campaigns designed to break down enemy morale and call for enemy troops to rally. One such campaign was initiated in 1968 to take advantage of the enemy's failure in the Tet Offensive. Called "Nguyen Trai" after a Vietnamese national hero celebrated for his persuasive literary talent, the campaign was primarily directed against high and middle echelon enemy cadre. The campaign also persuaded families with members serving the communist side to call for their return. While the results of this campaign were difficult to evaluate by statistics alone, rallier sources indicated that our appeals had affected the morale of many enemy cadre and soldiers.

The second program emphasized cordon-and-search operations. These operations were frequently conducted by the national police in coordination with RVNAF units in order to apprehend enemy agents—VCI or guerrillas—living among the civilian population. This was a tremendously difficult task; unless these agents had been blacklisted or tipped off by informants, it was almost impossible for the police to identify the VCI members or the guerrillas from among the popular masses.

Search activities were, therefore, most painful during such operations. To ensure that no enemy agents could escape, all people in the cordoned-off area had to go through a screening process in which those with proper identification papers were immediately released. Then

suspect elements, with or without proof of cooperation with the enemy, were turned over to interrogation centers for exploitation and further investigation or eventual prosecution by an appropriate court of justice. While being detained, the suspects were neither considered nor treated as prisoners of war because the GVN never declared war with North Vietnam.

Treatment of Prisoners of War

Even though the U.S. brought combat troops into South Vietnam in 1965 to fight the Communists alongside the RVNAF, it also never declared war with North Vietnam. As fighting escalated with the eventual commitment of 192 U.S. and ARVN combat battalions, the number of detailed enemy personnel also increased significantly. In the meantime, there were also U.S. personnel, both military and civilian, listed as missing in action but presumably taken prisoners, especially U.S. pilots shot down over North Vietnam. As the problem became more pressing, the U.S. began to apply the Geneva International convention on prisoners of war for purposes of classification and treatment.

In 1965, the U.S. decided to turn over to the RVNAF custody of all enemy personnel detained by its forces during operations. This was an action sanctioned by the Geneva convention which authorized such transfers of custody responsibility provided that certain binding provisions concerning the prisoners' welfare would be observed.

The GVN was faced immediately with three major problems, however. First, it always considered the VC as criminals who should be prosecuted under national laws although their treatment was as fair as required by Article 3 of the Geneva convention. The GVN, therefore, continued with this policy but made public all verdicts rendered. Second, the RVNAF never had any facilities constructed specifically as prisoner camps; they kept only military jails for their own convicts. Consequently, all enemy personnel captured by U.S. forces and turned over to RVNAF custody were detained in ordinary prisons, which was a violation of Article 22 of the Geneva convention. Third, according to Article 12 of the same

convention, U.S. forces were still responsible for those enemy personnel captured even though the RVNAF kept them in custody.

But the U.S. seemed to be most concerned about the American pilots, military and civilian personnel who were captured and detained by the Communists both in North and South Vietnam. The United States was concerned that, given the GVN's policy of denying the status of prisoners of war to Communist personnel, the VC and North Vietnam might take retaliatory measures against U.S. personnel. Indeed, Hanoi publicly threatened several times to prosecute captured U.S. pilots under its own laws, maintaining that as "war criminals" they were not entitled to protection by the Geneva provisos. The U.S., as a result, pressed the GVN for strict observance of the Geneva convention in the hope that North Vietnam and the VC would be bound to do the same to U.S. prisoners. American pressure on the subject was strong and insistent on the GVN.

At first, the GVN was reluctant to yield to pressure, claiming as Hanoi did that as aggressors and assassins, Communist did not earn the status of prisoners of war defined by the Geneva convention. The main reason for this attitude was that the GVN, ever suspicious of Communist foul play and intransigence, did not feel assured that North Vietnam and the VC would strictly apply Geneva standards to U.S. and allied personnel under detention. Gradually, in sympathy with the U.S. concern, the GVN softened its stance and finally notified the International Red Cross in August 1965 that the RVN was respecting and would continue to respect the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.

In June 1965, a combined JGS-MACV committee was formed to study the detailed implementation of the Geneva Convention. Five months later, the committee set in motion a program which included, among other things, efforts to educate combat troops in the subject of prisoners of war and the building of four POW camps, each capable of accommodating initially 1,000 prisoners for each corps area. Training aids used for this educational purpose included bilingual 3x5 cards on the subject "the enemy in your hands" and other materials designed to explain how prisoners of war should be treated according to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949. For the first time also, RVNAF individual and unit training programs

began to include basic subjects on the detention, confirmation, classification, and transfer of prisoners of war. Combat units were held responsible for them from the time they were captured until transferred to POW camps. In addition to combat troops, training also focused on Military Police battalions which were responsible for the administration and security of POW camps. To further emphasize the effort, the GPWD made the good treatment of prisoners one of the six basic precepts of the RVNAF soldier's code of conduct: "I, soldier of the RVN, absolutely pledge to treat well captured and surrendered enemy prisoners. I will not mistreat them, beat them or misappropriate their personal belongings."

The building of POW camps began in early 1966 as a crash program. It picked up momentum after a slow start due to material shortages. In May 1966 the first POW camp was completed in Bien Hoa, followed by two others in Pleiku and Da Nang. By year's end, these camps reached a total capacity of 3,000 prisoners, expandable to 4,500 in an emergency.

During 1967, the GVN embarked on a large-scale POW program designed to achieve several objectives. It involved, in the first place, the confirmation and transfer of prisoners from civilian detention centers to POW camps under military control. By year's end 1,202 such prisoners had been identified from among detainees in four national detention centers and 44 provincial jails and transferred to POW camps together with 221 others. Efforts were also made to improve accuracy in prisoner accounting procedures and to increase the capacity of POW camps. By the end of 1967, the RVNAF had increased their total handling capacity to 13,000 prisoners. This was made possible by the construction in mid-year of a central POW camp on Phu Quoc Island, the largest ever built. When it was completed in 1969, the Phu Quoc POW camp had ten enclosures, each capable of accommodating 2,000 prisoners. Its capacity could be expanded to 32,000 in an emergency or for a short time. Then in March 1968, a POW camp for females was built in Qui Nhon with the purpose of providing separate accommodations for all female prisoners. During the same year, POWs under 18 years of age were transferred to the Bien Hoa facility where they received rehabilitation and vocational training. By the end

of 1971, with constantly expanded and improved facilities, the RVNAF were able to accommodate a total of 35,665 POWs including 13,365 captured by U.S. forces.

Under the POW improvement program, the GVN also set about to provide work and education for the POWs under detention. In December 1968, it approved a POW work program devised with the assistance of MACV J-1's POW Work Advisory Detachment. Under this program, which began in 1968, prisoners were paid VN \$8 per day for their work. On Phu Quoc Island in particular, POWs were employed to handle supplies delivered by ships to the island and allowed to plant vegetables around their camps to improve their diet. POWs were also involved in handicraft work and learned to weave baskets, make clothes and manufacture bricks. The major difficulty faced by camp authorities was the lack of funds, available space and security guards. In addition to work, POWs also received vocational training, basic education and enjoyed other privileges concerning mail, health, welfare and visitation as determined by the Geneva convention. POWs were all allowed to correspond with their families and receive visits by relatives on a weekly scheduled basis. They were also issued toilet articles for their personal hygiene needs such as tooth brushes, dental creams, soaps, and towels and occasionally, clothes remade from old military uniforms. Each camp had a dispensary where POWs were treated by a medical doctor. On Phu Quoc Island, there was a 400-bed hospital for the sole use of prisoners. Camp commanders also placed special emphasis on sanitation and preventive medicine and constantly saw to it that prisoners lived in healthy conditions.

In addition to privileges and amenities, POWs also enjoyed inspections by the International Red Cross (IRC). At first, the GVN was not amenable to such inspections for the reason that the Communists never authorized the International Red Cross to visit their POW facilities in South or North Vietnam, especially where U.S. airmen were detained. The one condition it attached to such visits was reciprocity by the Communists. Gradually, however, under American advice and persuasion, the GVN relented and unilaterally authorized Red Cross representatives to visit POW camps across South Vietnam.

In August 1966, soon after its completion, the Bien Hoa POW camp received an IRC representative for the first time. This representative proved entirely friendly to camp authorities and even promised help in improving camp welfare facilities. In October, the IRC made another visit to the Da Nang and Pleiku POW camps and left with good impressions. Then from 28 November to 8 December 1966, IRC representatives conducted an extensive inspection across the country during which they visited collecting points, POW camps and medical treatment facilities. During 1967, the GVN also authorized members of the foreign press to accompany IRC representatives on inspection trips. These trips were always carefully arranged by the JGS and MACV which provided transportation, accommodation, security, and escort officers. IRC representatives enjoyed complete freedom during these visits and could interview any prisoner they selected without restriction. All discrepancies that they noted were duly recorded by the escort officer and transmitted to responsible authorities for appropriate action. Despite complex and difficult problems, both the U.S. and the RVN governments always endeavored to meet the requirements of the Geneva Convention. In terms of accommodation facilities such as sleeping quarters, beds, electricity, water, mess and food service, perhaps the POW camps were much better than our own barracks.

Release and repatriation of prisoners were also areas of endeavor by both the RVN and U.S. governments. Over the war years, especially beginning in 1966, both governments did free and repatriate POWs with the expectation that the Communists would respond in kind. During 1967, 139 prisoners were released in South Vietnam or repatriated to North Vietnam. Hanoi reciprocated by freeing four Americans and one Filipino. In April, the GVN set about to screen those prisoners disabled by sickness or disease for release as determined by Articles 109-110 of the Geneva Convention. The screening committee which included two Swiss physicians on contract with the IRC, selected 135 prisoners for release among 286 eligible; upon their requests, 39 among them were returned to North Vietnam across the Ben Hai River on 12 June 1967.

During 1968, the GVN continued its POW screening program with American support. Forty prisoners were selected for release by IRC

physicians and all desired to return to North Vietnam. However, despite repeated requests by the GVN through the intermediary of the IRC, Hanoi failed to respond. The GVN persisted for another year but all of its efforts to repatriate these 40 prisoners ended in failure.

During the Paris peace talks, in November 1969, the GVN brought up the subject of repatriating disabled prisoners and again offered to return 62. But North Vietnam refused to oblige although Articles 109-110 of the Geneva Convention required that the mother country of prisoners accept those who desired to return. The GVN even offered to provide sea transportation for the 62 prisoners to any point of entry at Hanoi's discretion, but again its request fell on deaf ears. Despite this, in observance of Article 21 of the Geneva Convention, the GVN released during 1969 a total of 191 POWs, all southern-born, for reasons of age or pregnancy. During the same year, it also converted to rallier status a number of POWs considered amenable to rehabilitation, most of them under 18.

Even though the Communists never responded to requests of prisoner repatriation or reciprocated to the unilateral prisoner releases by the GVN, both the U.S. and the RVN continued to adhere to their policy of human treatment of POWs during 1970 and 1971. Then in April 1971, the GVN proposed a bilateral agreement calling for their repatriation through a neutral country. But this proposal did not result in any favorable response. Suddenly in May Hanoi agreed to accept 570 disabled POWs. The ICC interviewed 660 eligible POWs but only 13 among them desired to return to North Vietnam. Arrangements were immediately made and the 13 repatriates boarded a sea transport bound for North Vietnam's waters. But before the release could be made, Hanoi suddenly changed its mind and the 13 POWs had to return to Da Nang.

Despite Communist intransigence, by March 1972, the GVN had released a total of 5,960 POWs including 188 repatriated to North Vietnam, 900 set free in South Vietnam, 1,784 reclassified, and 3,084 converted to rallier status. Hanoi reciprocated by freeing only 53 American prisoners by the end of 1971.

During 1973, in full implementation of the Paris Agreement, the GVN released a total of 26,508 Communist POWs. In return, it received only 4,608 of its own POWs, 588 U.S. and nine from third countries. All former POW camps across South Vietnam were completely deserted and prepared to close down or convert to other uses. But because peace never came and war resumed in earnest, these camps were reactivated to accommodate newly captured enemy personnel. Subsequent proposals by the GVN to exchange prisoners during Two-Party Joint Military Commission meetings were all turned down by the Communists.

In summary, the GVN always adopted a lenient policy toward the enemy, who was considered a blood relative with a different ideology. It always opened wide its arms to welcome those who returned and endeavored to induce this rally by persuasive appeals. Consequently, the RVNAF forbade all inhuman actions against enemy personnel after they had been captured or surrendered and subjected violators to prosecution and punishment. However, it was inevitable that, driven by anger and vindication for the casualties suffered by their comrades, a few RVNAF soldiers did commit atrocious acts against enemy POWs and such stories were reported by the press.

For those enemy personnel who failed to respond to the GVN appeals and happened to be captured during operations, it was logical that they should be prosecuted by GVN laws. After all, the Communists did the same thing to our servicemen through the device of people's justice. However, as fighting escalated after 1965 with the participation of U.S. forces, the problem of prisoners captured by both sides in increasing quantities seemed to warrant some sort of conventional treatment even though war was never declared. Because the GVN felt an obligation toward U.S. and allied personnel captured by the enemy, it fully observed the Geneva convention clauses in the hope that the enemy would do the same. Its seemingly reluctant attitude toward compliance at first simply derived from political needs to bargain for reciprocity by the Communists. Indeed, during the entire war, the RVN, the U.S. and their allies always endeavored, by unilateral actions, to provide adequately for enemy prisoners. But the excellent treatment of POWs on our part sometimes

seemed overzealous and more often than not incurred the wrath of some RVN servicemen who did not see any similar treatment by the enemy toward their comrades-in-arms. GVN intelligence reports revealed that our prisoners were being publicly humiliated or subjected to tortures and abuses. Some of our prisoners were chained like animals while being detained; they had to do hard labor without sufficient nutrition and were kept in complete isolation with the outer world. That was the main reason why our enemy never allowed the IRC to inspect POW detention camps in South or North Vietnam. Throughout the war, our enemy never made even a gesture to release our disabled prisoners. He did not even have an acceptable list of prisoners under his control. To our enemy, the POWs served a useful purpose: they were political hostages to be used whenever it was to his advantage.

CHAPTER XI

Indoctrination and Motivation

Indoctrination

Indoctrination or political education was an undertaking of major importance for the RVNAF during our protracted fight against the Communists. A soldier would fight with more dedication if he was ideologically motivated. This tenet held true in the Vietnam War.

Important as it was, ideological indoctrination began only after South Vietnam became a republic. Before that, it was almost non-existent. The Vietnamese soldier in the pre-Diem era fought without conviction, without knowing why he fought. He merely carried out the orders of his superior.

The French then held both political and military powers. Under their tutelage and domination, Vietnam hardly had a true national cause to motivate its incipient military force. Even Bao Dai had second thoughts about developing the Vietnamese National Army, confiding that "such an undertaking would be detrimental to our nation as long as we do not have an ideal for our men to fight." His conviction was well-founded because, as he admitted: "As long as we fail to inspire confidence among the populace, how can we impart enthusiasm and a fighting spirit on our troops? If we say that this is our army when it is commanded and used by the French, then we admit its mercenary character. How can a mercenary army have any cause to enlist the support of the people?"¹

¹Vietnamese Military History, Volume IV; Military History Division, J-5, JGS; Saigon, 1972.

As South Vietnam became an independent nation under President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1955, its national cause began to take shape. Under the U.S. military advisory assistance program, the Vietnamese Armed Forces went through a complete reorganization process built on the concept of mandatory military service. The Diem administration realized that to defend against Communist aggression, South Vietnam had to derive its power not from an all-volunteer, professional military force but one composed primarily of reserve elements politically motivated against Communism. It was believed that ideological awareness once inculcated and firmly held as a cause would greatly enhance the effectiveness of weapons. After all, the conflict that South Vietnam faced was an ideological one which pitted Freedom against Communism. Consequently, ideological awareness should be the force that motivated those who took up arms in defense against Communist aggression.

The task of inculcating and maintaining ideological awareness was assigned to the Directorate of Psychological Warfare, later to become the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD). To train the necessary manpower needed for its task, the Military Intelligence and Political Warfare School was established in 1957. At the same time, subjects on Communism and its aggressive nature were included in training programs at military schools, training centers, and units. But this education was limited and kept in low profile, perhaps in an effort to prevent antagonizing North Vietnam while the Geneva Accords were being enforced.

When North Vietnam initiated insurgency war in the South in 1959, the GVN immediately responded by promulgating Decree Law No. 10/59 which severely punished all acts of disrupting peace and order. At the same time, it waged a country-wide campaign denouncing the evils of Communism. The campaign soon gained strong momentum and pervaded every echelon of the administrative and military hierarchies. In the RVNAF, regular education sessions were held once a week with lectures given by polwar cadres or ranking members of the Can Lao Party. This all-out educational effort sought to achieve two objectives: first, to expose crimes and atrocities committed by the Communists and the devilish schemes that they were using to attain their military and political goals; and, secondly,

to alert RVNAF servicemen against entrapment by Communist schemes, enhance their vigilance, and encourage them to report any Communist attempt to contact or subvert.

To consolidate a political base for the military, President Diem successively appointed to key command positions officers affiliated with the Can Lao Party, a political monolith created by his brother, Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu, whose ideology was antithetical to Communism. In addition to political education and ideological immunization against Communism, the GVN felt that ranking officers should also be thoroughly conversant with national goals and defense policies. Therefore, when the Strategic Hamlet program became a national endeavor in 1961, all RVNAF field-grade officers were compelled to attend a seven-day course on the subject conducted by the presidency at the Lo O training center in Bien Hoa Province. Gradually, the strategic hamlet, as an ideological subject, was also introduced in political indoctrination programs of instruction at military schools and in units.

Developing the servicemen's knowledge on national policies while guarding them against the evils of Communism was imperative in an ideological conflict. This was recognized by almost every RVNAF serviceman. However, very few agreed on the practice of appointing members of the Can Lao Party to key positions in the RVNAF and the GVN tendency to force political affiliation on servicemen. Most RVNAF servicemen believed that in a free democracy, the military should stay away from party politics in order to be professionally effective. Because of its own interests, no politically involved army would be capable of taking orders, which sometimes gave rise to dissension and bloody coups. Politics, therefore, weakened the military, making them oblivious to defense duties. On the other hand, the military should be educated in national goals and policies, the objectives for which they were required to fight. Indoctrination in the Vietnam context should be understood as a motivation device to help the military know more about the enemy and the reasons why they should stand against this enemy. It should not be confused with politics in the sense that it involved affiliation with a political party and active politicking for the interests of that party. It was this failure to differentiate between politics and ideology that eventually brought disaster to the Diem regime.

During the period of political instability that followed the overthrow of President Diem, indoctrination was suspended altogether because it was identified with the deceased regime. The strategic hamlet program fell into neglect, which gave the enemy an opportunity to expand and consolidate his foothold in rural areas. At the grassroots level, GVN control was shaky and there were indications that the Self-Defense Corps had become incapacitated because of widespread desertion.

Not until 1965 when South Vietnam regained some measure of stability was indoctrination revived in the RVNAF. The political education process focused on the Popular Forces whose morale suffered the most during the 1963-1964 period, and was aptly called the "morale rearmament program". Under the guidance of the Indoctrination Division of the RF-PF Command, this program sought to impart anti-communist ideology on PF troopers, teaching them the art and techniques of winning popular support and appealing for the enemy to rally. During the same year, two new subjects were brought into the RVNAF indoctrination program: North Vietnam's aggressive design in infiltrating regular units into the South and the presence of U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam. This was warranted by the need to counter enemy propaganda directed against U.S. "imperialist aggression" on the one hand and to denounce overt aggression byanoi on the other.

In 1966, to test a new and better approach to indoctrination, the GPWD initiated the "New Horizon" project in three different areas and units: the 7th Division in the Mekong Delta, a RF company in Long An Province, and the 23d Division in the Central Highlands. The New Horizon program was a political warfare campaign designed primarily to improve small-unit leadership and prevent desertion in the RVNAF. Its primary tool was informal troop education and the concomitant implementation of programs seeking to improve the material and moral welfare of the RVNAF soldier. Instead of indoctrination sessions centered around formal lectures which were deemed uninteresting and too academic, the new method sought to present indoctrination subjects in an informal, lively manner during unit activity sessions held on major areas of endeavor: command and leadership, personnel administration, logistics, etc. The individual serviceman, therefore, learned while participating in unit activities and what he learned should contribute both to his self-improvement and the unit's effectiveness.

Indoctrination subjects included basic issues like: why and for whom do we fight; the heroic struggle of our forbears against the Chinese and the French; what is Communism; why do we have to fight the Communists; the cruelty and design of the Communists in South Vietnam; the presence of U.S. troops and the enemy's slanting propaganda about it. Various techniques of learning these subjects were employed: story telling, conversation, questions and answers, etc. which encouraged active participation by every serviceman and attracted his interest. Indoctrination time was usually included in normal activity sessions, which made learning effortless, lively and pleasant for all.

Encouraged by the excellent results of the pilot project, in 1967, the JGS instituted the "New Horizon" program in the RVNAF as part of an overall improvement plan. During the year, pacification and development also became a national endeavor and a subject of extensive indoctrination in every unit. The objective was to explain to RVNAF soldiers the reasons why pacification was required as a national policy and what the rural population could expect to enjoy in the near future in terms of security, freedom, and prosperity.

The enemy's Tet Offensive during 1968 resulted in a psychological setback for our side despite his military defeat. The U.S. decision to cease all aerial bombings against North Vietnam coupled with peace overtures confused the RVNAF rank and file. Although the South Vietnamese people became more determined than ever in their anti-Communist stance, there prevailed a feeling of uncertainty as to prospects for the future. To ease confusion and reinforce troop morale, the JGS launched the "Dien Hong" campaign in November 1968, an indoctrination effort focused on the RF and PF. Under the guidance of the GPWD, teams of cadets from the Political Warfare College and the Thu Duc Infantry School were sent to all sectors and districts across the country where they visited RF and PF units. During these meetings, our polwar emissaries presented and discussed current political and military developments, and explained the GVN attitude toward the U.S. cessation of bombings, toward peace negotiations, with particular emphasis on Communist atrocities in Hue City.

The Dien Hong campaign terminated in January 1969 after three months of extensive efforts. According to reports, 4,449 RF and PF units participated in this indoctrination program.

Following this effort, in February 1969 the GPWD launched another indoctrination campaign, called "New Opportunities," on a RVNAF-wide basis. Like in the Dien Hong campaign, the same technique of face-to-face meetings, presentations and discussions were used; however, these sessions were conducted by unit polwar cadres. At the same time, the Indoctrination Department, GPWD, sent out mobile teams to major ARVN units and sectors with the double purpose of providing guidance during indoctrination sessions held at corps, division and sector level and evaluating the indoctrination efforts in units. Subjects discussed during this campaign focused on the new opportunities opened to South Vietnam to enhance its national cause such as the redeployment of U.S. forces, the expansion and modernization of the RVNAF, our assumption of the major combat role with continued U.S. backing, and the prospects of peace talks. Of particular interest to audiences were discussions on how the Communists used the conference table as a forum for propaganda and deceit, their talk-and-fight strategy, their continued military defeat, and the serious ideological rift in the Communist world.

As U.S. forces continued their deployment and peace talks bogged down in futile polemics, new uncertainties and problems surfaced to affect troop morale, particularly as a result of the U.S. new policy of irreversible disengagement. The RVNAF rapidly expanded their force structure and modernized their weapons but apparently needed more than that to fill in the void of U.S. redeployment and face NVA divisions. The cost of living was skyrocketing and inflation so rampant that the fixed-salaried serviceman was gradually edged into destitution and hardship. Complaints surfaced everywhere about the RVNAF soldier's plight.

To meet this complex challenge, the JGS embarked on an extensive program designed to improve the RVNAF effectiveness in all areas of activity. To support this program, a JGS delegation visited all corps headquarters and military schools, explaining the new U.S. policy and presenting the various efforts that the GVN was undertaking to improve

the lot of the RVNAF serviceman. Audiences thus came to understand that the U.S. troop disengagement did not mean an abandonment of South Vietnam, but was dictated by domestic pressures, and that the U.S. would continue to support South Vietnam in the fight against the Communists. As to the economic plight of the RVNAF soldier, the JGS delegation assured everyone that the national leaders thoroughly understood the problem and were trying to solve it.

The GPWD followed up this effort with another large-scale indoctrination campaign designed for the self-improvement of individuals and units. The techniques used in this campaign were similar to those of the "New Horizon" program in which unit commanders led educational sessions with the technical assistance of their polwar officers. To stimulate individual soldiers in improving their personal conduct, the educational effort focused on helping them overcome bad personal habits such as gambling, drinking, laziness, irresponsibility, and AWOL, while at the same time developing the qualities required of a model soldier. The approach to achieve this centered on self-criticism and rewards. Individual soldiers were encouraged to analyze their personal problems during educational sessions and all pledged to correct bad habits. Model soldiers and those who made good on their promises were commended by the unit commander and presented with rewards such as gifts and special leaves.

Unit self-improvement efforts consisted of developing strengths and overcoming weaknesses in command, control and administration. The technique used focused on analyzing problems and finding corrective solutions by general consensus. First, the unit commander and his staff established a self-improvement program based on findings and suggestions concerning daily operations. Then every shortcoming found was publicly presented during educational sessions. After the unit commander expressed his determination to take corrective action, he asked the audience to suggest solutions and a deadline for each. The solution finally selected was the one agreed upon by a majority vote; it was binding on every serviceman concerned, including the unit commander. As the program unfolded, the unit gradually overcame its shortcomings and improved itself markedly. Every unit was thus able to improve on several of its

administrative problems, to include the updating of individual service records, better food service, timely payment of salaries and replacement of uniforms.

In the area of combat operations, a special but similar procedure was undertaken to improve the effectiveness of the unit as a whole. At the end of each operation, the unit commander held a self-criticism session during which every soldier participated in analyzing enemy and friendly performance, the people's attitude and the behavior of friendly forces toward people living in the area of operation. Lessons learned were then drawn to serve as a basis for future performance. During these sessions, self-criticism also involved individual achievements and conduct. In addition to its own learning process, every unit also devoted time to discuss and evaluate lessons learned by other units based on materials disseminated by the Central Training Command.

During 1972, indoctrination and self-improvement programs had to be suspended because of the combat efforts required to stall the enemy's offensive and regain lost territories. These programs were resumed at year's end but, as the cease-fire agreement was being concluded in January 1973, they took on an important subject: the Paris Agreement. The GPWD convened a meeting of all polwar cadres in the RVNAF to brief them on the significance of the cease-fire, the GVN attitude toward implementing the agreement, and most importantly, the enemy's scheme of taking advantage of this transitional period to gain territorial and popular control. The GPWD placed particular emphasis on the need to maintain vigilance in the face of possible enemy tricks, drawing lessons from the 1954 truce during which Viet Minh agents played on the complacency and confusion of nationalist troops, causing several units to disintegrate as a result of mass desertion. At the conclusion of this meeting, an indoctrination campaign was launched under the guidance of polwar cadres and every unit learned what to expect from the cease-fire. Therefore, when the cease-fire was implemented, all RVNAF units had been prepared and they forcefully and swiftly neutralized enemy activities designed to grab land and population.

During the post-cease-fire period, as the RVNAF reverted to a defensive posture and limited their efforts to counteracting enemy violations, the indoctrination program emphasized unit self-improvement in the areas of maintenance, preservation and economy of materiel. RVNAF servicemen were briefed on the reasons why economy was mandatory given the national need to devote its limited resources to reconstruction instead of war. They were also educated on measures designed to fight wastage and misuse, to moderate requirements, and to operate within a limited budget. The problem was thoroughly understood as the RVNAF prepared for self-moderation and austerity in the years ahead.

The resumption of war by the enemy, however, upset all of these efforts. Enemy-initiated activities escalated to such intensity and scale that fighting was the same as in previous years. Despite self-imposed austerity, our units soon found themselves low on ammunition and fuels, the inevitable result of U.S. military aid cutbacks. The RVNAF soldier feared he would not receive adequate supplies to sustain the fight and doubted the future of U.S. support. To allay fears and suspicions, the GPWD and the Central Logistics Command combined efforts to conduct an education campaign, dwelling on the U.S. pledge to continue backing and supporting South Vietnam. In spite of these efforts, suspicion persisted about an eventual abandonment by the U.S.

Soon this suspicion became a reality. Phuoc Long fell into enemy hands in early January without the U.S. taking positive action. Less than three months later, Ban Me Thuot succumbed, which led to the hasty evacuation of Pleiku and Kontum and the tragic disintegration of II Corps forces. Confusion and uncertainty pervaded the mind of every RVNAF serviceman, including the polwar cadre. Rumors spread about American sell-out and territorial concessions in secret agreement with North Vietnam. Polwar cadres were confused; lacking guidance and directives, they themselves became impotent and helpless, unable to make out what was going on. Like other servicemen, they were longing for some explanation and guidance or assurance from the national leadership. But this never came, and the morale of RVNAF troops deteriorated rapidly afterwards.

Other Motivation Measures

In addition to political indoctrination, which was the primary instrument of motivation, several other measures were undertaken to stimulate enthusiasm and enhance morale among RVNAF troops.

Foremost among these was the "emulation program" which consisted essentially of healthy competition among RVNAF units to achieve the best combat performance. These competitions took place among sectors, army divisions and air force units; they usually lasted for three or six months at a time. At the end of each period, results were tallied and performances compared, based on the total number of enemy personnel killed, enemy equipment captured and casualties and losses incurred by each unit. The best performing units were selected by a JGS committee chaired by the GPWD director and awarded prizes consisting of cash and other gifts. The first prize was usually tendered by the President of the Republic and lesser prizes by high-ranking GVN officials and civilian organizations. Award ceremonies were always conducted in a solemn manner at corps headquarters and service commands.

Besides unit competitions, individual servicemen also vied for the prestigious title of "Outstanding Soldier of the Year". This was a selective process undertaken annually involving all services and service branches, the RF and PF, combat and combat support units, and logistic and administrative units. Usually about a hundred or more servicemen made the list of outstanding soldiers, based on meritorious service, combat feats or exemplary conduct during the year. In addition to ceremonies held locally during which outstanding soldiers were introduced and honored, the GPWD also treated all of them to a 7-day VIP tour of Saigon during which they were dinner guests of the President of the Republic and other GVN officials. A limited number of the most outstanding serviceman was also invited to visit the Republic of China (Taiwan) for several days under the sponsorship of the Chinese Armed Force GPWD.

Beginning in 1972, the GPWD initiated a sponsorship program whereby individual RVNAF units were taken under the patronage of a

business firm, an association, or civic organization. The sponsorship program was intended as an expression of admiration and gratitude by the people toward the armed forces. Sponsoring individuals or organizations were committed to the units that they patronized through social and cultural ties. They made visits, provided assistance or entertainment, and sometimes donated gifts to meritorious soldiers in an effort to stimulate the morale of units concerned.

During the 1972 Easter Offensive, a cash award program was instituted to reward enemy tank killers. This was a realistic effort to encourage the destruction of the deadly T-54 (and their Chinese-made version T-59) tanks that the enemy employed during attacks against Quang Tri, Kontum and An Loc. Cash prizes were given by GVN officials, civilian personalities or associations and raised from an initial VN \$50,000 to VN \$200,000 for each tank destroyed. This greatly stimulated front-line soldiers who competed among themselves for tank kills. Awards were paid on the spot whenever the situation permitted the visit of prize sponsors. Several units thus earned millions of piasters which they spent for useful purposes. For the RVNAF soldier of 1972, a cash award was perhaps one of the best stimulants.

Over the years, most RVNAF servicemen were also mesmerized by the voice of a girl named Da Lan over the waves of the RVNAF radio broadcast station. Programs broadcast by Da Lan proved most popular and effective. Her voice flattered, titillated, encouraged, and stimulated the RVNAF soldier and made him feel a hero. She constantly reminded him of his manly mission on the battlefield and assured him that back home everything was all right. Occasionally, she sent out gifts or souvenirs to the frontline soldiers who usually cherished them with jealous favor.

An Evaluation

Motivating soldiers for effective combat against the enemy was the primary objective of the RVNAF political warfare system. Among the methods used to achieve this objective, indoctrination produced perhaps the most significant and long-lasting effect among soldiers in terms of ideological awareness, confidence, and self-improvement.

Through indoctrination, the RVNAF soldier thoroughly understood why and for whom he fought. He understood his duties and responsibilities toward the unit, the government, and the nation. He had no illusions about the true aggressive nature of the Communists, their scheme and tricks to take over South Vietnam by force. He was also aware of the atrocities committed by the Communists against the people.

Through the indoctrination program, the RVNAF soldier was also induced to improve his personal conduct in order to gain popular sympathy and win over the enemy. He was informed on the GVN policies and programs designed to ensure the welfare and happiness of the people. All these things, he had learned and he had graduated from the program with high marks. Tests and interviews conducted by the GPWD to evaluate the indoctrination effort all testified to this.

Commenting on the program, most polwar and other cadres agreed that the themes and subjects of indoctrination were substantive but lagging behind the march of events, except those concerning the enemy. They also believed that the new approach to indoctrination employed during the last few years was more lively and effective but required both a high degree of technical ability on the part of the cadre and an equally strong desire to learn and improve on the part of the soldier. Apparently to obtain lasting results, a longer time would be needed.

Indeed, the major shortcoming or difficulty of the indoctrination effort lay in the fact that it usually took place after political and military events had actually occurred, and almost never in anticipation. Therefore, it always appeared unprepared and defensive, almost apologetic. The subject of U.S. troop redeployment and disengagement, for example, was brought up only as an afterthought, which belied our previous insistence to the contrary. Evidently, this subject should have been raised and RVNAF servicemen conditioned to it since the very first days U.S. troops arrived. If the RVNAF serviceman had been prepared to accept it as inevitable, then his confidence in GVN policies would not have been affected as it was.

The second unfortunate thing was that we only knew about the cease-fire agreement a short time before it was concluded. The enemy, meanwhile,

had been prepared for it long before and he even made plans to take advantage of it. What could our polwar cadres say to explain this fait accompli to the troops?

The third event that reduced the credibility of our indoctrination effort was aid cutbacks and the American indifference in the face of enemy violations. How could our troops trust their polwar cadres when events which really happened did not follow the situation as presented during indoctrination classes.

The trouble with our indoctrination program was that the GVN never had and never could have an independent policy of its own. By necessity, it had to compromise with or just follow U.S. policy, without knowing for certain where South Vietnam would end up with this policy. Perhaps because of this constraint, our indoctrination effort gradually shifted away from political subjects especially during the last few years to tread on the firmer ground of military professionalism and leadership.

How did the enemy motivate his troops and maintain their morale? Generally speaking, some Communist methods of motivation did not seem to differ much from ours in form: political indoctrination, emulation, and sponsorship by the people. But the similarity ended there because ideologically and technically, these efforts were totally different.

Structurally the Communist war apparatus was a dual politico-military organization in which the party, whose hierarchy was embedded in every echelon of the military hierarchy, played the role of leadership. In a Communist unit, the political commissar led and the military commander commanded.

In a RVNAF unit, it was the commander who both led and commanded. The primary responsibility of the Communist political commissar was to motivate the combat spirit of the soldiers through words and deeds. Although he participated in combat alongside the military commander, he did not command the troops but ensured that they fought with enthusiasm and dedication. In every respect, the political commissar acted as a surrogate mother to the soldiers, listening to their complaints, cajoled and encouraged them, educated them, cared for them in difficult situations. Almost all political commissars were members of the Communist

Party, men who because of their ideological training, experience in political work and hierarchical standing usually earned the respect and trust of all soldiers, including the military commanders.

The RVNAF political warfare officer, by contrast, was far from being the equivalent of a political commissar. He was simply a staff officer summarily trained in psychological warfare techniques. He did not have the kind of protracted ideological training and experience that always inspired prestige and authority. Many cadres, who graduated from the Political Warfare College, were young and inexperienced officers who had difficulty in influencing our troops.

In addition to the party system with its role of leadership and ideological motivation, the Communists employed three techniques for the control of troops: supervision, criticism and self-criticism, and the three-man cell. Supervision involved continually monitoring the individual subordinate soldiers in their daily activities and conduct in order to discover irregularities, especially symptoms of moral weakness, and take corrective or preventive action. This was a responsibility of every unit commander, Communist or non-Communist.

Criticism and self-criticism were an effective form of correction and improvement, a mechanism of group control. At first glance, this technique seemed to be repressive and constraining. But we have to admit that it worked well to induce self-improvement, correct mistakes, and prevent trouble. As a device to maintain control over a group of men it proved effective if we just disregard possible abuses. Perhaps because of this, this technique was adopted by the RVNAF during the last few years to achieve self-improvement. However, as an transplanted concept, self-criticism did not work well in our system, perhaps because it was still unfamiliar and repulsive to our self-consciousness.

The three-man cell was an effective control technique involving only the rank and file. It was the building block of every Communist unit. Within a cell, the men lived together, fought together, assisted and supervised one another. In a combat unit which constantly faced hardship and hazards, this was perhaps a convenient arrangement for mutual help and support. Because of this, the RVNAF also adopted a

similar concept for some time, the "unity cell," but for unknown reasons it was later neglected.

The last important thing concerning motivation was the themes used for indoctrination. The merit of Communist indoctrination lay in the fact that the issues selected were usually realistic and emotional which incited either hatred or patriotism. During the initial stage of the war, Communist troops were indoctrinated in such subjects as "national unification" and "the indivisibility of Vietnam as a nation" which played directly on the desire of the majority of the people and served as a cause for the fight. These subjects had an attractive appeal because no Vietnamese would want a divided country forever. The GVN, in the meantime, sidestepped this issue and concentrated on attacking Communism as a means to motivate troops and the people. But Communism was still something exotic to most southern-born Vietnamese. In fact, the majority of the South Vietnamese population of the late fifties knew very little about Communism and had no living experience with a Communist regime. Therefore, they listened to the GVN anti-Communist lectures without conviction and even suspected what they were told about the evils of Communism. As a theme for indoctrination, anti-Communism did not seem to obtain desired results.

In 1960, our enemy switched to the theme of "national liberation," appealing to the South Vietnamese people to combat dictatorship and cronyism. Again this theme aroused repressed emotions because it revived the heroic struggle which delivered Vietnam from French domination and played on the people's abhorrence of dictatorial rulers.

When the U.S. began to bomb North Vietnam and brought combat troops in the South to fight the ground war in 1965, the Communists considered it an act of aggression. To motivate the North Vietnamese people and troops to fight back for their own survival, our enemy used the theme "Fight the American Aggressors to save the country and liberate our people in the South," likening this struggle to the war of Resistance against the French. Communist political commissars aroused the patriotism of their troops by resuscitating heroic deeds and sacrifices of the Viet Minh troops during the resistance. They compared and identified

American imperialism with French colonialism, telling their troops that American troops were even more cruel than the French. They aroused hatred against Americans by displaying images of destruction and death and attributing atrocities to American imperialists and their South Vietnamese "lackeys." The profound patriotism of the Vietnamese people, they affirmed, would defeat the Americans just as it had the French in spite of their military power. Appealing to patriotism and xenophobia, the Communists succeeded in cementing the determination of their troops and ensuring their loyalty.

It is interesting to note that the GVN also used the themes of patriotism and xenophobia to arouse the emotions of the South Vietnamese people. Somehow, these themes did not work well, perhaps because the people did not see any Chinese or Russian aggressor in South Vietnam or did not really consider the North Vietnamese as aggressors. After all, North Vietnamese were also part of the same people, the same country.

Through appeals to emotions and the various control devices, during the war the Communists were able to inculcate in their troops a deep commitment to their cause which was the major motive behind their apparent fanaticism. On our side, the indoctrination effort was less successful because our themes were not always appealing and we could not bring ourselves to use the same control techniques. Ours was a free, individualistic society which condoned divergence and dissension. People were free in their thinking and attitudes. Conversely, the Communists tied the individual soldier's conduct with the well-being of his family; his wife and children bore the consequences of anything he did wrong. This was something we could not do in our free society. All this explains why Communist indoctrination was generally more effective than ours.

PART FIVE

SPECIAL AREAS

CHAPTER XII

Regional and Popular Forces

Accounting for over one half the total strength of the RVNAF, the Regional and Popular Forces played a major counterinsurgency role during the Vietnam War. For this reason, it would be a deficiency not to mention these forces in a discussion of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. However, within the scope of this monograph, I will only discuss the organizational evolution of the Regional and Popular Forces, and provide some observations concerning the effectiveness and contributions of these forces during the war.¹

Evolution

Born under difficult political circumstances in the wake of the 1954 Geneva Accords, the Republic of Vietnam had no other national goals than to establish itself as a genuinely free and democratic nation with full sovereignty, and capable of defending itself against Communist aggression from the north.

The RVN leaders at that time estimated that the threat of Communist expansion could materialize under two forms: a direct invasion by main force army units of Communist North Vietnam and a war of insurgency waged within South Vietnam by local and guerrilla forces under the instigation

¹For details concerning Regional and Popular Forces see the monograph, entitled, Territorial Forces written by Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong as a part of the Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program in 1978.

and control of Viet Minh cadres who had remained behind. This double threat dictated that South Vietnam should be prepared to fight both forms of warfare at the same time.

The organization of the RVN defense forces, therefore, reflected the requirements to meet this dual challenge. To face the invasion threat from the north was the mission of the RVNAF which consisted of infantry divisions, a navy and an air force; their main adversary was the North Vietnamese regular army. Against insurgency, people at the village level were organized into armed cells of four to ten members which made up the Self-Defense Corps (SDC). The mission of SDC members was to defend their home communities against activities of the underground communist infrastructure and guerrillas.

For this mission, the Self-Defense Corps was primarily equipped with rifles and grenades issued by village governments. This armament was augmented with home-made weapons such as machetes and bamboo spears, nail boards, and booby traps. SDC members took turns carrying out security duties, posting sentinels, patrolling, searching, cordoning off and capturing insurgents under the control of hamlet and village chiefs. Weapons issued by the government were kept at the village office to be used by members who came on guard or patrol duty. When off duty, members went back to their normal activities but were always alert to their intelligence and combat responsibilities. SDC members had no government-issued uniforms; while on duty, they wore their civilian work clothes, which were usually black, the most practical color for the hard-working peasants of South Vietnam.

Outside of hamlets and villages, the SDC was supported by a stronger armed organization called the Civil Guard (CG), whose Vietnamese name, Bao An, derived from an old adage which meant protecting the nation and maintaining the people's security. The Civil Guard was organized into separate companies with men recruited locally. The majority of these men were auxiliary or regular force veterans who had been discharged as a result of the National Army's force reduction after 1954. Each province of South Vietnam had from two to eight CG companies under the operational control of the province chief. The area of operation of

each CG company was basically the district or a larger subdivision of the province. Its target was local Communist forces and guerrillas. When funds were available, members of the CG were issued uniforms by the Directorate of the Civil Guard of the Ministry of the Interior, like those in the regular army.

Up until 1960, the CG and SDC, which were collectively known as territorial forces, failed to receive proper attention and support because under MAAG advisory assistance, territorial security was slighted in favor of defense against outright aggression. The military assistance program did not cover these forces. As a result, their equipment, which consisted mostly of antiquated French, British, German and Japanese holdovers, was obsolescent, their ammunition inadequate, and their training virtually non-existent. The territorial forces had no capabilities to eliminate the Communist grassroots infrastructure and to counter disruptive activities in rural areas, therefore, as a result, the situation deteriorated day by day.

The United States soon realized the importance of territorial security and the need to improve it. It took a step forward to include the SDC and CG in the military assistance program during 1960-1961. Under MAAG advice, the separate administrative systems for the SDC and CG began to be unified. At the central echelon, the new Directorate General of Self Defense and Civil Guard, now under the Defense Ministry, had the responsibility to organize, train, and support both forces. At the provincial level, the provincial CG and SDC command had responsibility over CG companies and SDC elements in hamlets and villages. However, the operational control of these forces still rested with province and district chiefs with respect to CG companies, and with village chiefs with respect to SDC elements.

The SDC was reorganized into squads and platoons with their own authorized weapons. These units now operated on a full-time basis and had their own black uniforms complete with black baseball caps issued through CG and SDC channels. The people's militia image of the SDC began to recede as its professional military character became more pronounced.

An improvement program for territorial forces began with a standardization of weapons: U.S. second world war vintage for the CG, and French for the SDC. The task of training these forces was also vigorously undertaken under the advisory assistance of American advisors assigned to 26 hastily established provincial training centers.

Although placed under the Defense Ministry for the purpose of receiving MAP assistance, the CG and SDC still had no relationship with the RVNAF. Regarded as paramilitary forces by the JGS, the CG and SDC were not allowed to share available resources such as training personnel and logistic support. Much as the JGS realized their importance in maintaining territorial security, it could do little to assist them because it had no clear responsibility.

In an effort to unify command and to muster all available military forces to fight the war, in 1964, the CG and SDC were integrated into the regular army, and placed under the command of the JGS. The SDC changed its name to Popular Forces (PF), a designation signifying that the people themselves took up arms and rose to fight the enemy for the national cause like the patriots who had revolted against French rule. The CG was also given a new name, Regional Forces, (RF) which identified them as a local army operating within the boundaries of military regions. The RVNAF consisted, therefore, of three kinds of forces. At the rice-roots level of hamlets and villages, there were the PF whose targets were Communist guerrillas; at the district and province level, there were the RF who grappled with Communist local forces; and there was the ARVN whose opponent was the Communist main force units.

During the same reorganization, the Directorate General of CG/SD changed its name to Regional and Popular Forces Command; it was endowed with command and administrative responsibility over these forces. In the provinces, the provincial CG/SD command was disbanded and became part of the sector command. This gave province chiefs direct command responsibility over provincial RF companies and PF platoons. At lower levels, district chiefs had operational control over attached RF companies and village chiefs over PF platoons deployed in villages. For the support of provincial RF/PF units, there was the sector administrative and

logistic support company (ALSC) which was under the control of the sector command. Gradually, the RF were issued regular ARVN uniforms but the PF continued to keep their distinctive black "pajamas." Unlike the ARVN and RF, the PF had no rank insignia although they were an integral part of the armed forces.

In September 1966, the RF and PF Command was disbanded and absorbed into the JGS. The purpose of this move was to enhance unity of command and achieve economy of force but many suspected that it had been politically motivated. Although the RF and PF continued to operate under the control of province chiefs, command authority was now delegated to Corps/CTZ commanders.

The requirements of rural pacification greatly increased the number of RF companies after 1966. From 888 companies in 1967 the RF expanded to 1,050 companies in 1968, and to 1,407 companies in 1969, causing problems for effective control and support.

To improve command and control, company group headquarters were authorized beginning in 1969. Each group headquarters was in charge of two to five companies. In addition, a number of companies were assembled into battalions in order to test their mobile operational capabilities within sectors. Encouraged by the achievements of RF battalions in mobile combat action, especially during operations along the Cambodian border, the JGS directed the transformation of company and group headquarters into battalion headquarters. This transformation was completed when 360 RF battalions had been activated.

In the wake of this success, RF battalions were employed as the main pacification force in replacement of infantry divisions. As U.S. forces continued to redeploy and turn over combat responsibilities to ARVN divisions, the need for more combat forces became obvious. The JGS therefore planned to further consolidate RF battalions into regiments or groups. This idea was discussed frequently but was finally rejected because of the shortage of cadres, and its great demands on the budget and equipment. However, to increase the effectiveness of the sector's operational control, the JGS opted for a less expensive alternative in early 1972: the sector, tactical command post. Each

sector was to have one tactical CP, with the exception of Binh Dinh and Kien Hoa which had two because of their large areas and the greater number of RF battalions they employed.

Each sector tactical command post had an S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4, a political warfare and civil affairs platoon, a signal platoon, and a medical platoon. With this organization, the tactical CP was capable of exercising operational control over two to five RF battalions and to conduct pacification operations within the sector. By mid-1973, all 45 sector tactical CPs were in operation.

During 1973 and 1974, as Communist cease-fire violations escalated each day and to assist infantry divisions in crucial areas, corps/MR commanders were compelled to employ RF battalions outside of their home sectors with increasing frequency. Thus two RF battalions from the Go Cong Sector were assigned on long-term duties with the Dinh Tuong sector to operate in the Tri Thap area and four RF battalions from the An Giang Sector were semi-permanently attached to the Chuong Thien Sector. Since the sector tactical CP did not accompany these detached units, because of its responsibilities at home, operational control often became lax, and command supervision was inadequate.

Towards the end of 1974, in order to create in each sector a strong strike force capable of limited sustained action against Communist main force units and to establish for each MR its own reserve forces capable of assisting infantry divisions in dealing with the situation in crucial areas, the JGS planned to organize RF mobile groups by using sector tactical command posts, separate RF battalions, and territorial artillery platoons. Each group was to consist of a headquarters, three RF battalions, one battery of four 105-mm howitzers. With this organization, the RF mobile group was either capable of independent action in and out of home sectors or combined action when attached to infantry divisions. These plans called for the formation of 27 such groups and by 30 April 1975, seven had been activated in MR-3 and MR-4.

Observations

The evolution of the RF and PF during the Vietnam war pointed to two serious shortcomings with respect to the problem of territorial security. Both the GVN and the U.S. advisory assistance group were beset by the magnitude of the problem and the elusiveness of a satisfactory organizational concept.

It must be admitted that territorial security had not received proper attention since the beginning. During the years from 1955 to 1961, therefore, the main effort and the bulk of resources were devoted to building up defense against invasion. Valuable time had thus been lost during which security at the hamlet and village level, the chief domain of Communist insurgency activities, could have been strengthened.

Not until 1961 did the idea catch on that an effective defense of South Vietnam entailed not only capabilities to meet external aggression but also the maintenance of internal security as well. Although the MAP program was extended to territorial forces, these forces continued to have a low priority, when compared to the RVNAF, for South Vietnam's elite manpower and material resources.

Even in 1967, when rural pacification became a national policy, the RF and PF continued to play a secondary role since regular ARVN units assumed territorial security as their primary mission. In 1969, when U.S. forces began their withdrawal and ARVN infantry divisions were compelled to relinquish their role of pacification support, the RF and PF were given the opportunity to expand and develop but continued to be poor cousins when it came to receiving their share of logistic support and manpower resources.

With regard to the organization of territorial forces, both the GVN and the U.S. mission had no clear-cut concept but operated largely on expediency through the painful process of trial and error. The original idea of President Ngo Dinh Diem concerning a village defense based on voluntary participation by the people was both correct and conformed to the age-old Vietnamese tradition of village self-government. Had it been fully developed and implemented, the enemy would

have been beaten at his own game. Since the Communist infrastructure and guerrillas could operate only if supported and sheltered by the people, then, only the people could single them out and destroy them. The people should be motivated to organize the defense of their own families and communities. The role of the government was to support them with organizational skills and means, such as weapons and ammunition. Under Mr. Diem's properly conceived self-defense system, the entire village population should alternate between defense duties and normal activities; and the responsibility of defending the village should lie not just with the group on duty but with every villager. In case of alert, for example, not only the people on duty but the whole village should respond and take action. Despite this, village defense during the period 1955-61 was not very effective and the Communist infrastructure and the number of guerrillas continued to grow. The main reason was that villagers lacked organization guidance, motivation, and training in defensive tactics, which left them vulnerable to attacks or retaliation by better trained enemies. At the national level, the weakness seemed to derive from the lack of capable administrative cadres, and the absence of a cohesive party structure capable of organizing villagers and galvanizing them into a strong, fully-controlled, and thoroughly-motivated combat force. Instead of committing cadres and means to consolidate people's organizations in the village, motivating, and making them all combat-effective, the government and the U.S. mission were simply concerned with organizing and training a small group of professional men called Self-Defense Corps. This policy, while producing a good number of men trained to shoot unwittingly restricted the people's participation in and capacity for the fight. The enemy therefore had simply to contend with a small force instead of having to deal with every man, woman, and child. Unwittingly too, this approach induced villagers to rely on these professional fighters for their defense, which they no longer regarded as an obligation or duty.

Making the Popular Forces part of the armed forces in 1964 was a serious mistake of the military government. In all honesty, this

move failed to result in greater efficiency in the task of maintaining village security. For all practical purposes, it was the same old concept, the same organization, and the same system of force utilization. But the idea cost the defense budget more, placed an additional administrative burden on RVNAF, and made control all but impossible because the military command structure could not reach down to the level where the PF was so thinly deployed. The move made the RVNAF look impressive in numbers but not in substance. It wasted a valuable part of the human resources that was sorely needed for the regular force and RF units. The most serious damage resulted from it fostering among villagers the mentality of dependence upon the army and the tendency to regard the defense of villages against the local enemy as a governmental responsibility, and not their own. The people therefore stood on the sidelines, uninvolved and uncommitted.

In 1968, taking advantage of the rising popular hatred of Communists after the Tet offensive, the government of the Second Republic organized the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF) whose duties and structure, although larger, were similar to those of the SDC under the First Republic. With the birth of the PSDF, the Popular Forces became a sort of mongrel, neither completely military nor completely popular. Their original purpose having been taken away, they no longer fit in any clear-cut defense concept except to serve as tutors for the PSDF.

It is my opinion, that in the Vietnam war, the maintenance of community security should have been left to the people with the government's loyal and committed political and military cadres acting as a lever. To fight Communist insurgency, every citizen should have been turned into a militiaman. The government and the armed forces should only provide support and assistance as required beyond the capability of villagers and proportionate to the population and terrain of each community, but not to exceed the limits of the nation's resources. The armed forces should maintain security outside the boundaries of rural communities by using regional forces. The full integration of the RF into the regular army, therefore, was a logical, if belated, move.

In a counter-insurgency war, an anti-guerrilla war, or unconventional war, terrain and demography are two decisive factors. The topography of South Vietnam is divided into clearly delineated regions: the plateaux and mountains, the dense jungles, the immense plains and the flooded swamplands crisscrossed by waterways. The population was of varied ethnic backgrounds, living concentrated in definite areas and having distinct customs and social mores, but all moved by a sentimental attachment to the native land. Communist local forces and guerrillas took advantage of the terrain to hide, recuperate, and conceal supplies; they depended on the people to live and grow. Therefore, employing an army of locals who were familiar with the terrain and the people to fight them was both logical and necessary. If the concept of regional forces had been put into practice since 1955, the deficiencies in cadres, training, and support later encountered by these forces might have been less acute. There would have been fewer disputes over scarce resources and less feeling of inadequacy since all forces, regional or regular, would have been under the control of JGS.

From 1964, even after the RF had become an integral part of the RVNAF and in spite of great progress in the area of personnel, training, and administrative and logistic support, the forces were still beset by two serious problems: organization and employment. Their loose organization -- there were far too many separate companies -- resulted in difficult control and supervision and prevented their being used to their fullest capability. Instead of a solid, unified structure, the RF were allowed too much flexibility to suit the times and needs. Their hesitant, instinctive progress from companies to company groups then battalions, and finally groups, turned every planning effort into a nightmare. Because province chiefs were always too busy, they failed to pay enough attention to small units under their command and employed them in an ineffective manner. Such a patchwork of tactical organization led to a patchwork of administrative and logistic support; under any form, support for the RF and PF seemed always plagued by complexity, inefficiency, and confusion.

As for employment, the over-emphasis on the outpost system which was intended to demonstrate the GVN authority, reassure the populace with a ubiquitous military presence, and secure crucial economic resources, had led to the majority of RF units being tied down in static defense, atrophied initiative on the part of tactical commanders, and diminished the aggressiveness and mobility of the units themselves. Because of this system, many sectors had no reserve units at their disposal.

I strongly feel that once the idea of the RF as an infantry component of the RVNAF at the local level had been accepted, the most logical and appropriate unit of their organization should have been the administratively autonomous battalion. These battalions could have three, four, or even five companies as required. However, given a war without frontlines and prevalent enemy tactics, the four-company RF battalion seemed to have been the most appropriate. It should have been given administrative autonomy to provide for effective command and control, easy support, and better care for individual soldiers, which were the three decisive factors of success. With administrative autonomy, the RF battalion would have been able to take care of its own internal services and support, the sector administrative and logistic support company could have reverted to its direct support role, and such clearly and logically defined responsibilities would have undoubtedly resulted in greater efficiency.

As for the concept of outposts, it was definitely appropriate for a counter-insurgency situation, and should not be de-emphasized. It was possible for RF battalions to take turns assuming static security duty within a definite area of responsibility and serving as the sector's reserve forces, but this rotational system was seldom practiced. This technique of rotation would have prevented the enemy from exploiting the established habits which a static unit acquired over a long period of time. Then, it would have allowed commanders to develop initiative and resourcefulness, and finally would have provided the troops time for training or rest and recuperation. Regardless of the local security situation, each sector should have had at least one RF battalion in reserve to retain initiative. A situation in which the sector found

itself hamstrung, impotent, and constantly expecting relief from MR headquarters was certainly not conducive to winning the local war.

As for fire support, the utilization of 105-mm artillery for area defense forces was a good idea. The concept of deploying stationary two-piece sections without prime movers spread over the provincial territory had the advantage of wide area coverage; it guaranteed support for outpost troops which encouraged them to operate off-base. But it was usually ineffective in neutralizing the enemy, and could be instrumental in creating among RF troops the tendency to rely too much on artillery firepower during combat, and a feeling of insecurity in the absence of this kind of support. Area artillery was indispensable for RF operations, but its effectiveness would have been much better if deployed as four-piece batteries with complete mobility, or even as battalions when concentrated firepower was required to destroy strong enemy forces. In any event, area artillery should not be used just for sporadic harassment of the enemy or for the morale of troops in isolated outposts.

In summary, RF and PF troops were basically good combat soldiers with excellent war records. But their capabilities were not fully developed and employed because of their loose organization, their unimaginative employment, and the lack of an effective command and control system.

CHAPTER XIII

Corruption

Corruption was a media issue of the Vietnam War. It made headlines both in local and foreign press. It was hotly debated in the RVN National Assembly and in the U.S. Congress. Public opinion suggested that corruption was rampant among South Vietnamese armed forces and government agencies and that it weakened their resolve to fight. There was also the opinion that corruption was just a pretext for character assassination growing out of dark political motives and that it was not as bad as people believed.

The broad issue of corruption is discussed in this monograph only to the extent that it affected the Vietnamese armed forces and the conduct of the war. It is my hope that it will help shed some light on this turbid affair.

Forms and Causes of Corruption

The term "corruption" was traditionally used among Vietnamese to designate shady, dishonest and devious acts of bureaucrats in the exercise of national laws which resulted in the furtherance of their self-interest at the expense of the nation and the people. Bribery and abuse of power came most readily to mind when Vietnamese talked about corruption. A gift became a bribery when the gift-bearer gave not out of social or human obligation but out of a desire to gain something in return, to "trade a crawfish for a lobster" so to speak, and when the receiver accepted it with the understanding that it was a form of payment for some favor he had done for the giver. The line drawn between

gift and payoff was tenuous indeed. Whether a birthday present that a businessman gave a province chief became a bribe or not depended on the feelings of each at the time of gift-giving, and the value of the present itself.

The Vietnamese people judge a government employee's integrity not only by his deeds but also by his words, not only while he is still holding office but also after he has retired. The following story is frequently told by parents to teach their children about honesty. Once there was a young magistrate who ruled his people with uprightness and impartiality, who upheld the common good as the principle of his actions, and who dealt severely with profit-seekers who basely sought their gains through his back door. Because of his life-long persistence in righteous ways and integrity, the magistrate had only the government's meager pension to look forward to when he reached old age. But year after long year, the daily meals prepared by his wife were as copious as ever. Life after retirement was not the frugality of pickled and salted food as he had expected. Filled with delight, he had nothing but silent praise for her, and loved her all the more for the hardship she endured in order to provide so adequately for him. One day at the table, he openly lauded her and inquired how she had been managing to insure the continuing comfortable living of former times. Freed from restraint by his question, the old woman confided: "Let me be honest with you. Since you retired my meager savings have been dwindling, and your pension is certainly not sufficient; so I had to cut chips off the gold mouse I have for daily expenses and have just about used it up." The magistrate rolled his eyes in disbelief and asked, "How did you come to get that gold mouse?" She said plaintively, "A long time ago during your heyday a man came calling from afar while you were out. I had to receive him in your behalf. In our conversation he praised you as being an exemplary 'people's parent,' (mandarin) and asked me what sign of the horoscope you had been born under. I said you were born in the year of the mouse. After expressing again his praise for your good fortunes, the man took leave. I thought the story ended there and then, never suspecting that a week later the same man came back while I was out and brought a small gift. When I opened it I saw a mouse cast in pure gold..." Not waiting

for his wife to recount all her feelings upon finding the gold mouse, he looked up, burst into laughter and exclaimed, "Why on earth didn't you tell him I had been born in the year of the water buffalo!" Thus goes a Vietnamese saying: "A magistrate who is honest all his life loses his probity by uttering just one word."

The term "corruption" was at first not often heard among military circles. Only the terms "swindle" and "embezzlement" were sometimes heard in connection with finance officers. The term "pilfering" was also used to describe petty larceny committed by some military supply personnel. By 1965, the term "bribery" was rumored about personnel management officers, which soon spread to logistic officers. Next came the label "abuse of power," which described certain acts by province chiefs. In 1967, the term "corruption" became familiar and was continually discussed in the RVNAF in connection with a program designed to develop military efficiency and at the same time to check and eradicate corruption.

There were many acts of wrongdoing that fell under the broad definition of corruption in the RVNAF.

In the area of finance, the following were considered acts of corruption: illegal siphoning off and embezzlement of funds perpetrated by a unit's treasury officer or NCO who took advantage of the commander's lack of supervision or the opportunity provided by monthly paydays; outright appropriation of small change from EM's pay under the pretext of change unavailability; intentional delay in the disbursement of newly earned allowances such as for the newlywed wife, a new-born child, child-birth expenses; delay in disbursing new pay increase earned through promotion; delay in disbursing KIA, MIA allowances to beneficiaries; delay in transmitting pay records of retirees and deceased personnel to appropriate agencies and demanding compensation for such services; collusion between unit commanders and their treasury officers in appropriating deserters' pay; collusion between unit commanders and supplying contractors in establishing invoices for cash instead of supplies; and intentional delay in establishing and processing or purchasing vouchers and payments for contractors with the intention of extracting kickbacks.

In the area of personnel administration, the most frequent offense was the demand for payoffs for: draft evasion, draft exemption or deferment for health or professional reasons; assignment to units stationed in Saigon and large cities; assignment to non-combat branches of service such as administration, logistics, military police, or to less hazardous combat arms or services such as the artillery, the navy, and the air force; selection for specialized training in technical service courses after the first phase of infantry training; assignment to preferred or less dangerous posts or to places near home; fast promotions and assignment to prestigious or lucrative positions; and authorization to engage in private business.

In the area of logistics, corrupt acts included: appropriation of the individual soldier's benefits by curtailing his food and clothing allowances and commissary privileges; demand for money in allocating military and civilian transportation for men on leave or for their visiting families; use of military property such as motor vehicles for private purposes or building materials for a private home; sale of military supplies such as POL, tires, car batteries, generators; demand for payoff in the compensation for requisitioned properties or release of requisitioned properties; certifying for more goods and services than actually supplied; and irregularities in bidding such as accepting bids, approving contracts, receiving goods and services, and imposing penalties for delays.

In the area of training, the most frequent forms of corruption were bribery during examinations for admission to a course or successful completion of a course, and using the private funds of schools and training centers for personal reasons.

In the area of inspection and investigation, the most frequently rumored practices were bribes, parties, and gifts designed to obtain a lenient report on shortcomings, avoid punishment, and earn favorable comments.

The two chief causes that led the serviceman to corrupt practices were the social environment in which he lived and his personal standards. The environment was the instigating force, and the inner self the

inhibitive, restraining force. If his inner self was weak, the man would be pushed by the environment into committing unauthorized acts.

In a materialistic civilization, man's desires or needs become more numerous and more complex every day. Since happiness often derives from the satisfaction of material needs, the more material needs are satisfied, the more happy a man becomes. But the more numerous and complex the needs become, the more difficult they are to be satisfied because resources are always limited. A man with numerous material desires and needs is prone to commit corrupt acts if his inner self does not have enough restraining power. If he cannot control himself, the idea and practice of gaining more income to satisfy desires is a constant challenge. Then he takes advantage of loopholes in current regulations and laws and of naive and less knowledgeable people or looks for and creates opportunities to increase gains with complete disregard for dignity, duty, or consequence.

The materialistic-minded serviceman was not the exception in the RVNAF. Also, some were power hungry and greedy. There were those who spent a modest fortune to buy high ranks and exalted positions in order to acquire even greater wealth at the first opportunity. Our protracted war spawned two more types of people in the Vietnamese society, one cowardly and death-fearing who spent fortunes to buy safety through draft exemption or a soft, non-combat job if inducted into the military; the other type lived as if each day was the last, fully enjoying himself. The general mobilization law drew both of these kinds of people into the RVNAF. The pressing need for expanding the armed forces and combat requirements made it difficult to eliminate such undesirable types from the military.

On the other hand, the nation's dwindling resources did not permit commensurate pay for the servicemen. Low pay compounded by inflation put the average serviceman in a pathetic predicament, forcing him to struggle with himself between moral uprightness (which meant poverty and a life of penury for his wife and children) and corruption (which jeopardized combat effectiveness and perhaps the survival of the nation). Because of their chosen probity, a number of officers had to live off

their parents' incomes, moonlight during off-duty hours in such jobs as carrying passengers on Honda mopeds, reduce their material needs to a minimum, and be content with a life of frugality and destitution. It was because of this honesty that a number of dependent families were forced to have children live with parents on both sides and wives seek jobs; this resulted in many broken marriages.

Even though some parents, wives, and children had assisted in keeping our men honest, the same people--namely wives and children--were also the very motivating force that often led servicemen into corruption. Both men and wives used each other's clout, with the aid of an entourage of military henchmen, to engage in corrupt practices they could get away with within the husband's authority. If a wife had been accustomed to luxuries, a comfortable house and car, it was difficult for the husband to resist corruption.

The following is a story which was told during an anti-corruption seminar in 1971. It was an exchange between a Vietnamese officer and his wife. One night while lying beside her husband, the woman whispered, "Yesterday our third son was caught in the rain walking home from school, and he now has a fever. I wish you had done as our neighbor, Colonel Tam. He has brought home a vehicle from the office for his family to use every day; I've also heard he is going to buy an American car. What a smart man he is!" Half asleep, half awake, after a day's work in his unit, the husband did not give a direct answer but sighed with bitterness, "Who is to know who is smart and who is foolish in this world? To be smart in corrupt ways is just stupidity. But to be foolish in accepting honest poverty is really smartness." Then he urged his wife, "Go to sleep; tomorrow you'll know better."

The RVNAF Anti-Corruption Efforts

In the years before 1965, corruption was not yet an issue in the RVNAF. Most efforts were, therefore, directed toward checking embezzlement by treasury officers or NCOs in self-administrative units such as infantry battalions, artillery battalions, armored squadrons,

and headquarters companies. Investigations revealed that embezzling occurred most frequently during periods when commanders were busy with combat operations. In order to insure cash availability for daily expenses and payroll disbursement on payday while he had to be present with operating units and away from base areas, commanders often signed blank authorizations to withdraw cash from the local treasury for the convenient use of treasury officers. Besides, their preoccupation with operations, security, and defense matters, and their lack of understanding of financial regulations, caused unit commanders to neglect their function of supervising administrative and financial operations within their units. Unconsciously, they let fraud and deception occur at the expense of public funds and their men's interests.

Two measures were put into effect beginning in 1958 to improve this situation; one was to reassign all administrative and financial functions to regimental or group headquarters instead of battalion to remove a control problem, and the other was to create a new position of administrative assistant or finance officer in administrative units to share the financial responsibility of the unit commander. The administrative assistant or the finance officer was to be fully accountable for the unit's administrative and financial operations and to insure that every expenditure conformed to regulations even though the decision to make expenditures still rested with the unit commander. Both officers were to advise administrative unit commanders against any decision which ran counter to financial regulations. On payday the administrative unit commander, by virtue of his obligations and responsibilities, would provide transportation and security reports for his treasury officer to withdraw payroll cash from the local treasury and bring it back. He would also provide strict security in the location where the unit's cash funds were being kept. In conjunction with the separation of responsibilities between the administrative assistant or finance officer and the administrative unit commander, financial audit teams were established at the military region level. At the same time, the law on embezzlement of public funds was revised to provide for harsher penalties which ranged from long jail terms to

capital punishment depending on the amount of funds misappropriated. These measures resulted in a sharp decrease in embezzlement cases, which eventually became a rarity in subsequent years.

After 1965, corruption rapidly became a matter of concern for the RVNAF. The grumblings and whisperings heard among the public and servicemen about corruption within the armed forces were no longer confined to the area of finances but had spread to personnel and logistics. More detrimental still was the common belief that acts of corruption had the blessings of higher authorities. After completing a study on the causes of corruption and its effects on units and the RVNAF as a whole, in 1966 the JGS implemented the New Horizon and the armed forces improvement programs. Designed to complement each other, these two programs sought to achieve greater effectiveness as a major objective and to check and control corruption as one of the secondary objectives.

As part of the effort to achieve the secondary objective, the New Horizon program also publicized all the benefits and privileges to which every individual soldier was entitled so they might be known and protected. Unit commanders and staff officers were directed to monitor personally daily operations within their units, especially those concerning food, clothing, leaves, rewards and punishments, and pay and allowances. Together they were to determine strengths and weaknesses in each area and develop plans and programs to protect the individual soldier's rights and to bring justice to all. Once an area was detected as requiring improvement, it was made a subject for discussion in information and education sessions attended by all men. During these sessions, the unit commander would personally explain the benefits every man received from the armed forces and the unit's handling of those benefits up to that point. Instead of presenting his own view for improvements, the unit commander invited every man to make suggestions since the rights of the men were at stake. Under the guidance of the unit commander and his political warfare officer, the men effectively thought through the problems and made suggestions. The commander concerned then developed and implemented a program of improvement and designated selected personnel to help monitor activities.

Thanks to improved food programs carried out with the help of the unit's food preparation committee and farming committee, the men's food allowances were no longer diverted, and their meals became more nutritious in spite of meager allowances and skyrocketing prices. A uniform program was also implemented which insured adequate and timely issuance of correct size clothing. Subsequently, a leave program was adopted with the objective of insuring that men received leaves when authorized and in accordance with a predetermined schedule. With every passing week, one or two problems were being solved. Gradually, the situation in the units was improved enough to remove most causes which contributed to corruption. Indeed, as observed by political warfare cadres and unit commanders, the New Horizon program was the proper remedy for petty corruption problems in units. The success of this program could be attributed to the commitment of individual unit commanders and the concern on the part of higher echelons of command.

At the JGS and national levels, efforts to check and eliminate corruption were embodied in a plan to improve the RVNAF effectiveness. The Chairman, JGS, formed a committee whose members included representatives from J1, J3, J5, the Central Training Command, the General Political Warfare Department, and the Inspector General's Office, under the chairmanship of the AG, JGS. Its purpose was to provide support for the implementation of the New Horizon program at the unit level, to solve problems, consider requests for assistance which the General Political Warfare Department received from units, and to study and improve operating procedures within each member agency so as to prevent and eliminate corrupt practices. When this was achieved, justice would prevail, and so would the conditions for improving the performance of individual units and the RVNAF as a whole. The areas of personnel and logistics, which according to the GPWD were believed by the public and servicemen to be riddled with corruption and injustice, received considerable attention by the committee. Investigations were recommended to uncover instances of corruption and injustice in time so that appropriate action could be taken. Based on recommendations from the committee, several significant improvement programs were finally approved by the Chief, JGS, for implementation during 1966-67.

In the area of personnel selection and assignment, a serious effort was made to improve psychological testing of reserve officer candidates at the Thu Duc Infantry School. The purpose of this testing was to determine which students were best qualified for each branch of service. A rumor circulating at that time among officer candidates and their parents had to do with alleged demands for cash compensation from personnel of the Psychological Testing Center, AG, JGS, the commandant of Thu Duc Infantry School, and even the Chief of Staff, JGS. Parents with sons attending a reserve officer's course at Thu Duc could get the feel of the situation by listening to the conversations between students and their family members in the guest areas of the Thu Duc Infantry School every Saturday afternoon and Sunday during the first four weeks of a training class. They were all probing for hints on the right connection to receive assistance. The term "wire-puller" arose among these conversations to designate a kind of operator who, after locating officer candidates from rich families whom they considered good material, offered to serve as go-between to obtain for the willing candidates assignments to non-combat service branches for a fee.

There were several reasons which gave rise to a corrupt-laden situation. First, scoring practices ran counter to established testing regulations, which affected the scorers' impartiality. Second, security measures were improperly enforced with the result that decisions on assignment were inadequately safeguarded and were distributed too early and to too many persons in the Thu Duc Infantry School. Such a situation provided excellent opportunities for dishonest persons to extract bribes from families who had been nervously waiting for testing results, the best opportunity being the last two or three days of Phase One Training.

In an effort to minimize the harmful effects of this situation which produced a damaging impression among new officers, several actions were taken. First, it was decided to improve psychological testing procedures and instruments to increase test accuracy. This was done with the assistance of U.S. advisers. Next, answer sheets of written psychological tests were assigned code numbers, and their stubs were personally removed by the Chief of the JGS Psychological Testing Center.

All stubs were then contained in sealed envelopes and kept in the classified files of the Adjutant General's Office. Then, based on the distribution quota for each combat arm and technical service and on test results, the Chief of the Psychological Testing Center himself drew up an assignment list by code numbers. Finally, one day before releasing assignments, the Chief of the Psychological Testing Center and the security officer of the AG's Office made up a final roster by tallying code numbers with names on the stubs, and put it in a sealed envelope. The following morning, normally the last Saturday of Phase One Training, the Adjutant General and the center chief personally took the sealed envelope to the Thu Duc Infantry School. Before opening the envelope and reading the assignments to the assembled students, they explained the JGS testing and scoring procedures, the techniques used to ensure fairness and impartiality, and the impossibility of manipulation by money or power.

From then on, the JGS was resolved to apply such procedures. Officer candidates were also urged to cooperate with the JGS to fight bribery in connection with their assignment to specialized fields and to warn arriving underclassmen against "wire pullers" and throwing money down the drain. If a candidate had aptitude in a certain field, they were reassured, he would be given training and assigned in that field as long as the requirements existed.

Graduating officers and NCOs were only given the choice of assignments in accordance with their graduation rankings and quotas prepared by J1, JGS for the infantry, and by the heads of combat arms and technical services for their respective requirements. This procedure effectively removed the intermediary of Corps/MR. A minimum tour of duty—two years in combat units, three years in staff work, and four years in a military school—was prescribed as a requirement for transfers and requests for transfer, except in case of disciplinary action or health problems. These requirements minimized devious attempts by servicemen to obtain early transfers or by commanders to use hardship assignments as punishments or to transfer someone against his will in order to make room for a favorite.

In an effort to control the devious practice of position-buying, which was rumored to be widespread, the JGS also set up guidelines for the selection and assignment of officers to command, staff, and training positions. These guidelines effectively helped responsible authorities in making assignment decisions and following up on actions taken. Officers who qualified under these guidelines would receive top priority for assignment to appropriate positions. If the need arose, and there was no personnel available who met the qualifications, responsible authorities would have to recommend those who were considered capable as substitutes.

The promotion procedures previously discussed in Chapter III were expressly designed to minimize the use of devious means to get a promotion or a recommendation for one. The use of efficiency scores given by two different rating authorities in annual promotions effectively removed prejudices and manipulations. It also eliminated the practices of cronyism and rank-selling on the part of certain military authorities who possessed crucial power in the armed forces and who were believed to have been partial, clannish, and politically motivated.

In the area of logistics, the main anti-corruption effort focused on three vulnerable areas: the soldier's benefits, contract bids, and military property.

With regard to the individual soldier's benefits, action was taken to insure that any benefits, large or small, to which he was entitled were fully and promptly granted. To provide the soldier with full commissary services, an effort was made to expedite the establishment of an extensive network of retail outlets intended to replace unit stores whose personnel were believed to have profited from the soldier's privileges. Servicemen or their families, therefore, could shop at these retail stores at their convenience and within authorized limits without fear of having their privileges curtailed. Individual monthly limits of purchase were set by the Commissary Department and widely publicized and posted at retail outlets and unit stores for the information of all. Unit stores could obtain their merchandise from

regional commissary warehouses during any day, especially on pay days, to sell for the entire month. At the end of the month, merchandise left unsold would be reported to the unit's stock control committee, which was made up of officer, NCO, and EM representatives and chaired by the unit's political warfare officer. This committee would decide whether to return this merchandise to the warehouse or to allow its sale, at reduced prices, to authorized individuals, especially those with large families.

With regard to the supply of clothing, the Central Logistics Command did its best to meet all needs and minimize back orders. Each man had to have two clothing record booklets, the blue book kept by himself and the yellow book maintained at the unit's supply section, both to be updated at the time of initial issue and at each subsequent exchange or issue of clothing. Upon transfer, the man's unit issued him a clothing status slip which he signed and turned over to his new unit; it also forwarded the yellow booklet to his new unit to be used in future clothing exchanges. This procedure assisted each man in having adequate clothing at all times.

To improve food services, daily direct purchases of fresh food were undertaken by a committee of NCO and EM representatives in each unit. Food items purchased under contract were received by a committee of officers, NCO and EM representatives who inspected them for quantities and quality in order to avoid shady arrangements. Special attention was particularly devoted to food services in medical facilities, service schools, and training centers. The Central Logistics Command, the Medical Department, and the Central Training Command frequently sent out inspection teams to ensure good nutrition for servicemen under medical treatment and in training.

In the area of contract bid control, emphasis was placed on price offers, contract execution, reception of material, and payment. There were several possibilities of irregularity in the entire process. For example, contract officers might demand a kickback proportional to the value of the contract, inspectors might be bought to overlook contract violations, especially those regarding combat rations, or reception personnel might be bribed into accepting goods that failed to meet

contract specifications. Finally, disbursing personnel might also delay payment of contracts with the intention of exacting payoffs.

To minimize these problems, the JGS initiated several actions. In the first place, it directed that, to the maximum extent possible, bids were to be openly solicited and contracts parceled out into smaller ones to encourage competition and discourage monopoly and price-fixing. It also made sure that direct negotiations and conclusion of mutual agreement contracts were avoided. For the review of price offers, the JGS prevailed on the services of an interministerial expert committee which included representatives from the Ministries of Economics, Finance, Interior, and Labor. This committee analyzed unit prices offered by contractors, then submitted recommendations to the commander, Central Logistics Command and the Chief, JGS, the only two officials with decision-making authority regarding contract bidding in the RVNAF.

After a contract was signed, an inspection committee was convened with representatives from technical services whose membership rotated every calendar quarter. This inspection committee ensured that the goods or services being produced met the specifications required. When the goods were finally delivered, a receiving committee was set up to include representatives from the purchasing agency, the military security service, the area logistics command concerned, and one or more technicians, under the chairmanship of a field grade officer selected by the beneficiary organization. To avoid secret deals, members of this committee were chosen in confidentiality by the agencies concerned, and the bidding files were made available to the chairman and members for inspection only on the day of reception. In case the committee's decision was contested by the contractor and appealed to higher authorities, the case would be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Central Logistics Command and composed of members from the same agencies but with higher ranks. This committee was chaired by a lieutenant colonel or full colonel from the Central Logistics Command; its recommendation was submitted either to the commander, Central Logistics Command or the Chief, JGS, depending on the amount of the contract. To ensure timely payments to contractors, a maximum time was prescribed for the processing of vouchers submitted. Disbursing

personnel were bound to respect this and any delay had to be justified and explained to the satisfaction of audit teams.

As for military property, the main effort during this period was directed toward preventing illegal use of military and public real estate and other properties such as dump trucks, bulldozers, and building materials for the construction of private homes and apartment buildings. A great demand for this equipment resulted from the American buildup.

To combat corruption effectively, proper information and education were essential. However, the information and education program of the RVNAF was not always carried out properly. Most servicemen, including officers, were unaware of all the benefits they could expect from the first day of service. Only a full knowledge of rights and privileges helped the serviceman to claim and protect them and defend himself against abuse and fraud. But servicemen rarely knew of projects designed to increase their well-being and insure justice for all. Because they were too far removed from central authorities, they often complained of higher echelons' insensitivity to their problems, and sometimes alleged that their superiors had condoned corrupt practices. On the other hand, the sanctions that higher authorities had imposed on known and proven cases of corruption were seldom publicized as a topic of education and to serve as lessons for others.

To remedy this situation, the JGS initiated several actions. It directed the GPWD to publish a pocket-size manual for soldiers which contained the RVNAF code of conduct, the serviceman's rights and benefits, and actions each individual should take to protect his rights. Then it urged all unit commanders to use the political warfare system to notify men of new procedures, changes in servicemen's benefits, and punishments meted out to individuals caught in the act of committing corruption. In particular, the JGS held all unit commanders responsible for keeping their men fully informed at all times.

The next step the JGS took was to extend the political warfare system to smaller units, from battalion to platoon. At each level, therefore, a political officer or NCO was appointed to assist the

unit commander. To prepare these political warfare personnel for their new duties, the GPWD conducted courses in techniques of organizing and conducting study sessions and in improving activities within units. All was done as part of the New Horizon plan.

At the same time, the JGS put together a mobile team consisting of the AG, JGS as leader, the Deputy Chief, General Political Warfare Directorate, and field grade officers from the research divisions of J1, J3, the Central Logistics Command, and corps, divisions, and military schools. This team's twofold purpose was first to present and discuss plans and programs the JGS was implementing, in the fields of personnel, logistics, political warfare, and inspection to insure justice and minimize social ills in the armed forces including corruption, and raise the soldier's standard of living in the face of rising costs. The team also conveyed the JGS determination to combat corruption and asked for all men's cooperation in order to achieve victory.

The resolve to overcome shortcomings, the adoption of corrective actions, the determination to enforce rules, and the strong punishment of corrupt practices by the JGS would all be inadequate without the guarantee of correct compliance by lower echelons and the early discovery of budding corruption. Uncovering irregularities, therefore, was the first and crucial step in combating corruption; it was also the hardest, given the craftiness and power of the perpetrators. All the resolve to impose strong punishment and maintain military discipline would be mere inanity if the offender was never unmasked. Military security agencies were usually too preoccupied with maintaining security against Communist penetration and subversion. On the other hand, the Inspector General's Directorate, an organization responsible for evaluating the efficiency of units and insuring proper compliance with military rules and regulations, was being slighted as a way station for those fallen from grace, and lacked good, capable, respectable personnel. Reports of investigation from the Inspector General rarely received prompt attention to guarantee immediate sanctions or timely corrective actions.

Victims of injustice, suppression, or corruption hardly found a place dependable or confidential enough to air their grievances.

Going to a higher echelon would have violated command channels and could have brought further injury. Their only recourse, therefore, was to expose wrongdoings to the press, which caused further confusion. To restore the authority of military inspectors and give them the support required to check and combat corruption in the RVNAF, the JGS took several measures within the framework of the 1966 improvement program.

First, it revamped and unified the military inspection system from the JGS down to sectors and divisions. All field inspection organizations were placed under the command and technical supervision of JGS although they continued to function under the operational control of corps/CTZ, division, and sector commanders. In addition to inspections, the Inspector General's Directorate was responsible for conducting open investigations into cases of oppression, injustice, and corruption within the armed forces. With this new responsibility, the Inspector General made it public that it welcomed letters of complaints and grievances from all men as well as personal interviews. Servicemen were given the right of direct access to inspector general personnel without having to go through normal channels. They were also promised that the identity of the person who made accusations would be kept strictly confidential in order to protect him from retaliation.

To enhance the prestige of military inspector general personnel, the JGS gave them distinctive identification insignia, which they were required to wear while conducting inspections or investigations so that every man could identify them and approach them with problems or petitions. The AG, JGS also reviewed the records of all IG personnel in an effort to remove undesirable elements and give proper training to those who were retained. At the same time, it conducted training courses for newly appointed inspection personnel to meet expansion needs. Good conduct and professional experience were two prerequisites for the selection of new inspectors whose assignments, regardless of duty station, were all made by the Chief, JGS, upon recommendations of the Inspector General's Directorate.

A new procedure was implemented whereby one copy of all inspection reports drawn up by regional inspection teams was sent to the Inspector

General's Directorate along with decisions on corrective actions taken by the commanders concerned. It also required that reports of inspections or investigations made by representatives from the Inspector General's Directorate be exploited quickly by responsible authorities, especially the AG's Office and the Central Logistics Command, in order to insure immediate and visible results.

Achievements of the New Horizon Campaign

The New Horizon program, which had been initiated in 1966 in the 44th Regiment, 23th Infantry Division, the 46th Regiment, 25th Division, and the provinces of Long An and Dinh Tuong on an experimental basis brought about encouraging results in the units concerned. The troops witnessed a clear change of attitude in their commanders who showed genuine solicitude for them. Now that they had a clear idea of their rights and benefits, they began to appreciate the efforts made by their commanders and responsible personnel to protect these privileges. After the initial wariness had vanished, they also enjoyed the education sessions. The meetings held by GPWD mobile information teams succeeded in generating a great deal of good feelings among combat troops toward central authorities. The difficulties encountered by the GVN in its attempt to raise the troops' standard of living was received with understanding, and the JGS determination to improve the armed forces' efficiency was well known by all.

On the other hand, several improvement programs devised by the JGS also benefited from constructive ideas contributed by the troops who all expected strong action against reprehensible practices in the military. "The JGS is generating a refreshing wind through the armed forces, and we hope this wind will keep blowing forever. We have had our share of failure with half-measures or unfinished projects," was the concluding remark of the Commandant of the Nha Trang NCO School during a discussion session conducted by the central GPWD delegation.

Indeed, the campaign designed to control and combat corruption in the RVNAF under the New Horizon program achieved a remarkable impact

among the servicemen. It succeeded in reforming and deterring corrupt elements rather than uncovering them for punishment. In late 1966 and early 1967, three instances of corruption were unmasked which created quite a sensation in the armed forces. The first case involved the commandant of the Quang Trung Training Center who had used draftee labor and military real estate and materials to build himself an ice-making plant. Having served under President Nguyen Van Thieu, this officer was respected and feared by many. Acting on the information contained in a sealed envelope sent to the AG, JGS, and on orders of the Chief, JGS, the Inspector General made an unexpected visit to determine the truth and later ordered an official investigation. Since the results bore out the allegations, the JGS imposed severe punishment on the offender (60 days of confinement and demotion to lieutenant colonel from full colonel) and his accomplices.

The second case involved an attempt to bribe and acceptance of bribes by a lieutenant colonel who served as Chief of the Finance and Budget Office, JGS. Functioning on the principle of separation of responsibility regarding contract bidding for RVNAF, the Chief of Staff, JGS reserved the authority to approve all contracts submitted through public bidding which amounted to 30 million Vietnamese piasters or more. The results of bids were usually submitted by the Engineer Department and the Purchasing Agency to the Finance and Budget Office, JGS, for review prior to approval by the Chief of Staff, JGS. One afternoon, the Chief of Finance and Budget Office came to see the Chief of Staff and asked him to approve a contract for the construction of an additional 400-bed ward to the Cong Hoa General Hospital. Casually, he insinuated to the Chief of Staff that the contractor "would never forget his debt of gratitude." Angered by this offense to his self-respect, the Chief of Staff immediately ordered the arrest of the Chief of Finance and Budget Office and subjected the whole affair to a thorough investigation. The outcome revealed that, although the bidding had been conducted according to regulations, there was bribery by the winning contractor and acceptance of bribes by the Chief of the Finance and Budget Office. Both men were prosecuted by a military court and received prison terms. After that, the JGS ordered a new bid, and the contract offer amounted to 10% less than the previous contract.

The last case was a payoff by a reserve officer candidate at Thu Duc who wanted to get an assignment to the Commissary Department. One day while calling on the AG, JGS, a Catholic priest from Ho Nai, Duc Tu District, Bien Hoa Province mentioned that his nephew, a Thu Duc reserve officer, had to pay money in order to get an assignment with the Commissary Department. Since this was a good opportunity to obtain the truth, the AG, JGS, eagerly pressed the priest for further details. After a moment's hesitation, the priest said he knew nothing more than his nephew's complaint and had no idea who had asked for the money and to whom the money had been paid. The AG insisted and after promising to protect the priest's nephew and not to impose severe sanctions on the perpetrator, asserted that he just wanted to help in the fight against a social ill which had caused so many problems for the RVNAF. Finally the priest gave the AG his nephew's name and asked him to keep his word. An investigation by the Military Security Service led nowhere. In the end, the AG had to call the priest's nephew to his office, reiterated his promise, and requested help. The young officer said his mother had given an aspirant named Thuat, who lived in Saigon, 50,000 piasters to take care of the assignment. A check of individual records revealed that Aspirant Thuat was working at the Clothing Production Center of the Quartermaster Corps. Under questioning, the suspect admitted to having accepted 50,000 piasters from the officer to support a poor but large family, that he had not shared the money with anyone else, and had acted alone on the knowledge that the officer would be assigned to a sedentary position for family reasons. He had just gambled and won. True to his word to the priest, the AG gave Aspirant Thuat only 50 days of confinement and transferred him to a combat unit in II CTZ.

Based on lessons learned from these cases, during the first quarter of 1967, the JGS undertook a vigorous shakeup with the RVNAF which resulted in the removal from office and discharge of more than half a dozen general officers and over 40 field grade officers. Many had held key positions, such as corps and division commanders, chiefs of central departments, and province chiefs.¹ This purge had taken place not because of proven corruption charges

¹ Among those discharged there were LTC Nguyen Huu Co, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of War (formerly a corps commander), MG Bui Huu Nhon, Deputy Chief of Staff, JGS for Logistics (formerly a division commander), BG Nguyen Thanh Xang, Commander of the 25th Inf. Div., BG Pham Dang Lan, Chief of the Engineer Department, and Colonel Xam Tan Phuoc, Chief of Kien Giang Province.

but only on the strength of widespread military and popular rumors that these officers had been involved in corrupt practices. It restored faith among servicemen in the JGS's resolve to clean up the armed forces and enjoined other key cadres to stay pure. To avoid JGS action, which was sure to come sooner or later, a number of military personnel who had enriched themselves through devious means took advantage of election laws under the Second Republic and ran for seats in the National Assembly. Some succeeded and gained immunity as representatives or senators. Others, less lucky, were allowed to leave the armed forces for good.

After the great upheaval caused by the 1968 Communist general offensive, the GVN promulgated the general mobilization law. While this law was dictated by rising needs for military manpower, it also impeded the process of eliminating undesirable personnel from the armed forces. Then under Vietnamization, the rapid expansion of the RVNAF and other pressing problems finally reduced the effort to control and combat corruption in RVNAF to a secondary role.

Corruption As a National Problem

Not until the end of 1970 did anti-corruption become a national concern. Vice President Tran Van Huong was then assigned the job of fighting corruption nationwide. The entrusting of such a vital task to the Vice-President initially revived hopes among the RVNAF ranks. It sounded the alarm for those who were involved in or tempted toward corruption. There was no doubt that Mr. Huong, with his record of probity, his frugal living, his resolve, his welcoming all kinds of information on corrupt acts, and especially his instructions for all civil and military cadres to make public their assets every year, earned the respect and admiration of all. The only matter of concern for the Vietnamese people and armed forces was his advanced age and failing health and the honesty of his entourage. "He is uncorruptible, but is his entourage," everybody seemed to ask.

For the RVNAF, the effort to combat corruption was once again resumed. Planning, coordination, and supervision were entrusted to a

committee composed of commanders of services, combat arms, and technical services, under Lt. General Nguyen Van La, Deputy Chief, JGS, serving as chairman, and the Assistant Chief of Staff, J5 as secretary. During its first meeting, the committee decided to implement the same principles of action as those adopted earlier in 1966. The principle of sole responsibility was to be enforced throughout the RVNAF. In other words, the commanders of the services and major units, the chiefs of combat arms and technical services, and the chiefs of central commands were fully responsible for the achievements and effectiveness of their own organizations. They were individually required to review the situation in their own organizations and draw up plans to check and fight corruption to suite their capabilities and resources.

The over-all anti-corruption effort was executed in two phases: during the first phase, emphasis was on education, warning, correction, and awakening of some servicemen who were still wallowing in the morass of corruption; during the second phase the focus was on aggressively uncovering corrupt acts and severely and publicly punishing perpetrators. To accomplish this, the policies implemented under the New Horizon program in 1966-67 were continued because of their achievements to date. The JGS divisions and central commands were required, in addition to conducting education sessions for their own personnel, to review their organizational and operating procedures in order to bring more justice to the field units, improve their capability to protect the servicemen's interests, military property and properties of the people, and to stop corruption. The task entrusted to the General Political Warfare Department was to train polwar cadres in ways to help unit commanders organize and conduct education sessions for individual and unit improvement, research study topics and procedures to make them more appropriate and uniform throughout the armed forces, and revise and update the soldier's manual for the purpose of exploiting the achievements of the campaign, particularly those that resulted in punishment. On their part, the Inspector General's Directorate, the Military Security Service, and the Military Police Command were ordered to pursue aggressively their investigative work, focusing on leads

provided and bringing corrupt cases to a swift conclusion so that immediate action could be taken to punish the offenders and warn would-be offenders. Ad hoc committees were also set up at service, MR, and major unit headquarters to help commanders direct and coordinate the fight against corruption.

The 1970-72 campaign to check and combat corruption was launched by instructions and memos, from all levels of command, and by group discussions between commanders and men under their control. Every serviceman was made aware of the forms and damage of corruption and of the campaign pursued by all command echelons to check and fight this evil. At the company and battalion level, the New Horizon spirit was revived through a plan whose objective was to improve the commanders' leadership techniques and enhance their concern for the welfare of each man. At the JGS echelon, staff divisions and central commands endeavored to find ways to ameliorate vital administrative functions in two major areas of personnel and logistics.

In the area of personnel, the JGS set about to improve the recruiting system by cutting down the number of recruiting agencies whose proliferation made control difficult and generated opportunities for corruption. Their work would be accomplished by a JGS-appointed committee which procured recruits through the screening of draftees. Next, it ordered an improvement in the operation of recruitment and induction centers. To minimize corruption possibilities, tours of duty for doctors in charge of physical examination were reduced to three months. Leaves for draftees being processed were suspended except for funerals and weddings in order to avoid the sale of leave forms. The centers were also directed to form daily food inspection committees composed of representatives of draftees, NCO candidates, and officer candidates to supervise rice delivery, purchase of fresh foods, cooking and serving; pilferage was thus avoided.

Finally, the JGS established a permanent committee composed of the Chief, Data Processing Center, AG, JGS, and representatives of the Directorate General of Finance and Audit of the Ministry of Defense, and regional administrative and finance services. The mission of this

committee was to study and compare personnel rosters, as they appeared in the payroll records maintained by individual units, with the rosters on the printout of the Data Processing Center compiled on the basis of personnel reports, Form QD-22, submitted by the units concerned, in order to uncover fraudulent practices, such as keeping deserters or MIAs on the payroll to siphon off their pay.

In the areas of logistics, there was a general effort to improve supply management operations to minimize fraud, collusion, and pilfering. This was done by removing stock control responsibility from storage units, consolidating inventories, reducing the number of storage units, separating customers from the storage area, and insuring that the quantities of items being received or shipped out matched those recorded on shipping lists or requisition orders.

To lessen the opportunities for corruption, the Central Logistics Command endeavored to improve contract bidding by holding open meetings every three months with businessmen and industrialists. The purpose was to welcome and answer questions, discuss problems and suggestions, and to keep contractors posted on progress made in expediting contract payments, a major area of concern for most military suppliers. Businessmen also received the personal pledge of the CLC commander that he was determined to honor his commitments to perform well and correctly for the progress of Vietnamese industry and for the interests of all servicemen. In return, the CLC also asked businessmen to cooperate with and help the JGS combat greed among logistic personnel.

In conjunction with the improvement of operating procedures and troop information and education, the JGS, service commands, combat arms and technical services, MRs, and major units also organized watchdog teams to oversee the operations of subordinate units and agencies, insure correct application of rules and regulations, uncover irregularities and offenses and apply corrective measures or conduct further inquiry for appropriate action. At the same time, the Inspector General's organization received additional personnel to meet the requirements of quarterly inspections and unexpected investigations occasioned by tipoffs. The Investigation Service of the Inspector General's Directorate also

received extra help to process written information volunteered by military personnel and civilian employees, conduct personal interviews, and perform investigative work. Reports in newspapers were also exploited by the Directorate as public sources of information leading to the discovery of corrupt cases.

In addition to internal control and inspection, the RVNAF were subjected to scrutiny by the Vice President's Office and the State Supervision Council. The investigations conducted by these agencies were either covert or overt.

As a result of its efforts, during 1970-72, the JGS succeeded in uncovering several important cases of corruption through the process of inspections and investigations. The 2nd Recruitment and Induction Center was found guilty of defrauding draftees of their food allowances. The 16th Armored Squadron in Dinh Tuong Province sold fuel allocated for combat operations. The 47th Regiment wangled equipment from a U.S. Camp in Pleiku being turned over to ARVN control. The committee in charge of receiving Camp Radcliff from the 4th U.S. Infantry Division in An Khe was guilty of dereliction of duty which resulted in robbery of materials and of complicity with military and civilian groups in the removal of equipment for private use. An artillery battalion of the 18th Division, stationed in Bien Hoa, loaned space in its rear base for the storage of goods spirited from the Saigon docks. Rear base personnel of the 3rd Ranger Brigade near Camp Long Binh rented out military vehicles to transport rice for a businessman in Long Khanh Province. However, there was not a single case of corruption involving the transfer and reassignment of personnel. Strong actions were subsequently taken against the commanders of units found guilty of charges, to include severe disciplinary punishment, removal from office, demotion, and court-martial. Despite this, both the public and the military believed that this anti-corruption campaign had struck only the poor small fry, leaving quite intact the big sharks in higher places.

The Corruption Upheaval of 1974-75

While the campaign was making great progress, the NVA launched an all-out invasion across the Ben Hai River in the spring of 1972. All efforts were, therefore, devoted to stopping the enemy and regaining the territory lost during this offensive. No sooner had the RVNAF restored their balance than they were immediately faced with the Communists' claims-staking and land-grabing scheme which occurred before and after the cease-fire. The campaign to prevent and fight corruption in the RVNAF, therefore, was relegated to an obscure background only to resume in 1974, when conditions for corruption had virtually evaporated. Supplies for U.S. forces were no longer available, commodities for the American PX system had tapered off, U.S. camps had been turned over, and all new properties had been properly accounted for. Meanwhile, commodities of the Vietnamese commissary system consisted mostly of domestic and less attractive products; the canned food program and the monthly allowance of rice as a supplemental food allocation had been cut off, and fuels, building materials, and other supplies were no longer as abundant as they had been before aid cutbacks. As a result, the RVANF anti-corruption campaign, during the post-cease-fire period, focused on only four key areas: ghost and ornamental troops, transfers and assignments, contract bidding, and military property.

The most infamous corrupt activity during this period involved ghost and ornamental soldiers. Ghost soldiers referred primarily to those KIA, MIA, or deserters who somehow managed to sign for their pay; although their names had been removed from personnel rosters, they still figured on the payrolls. Ghost soldiers also included those whose names were carried on the unit personnel roster but who were not normally present in the unit because they had been loaned out on official or unofficial duty or authorized to stay at home to practice their private professions. Ornamental troops were used for just that purpose: as decorations for offices and nothing else. Most of these troops were not authorized by TO&E and had been transferred or on loan from combat units.

The evil of ghost and ornamental soldiers had surfaced years before in MR-4, chiefly among RF and PF units. It had been a major target for

Lt. General Ngo Quang Truong, then MR-4 Commander, who succeeded in keeping it under control. By 1974, however, it was a common belief that the scourge of ghost and ornamental troops had broken out again among regional and popular forces of the Mekong Delta. There were good indications that the actual combat strength of RF companies was much lower than reported. A JGS delegation, under the leadership of the J3, JGS, was formed to determine why the RF and PF in MR-4 had suffered so many casualties as reported. During its one-month mission, this fact-finding delegation made unannounced visits to a number of outposts and RF companies located throughout the 16 provinces of the Mekong Delta. It found hard evidence that the shortage of combat troops had been due, among other things, to the "ghost" and "ornamental" group problem and to insufficient replacements, both of which boosted casualty figures to an abnormally high level.

To secure the President's support for a vital enterprise which would surely affect the interests, pride, and honor of certain influential military and government officials, the JGS recommended and received presidential approval for a program designed to improve territorial forces, including a nationwide campaign against "ghost" and "ornamental" troops. This effort would start with the RF and PF in MR-4. Lt. General Nguyen Vinh Nghi, IV Corps Commander, was appointed by the President to lead the campaign in MR-4 with the assistance provided by the JGS; he was to report results every three months.

The campaign started by granting a seven-day grace period during which every unit within the region was to reexamine its ghost and ornamental troops problem, recall all personnel on loan within or outside the unit, and put an end to the practice. The grace period over, the MR-4 commander launched a campaign to combat the problems of ghost and ornamental troops and indiscriminate personnel loan, inform and educate the troops about it, call for everyone's cooperation, and inflict severe and immediate punishments in case of recidivism. Apart from its own resources, MR-4 headquarters received substantial assistance from the JGS. Two hundred officer students from the Political Warfare College, organized into teams and cells, went out to RF companies and

battalions to help commanders set up activities programs and to report to the General Political Warfare Department on the actual state of these units with respect to morale, personnel, supply, administration, and pay in order to facilitate future project planning. Ten personnel and finance teams representing the AG, JGS, the Data Processing Center, and the Directorate General of Finance and Audit were simultaneously sent to sectors, particularly those with high personnel strength. Each team was responsible for checking individual records against personnel reports, verifying desertion reports and personnel absent from the unit, and comparing personnel on rosters against those on the payroll. In case of doubt, the team made an unexpected head count against the strength reported to be present. In addition, the MR-4 commander formed 16 inspection teams with personnel under his command, each headed by a field grade officer. Each team worked with one sector and was responsible for checking into the problems of personnel administration, handled by the sector's AG section, and payroll disbursement by the administrative and logistic support center.

After three months, the MR-4 commander and the assistance teams, provided by the JGS and GPWD, discovered and accomplished several things. The problem of ghost and ornamental troops was found to be prevalent in most sectors under MR-4 command. Loaning personnel to outside agencies, granting personnel permission to pursue private occupations at home, and delay in removing deserters from payroll were the three most common irregularities. This campaign brought new hopes to RF and PF commanders, who expected to receive more combat troops because all personnel on loan were recalled, and the problem virtually solved. In addition, deserters were promptly reported, removed from unit rosters, and their pay immediately stopped. As a result of this action alone, the amount of payroll money returned to the Treasury exceeded 600 million piasters. However, the overall troop strength on duty was still low because of delays in obtaining replacements for deserters, MIAs, KIAs, and the wounded. Though the campaign was going well, constant attention was still needed especially with regard to the problem of "contributions" which units frequently collected for intramural parties, gifts to commanders, etc.

Apart from these general findings and accomplishments, nine specific cases of ghost and ornamental troops had been uncovered during the first five months of the campaign after the seven-day grace period. Four cases were found at the battalion level, involving three ARVN battalions and one RF battalion, in which 29 ghost troops had been uncovered. Three cases were discovered at the RF company level, involving two companies in MR-4 and one company in MR-3, in which 36 ghost troops had been found; and two cases at the sector headquarters level. All of these cases were reported to the U.S. Defense Attache Office on 31 May 1974.

For years, the public had believed and rumored that positions were bought and sold, and money was involved in the operation of transfers and assignments. The JGS was well aware of this but lacked the hard evidence to clamp down on these shady transactions. During this period, therefore, the only thing the JGS could do was to revise and sharpen directives concerning selection, assignment, and rotation of personnel at all levels. It also sent out reminders to commanders with transfer and assignment authority, directing them to comply strictly with the directives and insure that applicable criteria was used.

To provide an example for subordinates, the JGS itself strictly enforced established regulations concerning transfers and assignments, starting from the Chief of Staff, JGS, his office and entourage, down to the AG and J1 divisions of the JGS, each of which had suffered publicly from unsubstantiated reports of bribery. After nearly a year of effort to uncover delinquent members, only two cases of signature forging to transfer personnel in exchange for money were discovered. A warrant officer first class in the mail section of the AG Division, JGS had surreptitiously used an old stencil bearing the signature and seal of the Chief of Staff, JGS, to forge an order transferring a Chinese Vietnamese draftee from a regiment of the 23rd Infantry Division in Pleiku to the Bien Hoa Sector through the intermediary of a GPWD captain for 250,000 piasters. This shenanigan was unmasked because of a small error in the fake order and a cross check by the AG Transfer Section. The second case involved a warrant officer in the 25th Infantry Division's AG Section who forged the Division Chief of Staff's signature to transfer

a draftee to MR-4. An inquiry tracked down the false order, but resulted in no action because both men had deserted a week before the inquiry began. The effort had been surfaced by an anonymous letter sent from the 25th Division to the Chief of Staff, JGS.

In the area of contract services, the JGS was concerned not only with the internal operations of the purchasing agency, technical services, the CLC, administration and finance office, the offices of the CLC commander, and JGS chief of staff, but also with the reception of goods which the U.S. DAO had ordered for the RVNAF under the in-country procurement program. In connection with this, there was a rumor that Vietnamese and U.S. officials had reached secret understandings with contractors concerning production control and commodity reception. The Central Logistics Command, therefore, issued warnings during its quarterly meetings with Vietnamese contractors who were dealing either with the RVNAF or U.S. DAO under the ICP program. It also frequently changed the membership of production control and receiving committees, employing for these tasks only the most trusted and reliable personnel. During the entire period, in spite of efforts made by military security agents and audit specialists, not a single case of corruption was found concerning contractor services. The audit team discovered only a few cases of delay in payment at the Transportation and Quartermaster Departments, but judged these delays to be caused by reasons beyond the control of responsible officers. As for contracts under the ICP program, both U.S. DAO and CLC audit teams unmasked three fraudulent cases involving the delivery of barbed wire, lumber, and canned food which failed to meet specifications, and the counterfeiting of certificates of commodity reception submitted by RVNAF personnel to the U.S. DAO Comptroller for disbursement.

In another effort to safeguard military property, insure its proper use, and prevent waste, the JGS also directed the strict enforcement of several measures. It prohibited the use of motor vehicles, especially jeeps and trucks, for any purpose but official business. Large headquarters were ordered to set up motor pools for the transportation of officers and prohibit them from keeping military vehicles at home.

At the same time, the CLC subjected to strict control all phases of POL supply operations, from delivery and storage to transportation and distribution, to avoid pilferage. It also limited the issuance of supplemental fuel allocations for daily administrative operations and subjected all military trucks in operation to control by MP traffic teams.

To prevent pilferage and the theft of military supplies, the CLC enforced the principle of one-for-one exchange for tires, car batteries, and dry batteries. It required that tires turned in for exchange be checked against vehicle logs and odometer readings to make sure they had normal wear and tear and not rented out for civilian use. Tires that were beyond retreading were ordered to be slashed beyond use before being turned in to PDO to prevent fraudulent re-exchange.

Other measures taken included the improvement of procedures for receiving and forwarding aid commodities and domestic goods at the Saigon Transportation Terminal in order to minimize stealing and pilferage. In cooperation with U.S. DAO and the Audit Office of the U.S. Defense Department, the JGS also conducted in-country courses designed to train auditors for finance and logistic agencies, and insured maximum use of these specialists in auditing work.

Several important cases of abuse and corruption were uncovered as a result of the JGS efforts. The S-4 of Gia Dinh Sector was found guilty of using military vehicles to transport goods stolen from the American PX warehouses at Newport, Saigon. Military vehicles from several units were illegally employed to carry smuggled goods from Go Cong to Saigon; the whole convoy was caught in Long An. A warrant officer first class from the Army Arsenal acted in collusion with a sergeant from the Saigon Transportation Terminal to forge papers to sell twelve tons of steel plate intended to make gun shields for M-113 armored personnel carriers. A river-transport contractor, acting in complicity with dock hands at the Can Tho Transportation Terminal and warehouse workers of the 341st Direct Support Group, stole 15 million piasters worth of canned food and cement in transit from Saigon to Can Tho.

At the time this campaign was making excellent progress, the Inspector General's Directorate was concluding its painful and drawn-out inquiry into corruption charges involving ghost and ornamental soldiers, position buying and selling, contributions to commanders, and illegal use of military vehicles and building materials in the 5th and 25th Infantry Divisions. Because the charges involved two division commanders, whose appointment and removal were under presidential authority, the Inspector General's Directorate submitted both cases to the President for decision. This decision took a long time to come. He finally made a severe decision, but when it was publicized, the anti-corruption movement initiated by opposition political and religious groups had reached such a momentum that his good intent was somewhat eclipsed. Many believed, therefore, that he had made the decision not out of a sincere desire to eradicate corruption, but, rather, under irresistible pressure from religious groups.

Apart from severe actions, such as maximum disciplinary punishments, removal from office, demotion, discharge, trial by a court-martial against corrupt elements caught in flagrante delicto, the JGS also cleaned its own house through the discharge of a few generals and of more than 4,000 field and company grade officers who either had a tainted past or were too old. This clean-up movement restored the faith of many servicemen in the GVN resolve to keep the RVNAF healthy, but it also caused a great deal of resentment and allegations of "ingratitude and dumping" on the part of those discharged.

By that time, the anti-corruption movement, which had been started by religious groups and later joined by opposition representatives and senators, was gaining intensity. At first, the protesters simply asked that the government take concrete actions to clean its own house. The press subsequently carried accusations of corrupt acts by high GVN and military officials, including the MR-4 and MR-2 commanders, and the national security advisor to the President. The MR-4 commander countered with a point-by-point defense in the newspaper, but to no avail. The President decided to remove the MR-4 commander and put him in charge of the Infantry School; he also removed the MR-2 commander and made him

Chief of Armor Corps without so much as an inquiry, leaving many questions unanswered among the military. As for the national security advisor, the President apparently took no action. Following another turn of the screw, the movement accused the President himself of corrupt practices through news editorials, leaflets, and sermons which seemed to be pushing things to tragic showdown. According to the RVN laws, only the President had the authority to act in cleaning up the government and the armed forces, especially with regard to the removal of generals and officers whom he had appointed to hold key positions in the GVN, RVNAF, and police. Now that his personal integrity was being questioned, whether justly or unjustly, how could he correct anyone?

Corruption was a burning issue not only in South Vietnamese politics, but in American politics as well. Congressman Aspin, for example, brought the problem of RVNAF corruption to the House floor citing a case in point known among Vietnamese logistic circles as the Hoc Mon case. In early 1975—I can no longer remember the exact date--the U.S. Defense Attache handed me a telegram from the U.S. Defense Department asking for details about an alleged sale by the RVNAF to businessmen of helicopter rotor blades and parts that were still stocked in Hoc Mon, Gia Dinh Province. The charge had been made by Congressman Aspin. I was shocked and could hardly speak. I was filled with wrath for the unscrupulous perpetrators, and with pity for the country, which must have reached its ignoble end to have produced such rotten children. Fortunately, we were able to lay our hands on the heaps of scrap metal in Hoc Mon during our inquiry. We quickly gathered a team of U.S.-DAO personnel, VNAF, judicial MP, and national police to locate these heaps of metal. It wasn't hard to locate them and their owner, who presented completed sales papers from PDO in Long Binh. VNAF and U.S. DAO specialists, after some digging into the heaps, were able to find helicopter rotor blades and parts, but they were all scraps. The truth was that simple. And the RVNAF emerged from it all, fully vindicated of the corruption allegations.

Scarcely had the political storm subsided when the Communist hurricane arose. Phuoc Long, the first provincial capital of the RVN, fell under NVA massive attacks in early 1975. Then Tay Ninh, a province capital in MR-3, and the provincial capital of Kien Tuong in MR-4 came under attack.

Next came the fall of the province capital of Ban Me Thuot on 10 March 1975. Both the campaign designed to fight corruption in the RVNAF and the movement to demand a government clean-up gave place to an all-out effort to resist outside Communist invaders who were a thousand times more dangerous than the corrupt enemy from within.

Observations

Corruption did exist in the RVNAF beginning with the area of finance and subsequently spreading to other areas. The opportunities for corruption proliferated with the escalation of the war, the division of decadence in society, and the impoverishment of servicemen of all ranks. It was not easy to determine the exact number of corrupt servicemen or the effect of corruption on the RVNAF performance. We only knew for certain that opinion in the military and civilian population focused on a small number of general officers in high military and government positions. We also found that a MR which had an honest, just, and impartial commander was least affected by corruption. Conversely, a unit or organization which was unfortunate enough to have a dishonest and greedy commander was certainly plagued by widespread corruption involving almost everyone from the top to the lowest level. In such a case, the troops were discontented, morale was low, equipment became unserviceable, and finally the unit's performance suffered. Cases in point were the 5th and 25th Infantry Divisions under the command of Brigadier General Tran Quoc Lich and Brigadier General Le Van Tu, respectively. Of course, even a unit or organization with an honest commander also had problems with corruption; however, it was usually detected, occurred only surreptitiously, and was perpetrated only by subordinates.

The effort to control and stamp out corruption in the RVNAF was made in all areas and by all echelons of command. It did deter corruption-minded servicemen, but did not eradicate the evil. Indeed, controlling and stamping out corruption while fighting a hot war was an indescribably complex and difficult undertaking. Corruption could be compared to an invisible ghost forever stalking its weak-minded victims or even honest

persons in their weak moments to strike. Because of its invisibility, it was hard to evade, find, capture, and destroy. One had to be constantly on guard. In fact, acts of corruption rarely left any trace or evidence. There simply were no written messages, notes, or receipts involved in the demand and acceptance of bribes. But the laws required concrete evidence for indictment and conviction.

Many regarded corruption as a social ill. So long as there were operators in our society who bought life and security with money, and the armed forces kept admitting them into their ranks, it was hard to stamp out corruption. So long as social values were based on fame and wealth, and happiness measured in terms of material needs fulfilled, corruption would live on. How prevalent it was depended on the state of the society. In a society beset with disorientation, disturbance, and decay from war, corruption would flourish more readily. Consequently, the effort to control and stamp out corruption in the armed forces had to go hand in hand with that of reforming the society as a whole. And social reform was no short work.

Let us look on the RVNAF as a secular banyan tree with intricately intertwined roots and branches that gained strength from their togetherness to protect South Vietnam from the Communist typhoon. Wartime conditions led its tentacles to embrace the government for further strength. The man responsible for tending and pruning the tree came from the tree itself, so his pruning job became even harder. He had to do the pruning in such a way as to avoid charges of ingratitude, of breaking the bow after the bird was killed, and of throwing away the trap after the animal was caught.

The office of state supervision, the anti-corruption office of Vice President Tran Van Huong, and the Inspector General's Directorate--the three key agencies in charge of uncovering corruption acts--lacked a cutting edge and coordination of efforts. More importantly, they lacked the kind of personnel determined and daring enough to act without regard to consequences, especially against powerful military and government officials, and without fear of retaliation.

The concentration of so much power in the person of the President, who alone could transfer and appoint generals and province chiefs, naturally produced a sense of impotence and helplessness among the Prime Minister, the Interior Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Chief of the Joint General Staff. This supreme power also often made him virtually inaccessible to all of them.

The practice of transferring some personnel, who had been charged with corruption in the news media, to higher positions made bad men contemptuous, discouraged good and well-meaning men, and deterred investigative agencies.

The South Vietnamese press, generally unfaithful to the common cause, had poisoned the public and servicemen alike. After the gate was opened for the flood of complaints and charges to flow in from the military and the populace, the Inspector General's Directorate estimated that only 15 to 20 percent of the charges were substantiated, the rest being mere heresay.

In spite of these difficulties, the good intentions of the RVNAF in trying to check and stamp out corruption were undeniable. However, the results of this difficult and time-consuming effort would have been better if some of the ideas I strongly advocated at the time had been put into practice.

In the first place, I think that military pay should have been raised to a higher level, as it had been during the First Republic, to relieve hardship on dependents. The shameful use of military means for private purposes would have been drastically reduced, I believe. Next, more attention should have been given to the Inspector General's Directorate to make sure that it had honest, determined, and reform-minded personnel; and then they should have been protected from reprisals of the corrupt system.

To combat corruption more effectively, the GVN should have clearly delineated responsibilities among the three anti-corruption agencies--the office of State Supervision, the Office of the Vice-President, and the JGS Inspector General's Directorate--and directed their efforts toward high government and military officials starting from the top with

the office of the President, the Prime Minister, cabinet members, directors general and directors, and province chiefs. In the RVNAF, the same efforts should have focused on all general officers, key commanders, and service chiefs. I am sure that if men at the top are righteous, those below will usually follow suit.

The next step should have been a decentralization of the presidential power to make appointments and transfers by giving the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior authority over directors general and province chiefs, and the Minister of Defense or the JGS the same authority over general officers.

Although Vice President Tran Van Huong's directive, which required all GVN officials and RVNAF officers to make annual statements of income and assets, was sound, his action suffered from overextension, inefficiency, and lack of a legal basis. It would probably have been more effective if it had applied only to senior-level cadres in the executive and judiciary and perhaps to members of the legislative branch just before they assumed their new positions and immediately after they completed their governmental responsibilities. Also, it should have been supported by some legislation which automatically charged any official whose assets had increased unjustifiably and seized the excess for the benefit of the national treasury. On the other hand, probity bonus would have been an excellent incentive for those who had remained honest throughout their tenure.

The National Assembly had many reform-minded members who did exercise their rights in demanding from the executive branch investigations or testimonies concerning allegations and charges of corruption involving high government and military officials. The President, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, should have been more receptive to public opinion and more willing to order investigations and insure appropriate punishment in case of proven guilt. He should have stopped taking half-measures or cover-up actions, such as transferring corrupt elements to a safe place, or more ironically, to the Inspector General's Directorate, the very training ground and paragon of the armed services.

If these actions had been taken, I am sure that the RVNAF would have been able to eliminate all black sheep from among their ranks.

South Vietnam would then have had a better chance to combat its social ills with success and to rebuild a more just and healthy society, the most fundamental pre-condition for long-term survival against Communism.

CHAPTER XIV

Observations and Conclusions

During the twenty years of direct U.S. military aid and advisory assistance, the Vietnamese Armed Forces expanded rapidly and matured. This was especially true during the eight years of fighting alongside U.S. and FWMA forces.

To reach the force structure level of 1.1 million, the RVNAF had practically absorbed all manpower available. In fact, through partial and finally general mobilization, South Vietnam had scraped the bottom of its manpower resources. Every household, therefore, had at least one member in the military service. To maintain that force structure level, the RVNAF depended primarily on 18-year old draftees since most men between 19 and 38 years of age were already in the military service. During 1974, even that resource was drying up, and the ability to provide the personnel required was becoming more problematic each day for the GVN.

In the area of personnel administration, much progress was visible. Individual service records were constantly updated and entries checked for accuracy; this was also true for strength accountability and control. Transfers, assignments, and rotations were all subjected to clearly defined criteria, and responsible authorities made a determined effort to respect these criteria. The influence of pressure groups--religions and political parties--on personnel management declined markedly when compared to the period of the First Republic and the three years that followed it. Some vestige of it still remained however, but only the RF and PF at the provincial level were usually involved. The promotion system, which was based on criteria of merits and demerits and proven and potential abilities, brought about some measure of justice and confidence among

the RVNAF servicemen, especially NCO's and company and field-grade officers. Factionalism and politics no longer influenced promotion, except perhaps where it concerned general officers.

The RVNAF officers and men were mostly well trained, and their training was systematic and professionally effective, based on U.S. methods, manuals, and doctrine. The RVNAF training base was well organized and equipped. Its various service schools and training centers provided for every training need and met most requirements in skilled manpower. It was augmented by the off-shore training program which produced competent instructors. In addition to regular training, RVNAF officers and men also benefited from U.S. combat and leadership practices which they learned during combined operations or through protracted exposure to each other. The selection of students was based on carefully studied criteria and their assignment upon graduation determined by a career management program, especially for officers during the 1965 to 1974 period.

As early as 1968, in combat operations, the RVNAF came of age with the support of U.S. advisers; this was true for combat and combat support units. The RVNAF had proved their ability and effectiveness in small-unit operations in support of pacification as well as in large-scale operations. They had demonstrated this during 1968 by regaining the initiative and defeating all four phases of the enemy's offensive. Two years later, in 1970, they crossed the border in force and crushed enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. But their greatest combat achievement came during 1972 when in three areas--Quang Tri-Hue, Kontum, and An Loc--they not only stalled the strong NVA invasion and held firm but also counterattacked gallantly and regained Quang Tri. Through this and other combat feats, the RVNAF had demonstrated that they were an equal match for Giap's divisions.

The post-cease-fire period again saw the RVNAF combat effectiveness highlighted by other significant achievements. The reoccupation of Sa Huynh just before the cease-fire hour was no small feat. Then the ARVN effectively stopped the advance of NVA divisions toward the MR-1 coastal plains in 1974 after battling them ferociously at Thuong Duc and Duc Duc.

ARVN forces also defeated, during the same year, two inveterate NVA divisions, the 5th and 9th, at Tuyen Binh and Moc Hoa when they attempted to penetrate the Mekong Delta. Even during South Vietnam's final days, the heroic stand of the 18th ARVN Division at Xuan Loc effectively stopped the onrush of several NVA divisions toward Saigon even though this gallant division could not hold for long.

The major strategic weakness of the RVNAF, after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, lay in the fact that they had been overextended in static territorial defense for too long and committed to fight too many battles without a chance to rest and recuperate. Although our concept of territorial security, which was founded on an extensive system of fire bases and outposts, did cause tremendous tactical difficulties for the enemy and brought assurance to the people, it also nailed down our main striking force--the divisions--in a static, helpless posture from which they could not be extricated. We therefore lost our strategic mobility and initiative.

The most debilitating effect on our ability to strike back was the permanent commitment of our strategic reserve forces--the Airborne and the Marine Division--in MR-1 for static defense beginning in mid-1972. The JGS was fully aware of this weakness and tried to recover them in vain. The same predicament affected our corps commanders who saw themselves unable to use one of their divisions as a strike reserve for each MR. We, therefore, fought a war without a strategic reserve force simply because the "hold all" policy espoused by our president had so dictated.

All this seemed to derive from our inability to adapt our force structure organization to the strategic requirements of each period. During the early years and until 1961, the organization of our forces had been founded on the U.S. concept of mutual defense which relied on SEATO and the U.S. protective shield. The ARVN was thus shaped into a conventional force with corps and divisions and a field command for operational control, ready to engage an invasion from the north. Concern for territorial security was relegated to a lower priority as seen through the disbandment of MR headquarters and the low regard for territorial forces. This was a sound organizational concept if the

assumption of a Korean-style invasion had been true. But the war broke out, not with a bang but with a whimper. It materialized stealthily through the disruption of security with subversive activities by guerrillas and local forces.

The nature of insurgency was fully recognized by 1961 which led to the efforts to counter it with an emphasis on the development of territorial and unconventional forces and the support of U.S. combat assets. The new concept of defense thus took into account the necessity to fight not only an invasion but also insurgency within the national borders. As antithesis to Communist three-phase people's warfare, it was sound enough but hesitant and came rather late. As a result, not until 1964 did the RVNAF organization include the necessary forces to maintain territorial security.

Despite this, the RVNAF arrangement for command and control continued to reshuffle to meet new requirements, which indicated that the organizational base was still shaky and not appropriate for effective conduct of the war. The ARVN Command, for example was disbanded in 1964 and its functions taken over by the JGS. A RF and PF Command was created in 1964 only to be deactivated two years later and absorbed into the JGS. Then military region headquarters came into being in 1970, not as separate commands, but as additional functions to be assumed by each army corps. By the same reorganization sweep, the DTA was abolished, placing sectors under direct control of corps headquarters. Finally, the territorial control organization was extended to the village level with the creation of sub-subsector headquarters in 1974.

All of these trends reflected a concern for unity of command and economy of resources, which was theoretically desirable for the improvement of command and control. Given the expanding force structure of the RVNAF, however, these trends were hardly conducive to effective conduct of the war. The JGS thus became burdened with the day-to-day chores of an army command which took up most of the time normally devoted to operational control and planning, especially after MACV no longer existed.

Many considered the disbandment of the ARVN and RF and PF commands as a regrettable move. They were convinced that better command and

control could have been achieved through an army command with RF-PF, ranger, and other combat arm components under its control. This arrangement was logical because the ARVN was the largest component of the RVNAF force structure. The deactivation of the RF-PF Command inevitably placed the administration of these forces under corps/MR headquarters, which was manageable as long as the RF-PF force structure within each MR was kept within acceptable limits. Indeed, corps commands did not feel burdened by this responsibility because during the 1965-67 period, most combat operations were conducted by U.S. forces, and the DTAs also took their share of supervising sectors. However, as the RF and PF expanded rapidly, along with the pacification momentum beginning in 1968, their administration became increasingly burdensome for corps commands. The onset of U.S. troop redeployment in 1969 also placed increased combat responsibilities on corps headquarters and when DTA's were finally abolished, the ARVN corps found themselves besieged by too many responsibilities and a span of control much too large. Their predicament was not unlike that of the JGS mentioned above.

The difficult problem of territorial control became one of the most important. Divided among four corps, this span of control was overwhelming. II Corps, for example, controlled 11 sectors (provinces); III Corps, 13; IV Corps, 16. I Corps found itself controlling the least territory (five provinces) but permanently faced a direct threat from NVA divisions located just across the DMZ. Effective control under these circumstances was impossible.

Several ideas had been advanced to remedy these shortcomings. Although at variance with one another in details, these ideas agreed on two major points:

- (1) The control of MR-2, 3 and 4 should be divided among subregions or tactical areas like in 1954 or 1962, respectively. The DTA's should not be abolished in 1970 but transformed into subregions and instead of extracting all 10 infantry divisions for mobile combat, which was impossible, at least four divisions should be converted into general reserve units like the Marine or Airborne division, and the remaining assigned territorial duties.

(2) Each military region should be placed under a separate command entirely responsible for territorial security and pacification. Then the four corps headquarters should be reduced to two or three at the maximum, each in control of two or three divisions and entirely responsible for mobile tactical operations. Each corps would be assigned a tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) which was determined by the JGS in a flexible manner depending on tactical requirements. Such TAORs, could be the DMZ, the Pleiku-Kontum border area or the Tay Ninh-Hau Nghia-Kien Tuong border area. The objective was to stop NVA divisions in order to destroy them.

The most appropriate time frame for this reorganization would have been around 1970 when U.S. units began to redeploy and the Communists were upgrading their local forces into main force units in order to switch to full conventional warfare. Pacification would then have been the exclusive responsibility of MR headquarters while corps headquarters, with their reserve infantry division, would have taken over from U.S. field forces in the conduct of large scale operations as U.S. divisions withdrew. I believe that if this had been done, our reserve infantry divisions would have been as mobile effective as the airborne or marine divisions and we would have been able to retain our initiative in the conduct of the war.

In spite of our shortcomings in organization and command and control, the RVNAF did earn the respect of their archenemy, the NVA. An editorial published by North Vietnam's "People's Army" in late 1972 indeed gave high marks to the RVNAF and attributed the survival of South Vietnam to their existence. The RVNAF, the editorial remarked, were a powerful, ultra anti-Communist force made up of cadres of the petty bourgeois class. To crush the South Vietnamese regime, therefore, it was mandatory that this force should be destroyed first.

North Vietnam's three-pronged offensive strategy therefore focused on weakening (by proselyting actions) and destroying (by military action) the RVNAF. Almost all enemy offensive campaigns during the war were conducted with the objective of destroying, attriting, disrupting or weakening the RVNAF. Our enemy even pre-determined quotas of casualties to be inflicted on the RVNAF during each campaign.

Thus, despite individual acts of misconduct or mischief and regardless of the damage caused to the population, the RVNAF continued to earn the confidence and trust of the South Vietnamese people who relied on them for protection against Communist violence. This could be readily seen in the pattern of population distribution. People always aggregated in productive communities around or near military bases, outposts, where they were sure they enjoyed security and protection. When a military unit relocated, they became concerned, worried and usually chose to move to another area where they could find protection again. Because of this coexistence and mutual dependence, the people gradually developed a deep attachment toward RVNAF units and shared with them moments of joy or grief over the years. The RVNAF had always been regarded by political parties, religious, and other social groups as a tightly knit, powerful organization grouping all elite elements of South Vietnamese society. The confidence people placed in the RVNAF was always unswerving because they could depend on them for protection and owed them the freedom and security they enjoyed. The effectiveness and prestige of the RVNAF was such that every pressure group would look on them for assistance or for the achievement of certain goals, including designs to change the regime.

The big question, however, was why such a powerful and cohesive force disintegrated so rapidly during the final days and why the humiliation of abject surrender? As I suggested in my introduction, an army cannot be self-generating or self-sustaining. The RVNAF were but an instrument for the GVN to attain its goals. Their performance depended on GVN policies, on the quality of national leadership, and on the resources assigned to them.

In the first place, the GVN did not have a comprehensive national policy and a military strategy of its own tailored to the political, social and economic conditions of South Vietnam. It was dependent on the U.S. for major policies and military strategy. South Vietnam had built its strength primarily from U.S. aid, military and economic, and the support and assistance of U.S. forces. It used these abundant material resources to motivate its people and troops in the war effort.

South Vietnam had been regarded as an anti-Communist bulwark in Southeast Asia since the mid-50's and the U.S. had developed and equipped the RVNAF for this role, when this bulwark appeared to be on the verge of collapse, the U.S. brought in its combat troops to prop it up. But although engaged in war, the U.S. only endeavored to defeat the enemy in South Vietnam. It never sought to defeat North Vietnam, the very source of aggression.

The GVN anti-Communist stance proved to be too extreme, too inflexible. It failed to detect and follow the U.S. trend toward accommodation and negotiation. U.S. policy made a turnabout with the Nixon Doctrine which de-escalated the war, negotiated with the enemy for a solution to the war, extricated troops from South Vietnam and turned over combat responsibility to the RVNAF, in other words, a total disengagement from the war. Despite this, the GVN held fast to its old strategy and did not place enough emphasis on the Vietnamization process in order to revise its national policies accordingly. Under the Vietnamization program, the U.S. provided South Vietnam with just enough military aid required for self-defense. The Paris Agreement, therefore, caught South Vietnam in an utterly disadvantageous position, militarily and politically. Even after President Nixon had resigned and the U.S. Congress attitude toward the war in South Vietnam had become clear, our president still clung to his inflexible war strategy, building his hopes on continued U.S. military aid and support.

Because of this blind trust in the U.S., our leaders had become short-sighted. They regarded the U.S. troop withdrawal simply as a strategic redeployment dictated by political needs. They reasoned that since this redeployment helped the U.S. cut down on expenditures, the U.S. could afford to provide more military aid to South Vietnam. Under no condition did they believe that the U.S. would abandon South Vietnam, for reasons of honor, credibility, and past investment with U.S. blood and money. All of these arguments became themes of indoctrination and the RVNAF troops believed what their leaders said.

Sincere confidence that the U.S. would intervene forcefully in retaliation of Communist violations reassured our leaders after the Paris Agreement. The JGS in fact worked out a secret plan with the

U.S. 7th Air Force and briefed all corps commanders on procedures to call for this intervention. Our leaders continued to believe in U.S. air intervention even after the U.S. Congress had expressly forbidden it. They deluded themselves into thinking that perhaps this simply meant that U.S. intervention would take a longer time to come because of the complex procedures involved.

Another delusion entertained by our national leadership was that U.S. military aid would continue at the pre-cease-fire level. So when FY-75 appropriations were drastically cut back to a level that might adversely affect the RVNAF combat capabilities, President Thieu blamed the JGS for it. In a staff meeting held at the Independence Palace he said that the U.S. was always prepared to provide the RVNAF with whatever they needed. The reason for the cutback, he explained, was that the JGS had not come up with proper justifications for our requirements. And he attributed this to the austerity measures enforced by the JGS to save ammunition and fuels.

The loss of Phuoc Long in early January 1975 was perhaps the beginning of suspicion and disillusion. After having met with a fact finding U.S. congressional delegation in February, our president should have had second thoughts about the future of U.S. military aid. And when Ban Me Thuot fell into enemy hands in March without the U.S. even reacting, he found his last hopes completely shattered. And he decided on a new course of action, to save what he could within his means.

But it was already too late. For his new strategy to work, it should have been implemented right after the U.S. decided to disengage from the war in mid-1969. Then if we had fully realized what Vietnamization really implied for the future and directed all of our efforts to its objectives, perhaps we could have developed a new national policy and a new military strategy more in line with our own situation. While there was no guarantee that this new strategy would have changed the final outcome of the war, at least it would have afforded us more time for preparing to meet the ultimate challenge and spared us the disastrous events of 1975 that led to South Vietnam's collapse.

Then the conduct of the war after the cease-fire agreement, under President Thieu's leadership, also puzzled many people because he held

all powers for decisions. It seemed that when the situation got serious no tactical move could be made without his approval. The impression he gave was that every military action, however small, would affect the domestic political situation, hence it was imperative that he make the decision. This was particularly true concerning the employment of our general reserve forces. The JGS attempted in vain to extricate the Marine and Airborne Divisions from their static defense role in MR-1; President Thieu was simply not amenable to such a vital move. During inspection trips, he usually gave direct orders to corps commanders; on other occasions, he wrote to them personally. Several important actions, therefore, were undertaken without the JGS knowledge or control. The unfortunate skirmish with Red Chinese warships in the Paracels in early 1974 was a case in point. He made the decision to take on the Chinese after listening to a briefing by the naval commander of MR-1, without even informing the JGS. Only when the affair turned sour was the JGS informed and asked to provide support. He did not understand or consider that the area of contest lay beyond the effective range of our tactical jet fighters.

Even though he had a substantial staff of aides and advisers, including the JGS, President Thieu seldom fully utilized their services. In the face of difficult situations, he preferred to think them over, make decisions by himself instead of having the JGS study the courses of action available, and gave orders directly to field commanders, bypassing the JGS completely. In the case of the Communist attack on Phuoc Long, a provincial town deep in the heart of War Zone D, for example, he maintained direct contact with the III Corps commander to monitor the situation. Then he called the latter and the Chief of the JGS to his office where, after summary discussions, he decided on reinforcing the besieged garrison. The events that subsequently unfolded during the final months of the RVN shed a clear light on the way President Thieu handled the conduct of the war. In early March, apparently because of the political turmoil in the nation's capital, he decided to redeploy the Airborne Division from MR-1 to Saigon. To fill that void, he ordered that three newly activated Marine brigades and one Ranger group of the general reserves be moved to MR-1. But

when this ranger group was preparing for movement, he decided to assign it to II Corps in Pleiku after Ban Me Thuot fell on 10 March.

Two days after this momentous setback, he invited the Prime Minister, the Chief of the JGS, and his own assistant for security to a working breakfast during which he gave them directives about a new strategy. "Hold our prosperous and populated areas," he explained, pointing to the phase lines he had himself drawn across a map of South Vietnam. It was an idea that he had personally conceived and presented as an irreversible decision. He made no attempt to have the JGS study the implications of this new strategic move or develop plans to implement it. Instead, he chose to do everything alone.

On 14 March, therefore, he flew to Cam Ranh with the same entourage and gave orders to the II Corps commander to "redeploy" his forces from Pleiku-Kontum and use these forces to reoccupy Ban Me Thuot at all costs and hold the line there. It is still a matter of debate whether after this meeting General Phu, the II Corps commander, received any other directives from the president. In any event, the way he implemented President Thieu's orders clearly indicated that the redeployment of forces really meant an abandonment of Pleiku and Kontum.

The same personal touch also affected the events in MR-1 during the following days. President Thieu again summoned the I Corps commander to his office to expound his new strategy and gave him the directives to carry it out. On 19 March, he again called General Truong to his palace. During this meeting, Truong presented his own plans which centered on holding three enclaves: Hue, Da Nang, and Chu Lai. But President Thieu listened without making any decisions. Apparently, he was having second thoughts about his new strategy, the way it had been implemented so far and the panic it was causing among the population of MR-1. A few days later, he directed the JGS to inform the I Corps commander that he could not support the defense of Hue and Chu Lai and it was up to the I Corps commander to redeploy his forces for the defense of Da Nang.

It was obvious from these events that the JGS no longer had any control over the course of the war. This evidently annoyed the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Fred C. Weyand, who visited South

Vietnam at that time. During the last meeting he attended at the Independence Palace on 26 March, he bluntly asked: "who runs the war?" and recommended that the JGS be given more authority in the conduct of the war.

But even if the JGS had been given more authority, there was perhaps little it could have done to tilt the balance of force to our favor. The fact was that the RVNAF were hardly organized and equipped to handle the post-cease-fire situation. It was true that they had been expanded and modernized, through the Vietnamization process, but it had never been assumed that they could defeat the North Vietnamese Army without U.S. air support. So, as soon as the last U.S. troop and plane had left, and particularly after the U.S. Congress had tied the U.S. President's hands in the use of the U.S. Air Force in South Vietnam, the RVNAF found themselves in desperate need of the kind of tactical air support that had helped them win so many battles. Then even our supplies, which had been promised by the United States, dwindled with each fiscal year. This became so critical in 1974, that our Chief of the JGS, when briefing all U.S. visitors, likened our position to that of a boxer fighting with a hand tied behind him against a fierce opponent who became stronger and stronger after each round.

Indeed, with greatly reduced supplies, and the uncertain future of military aid, our forces fought on without much self-assurance. Appeals by our President to fight a "poor man's war" did little to help improve things. Their only effect was to confuse our troops and raise more doubts about the prospects of continued U.S. support from which our strength derived.

Our enemy, in the meantime, made the most of the cease-fire agreement. Now immune from U.S. airstrikes, he brought more troops and equipment into the south not only to replace losses but also to augment and modernize his forces. His infiltration route became a highway system on which convoys rolled around the clock from the 17th Parallel to Tay Ninh. His supply storage system along this route was modernized with prefabricated warehouses built in the open and a long fuel pipeline that enabled his trucks to keep rolling. The RVNAF remained impotent in the

face of all these war preparations. The task of interdicting or destroying this lifeline was simply beyond our capabilities. As 1974 drew to an end, therefore, it was very clear that the balance of power had changed and South Vietnam was crippled by shortages in supply.

The final collapse of South Vietnam was primarily a disintegration of morale that had been accelerated by a panicky population and dispelled rumors of an American sell-out. For years, the RVNAF had built their strength and morale on military aid and the support of the U.S. Evidently, only the U.S. could have saved South Vietnam from this terrible collapse of 1975.

Appendix – RVNAF Decorations and Criteria for Award

AWARD/DECORATION (In order of precedence)	AUTHORIZED FOR						CRITERIA
	INDIVIDUAL				UNIT		
	Vietnamese		Foreign (US)		Vietnamese	Foreign (US)	
	Mil	Civ	Mil	Civ			
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
NATIONAL ORDER OF VIETNAM Grand Cross or 1st Class Grand Officer or 2nd Class Commander or 3rd Class Officer or 4th Class Knight or 5th Class	X	X	X	X			Awarded to individuals who have made distinguished and outstanding achievements to warrant the country's recognition or for honorable service in the Armed Forces for a specific number of years (See Decree #74-A/QT, 15 Aug 50). May be awarded posthumously.
MILITARY MERIT MEDAL	X		X				Awarded only to noncommissioned officers and enlisted men for exceptionally meritorious battlefield achievements. May be awarded posthumously.
ARMY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER 1st Class (Gen Off) 2nd Class (Officers below Gen Off level)	X		X		X		Awarded to individuals who have: (a) Previously received citations for merit or have been wounded many times in combat, or in line of duty. (b) Accomplished an exceptionally important achievement that redounds to the credit of, or is beneficial to the Army in any field. Awarded to Army Units and General Officers in other armed services who have accomplished an achievement that is exceptionally important and beneficial to the Republic of Vietnam Army. Awarded to foreigners either for their meritorious service to the Republic of Vietnam or for diplomatic service.
AIR FORCE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER 1st Class (Gen Off) 2nd Class (Officers below Gen Off level)	X		X		X		Same as Army Distinguished Service Order.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
NAVY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER 1st Class (Admirals) 2nd Class (Officers below flag rank)	X		X		X		Same as Army Distinguished Order.
ARMY MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL	X		X				Awarded to noncommissioned officers and enlisted men who have: (a) Received citations for merit or have been wounded many times. (b) Accomplished an exceptionally important achievement that redounds to the credit of, or is beneficial to the Army in any field. Awarded to foreign noncommissioned officers and enlisted men for meritorious service to the Republic of Vietnam.
AIR FORCE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL	X		X				Same as Army Meritorious Service Medal.
NAVY MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL	X		X				Same as Army Meritorious Service Medal.
SPECIAL SERVICE MEDAL	X	X	X	X			Awarded to Vietnamese or foreign military or civilian personnel who have distinguished themselves by extraordinary deeds, or who have accomplished a special or important mission that involves a risk of life and requires exceptional fortitude and aggressiveness. May be awarded posthumously.
GALLANTRY CROSS With Palm (OLC) With Gold Star With Silver Star With Bronze Star	X	X	X	X	X	X	Awarded for gallantry in action against the enemy. May be awarded posthumously.
AIR GALLANTRY MEDAL With Gold Wing With Silver Wing With Bronze Wing	X	X	X	X			Awarded to personnel in recognition of exceptional bravery and coolness during aircraft incidents caused by weather, technical problems or enemy engagement. May be awarded posthumously.
NAVY GALLANTRY MEDAL With Gold Anchor With Silver Anchor With Bronze Anchor	X	X	X	X			Awarded to personnel in recognition of exceptional bravery and coolness during incidents in which their vessel is in danger due to accidents or enemy engagement. May be awarded posthumously.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
HAZARDOUS SERVICE MEDAL	X		X				Awarded for: (a) Heroic conduct in the protection of government property or the lives of government high officials. (b) Periods in excess of 6 months of enduring danger to accomplish strategic mission in a remote area under constant enemy threat. (c) Proving enthusiasm and determination in the accomplishment of a mission relatively dangerous though not involving direct participation in combat. May be awarded posthumously. Awarded for extreme bravery and risk of life to rescue a person in distress. May be awarded posthumously. Awarded for wounds caused by rebel weapons of war.
LIFE SAVING MEDAL	X	X	X	X			
WOUND MEDAL (PURPLE HEART)	X	X					
ARMED FORCES HONOR MEDAL	X	X	X	X			Awarded for: (a) Participation as advisors in the preparation of Vietnamese military law and regulations. (b) Making a direct contribution to the activation and organization of units of the RVNAF. (c) Direction and conduct of the training of officers and enlisted personnel at military schools, training centers and training units.
LEADERSHIP MEDAL	X						Awarded to commanders of combat units, company and higher, who have distinguished themselves in combat and leadership by maintaining a high standard of operational efficiency, training, discipline, and morale for their units.
STAFF SERVICE MEDAL 1st Class (Officers) 2nd Class (NCOs and EM)	X	X	X	X			Awarded to personnel in military staff organizations who have distinguished themselves in resourcefulness and dedication to the staff work assigned. Foreign personnel must have served at least 6 months in staff work at a unit of the RVNAF and have achieved an exceptional success that is beneficial in the staff field.
TECHNICAL SERVICE MEDAL 1st Class (Officers) 2nd Class (NCOs and EM)	X	X	X	X			Awarded to personnel who serve as specialists with the various combat and technical units of the RVN Army, Navy, and Air Force and are technically proficient, resourceful, and exceptionally dedicated to their duties.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
TRAINING SERVICE MEDAL 1st Class (Officers) 2nd Class (NCOs and EM)	X	X	X	X			Foreigners must have served at least 6 months in technical work at a unit of the RVNAF and achieved exceptional success beneficial to the technical field. Awarded to instructors, lecturers, training personnel, and organizations that have distinguished themselves by outstanding and dedicated performance at Military Schools and Training Centers or have otherwise made an important contribution to the training of RVNAF. Foreigners must have served at least 6 months in training work at a unit of the RVNAF and achieved exceptional success beneficial to the training field.
CIVIL ACTIONS HONOR MEDAL	X				X		Awarded for outstanding achievements in civic actions. May be awarded posthumously.
LOYALTY MEDAL	X	X					Awarded for proof of loyalty to the national cause by denouncing and countering enemy subversive activities that are prejudicial to the security and order of the country.
MILITARY SERVICE MEDAL	X						Awarded to personnel who have accumulated a prescribed period of service with good conduct and outstanding performance records. This medal is awarded in 5 Classes, 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th and 5th Class for 23, 18, 13, 8 and 3 years service respectively.
AIR SERVICE MEDAL	X						Awarded to personnel who have accumulated a prescribed number of flying hours aboard the aircraft of Republic of Vietnam Air Force or allied Air Force.
NAVY SERVICE MEDAL	X						Awarded to personnel who have accumulated a prescribed period of service on the sea. This medal is awarded in 4 classes, 1st, 2d, 3d and Honor Class. The 1st, 2d and 3d class is awarded for 10, 5, and 2 years service respectively. The Honor Class is awarded on a special basis for number of missions completed.
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL	X						Awarded for completion of at least 3 years of service with a record of exemplary discipline and behavior. This medal is awarded in 5 classes. The Good Conduct Medal 5th Class is awarded for 3 years service and the rest are 5 years subsequent to award of the 5th Class.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
CAMPAIGN MEDAL	X		X		X	X	Awarded for direct participation in a large scale combat operation for a prescribed period of time (6 months for foreign personnel). Foreign authorities will determine eligibility of their personnel for this award.
AIR FORCE NORTH EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL	X		X		X		Awarded to flying personnel who have enthusiastically participated in air raids over North Vietnam (north of 17th parallel). May be awarded posthumously.
MEDAL OF SACRIFICE	X	X					Awarded posthumously for sacrifice of life for accomplishment of the mission.
CIVIL SERVICE HONOR MEDAL		X		X			Awarded for active contribution in the development of the RVNAF, or to the morale and material well being of RVNAF personnel and dependents.
FOURRAGERE	X		X		X	X	Awarded in recognition of outstanding actions performed by units that have received numerous citations for gallantry at Armed Forces level.
Gold - 2 unit citations							Members of the unit at time of actions for which the award is made may continue to wear the Fourragere after transfer from the unit except in formations. All members of the unit are authorized to wear the Fourragere while assigned.
Green - 4 unit citations							
Red - 6 unit citations							
Red, Green & Gold - 9 or more unit citations							

Glossary

ACTOV	Accelerated Turnover (of assets)
ADP	Automatic Data Processing
AG	Adjutant General
ALC	Area Logistics Command
APO	Army Post Office
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
ASR	Ammunition Supply Rate
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BVN	Bataillon Vietnamien (Vietnamese Battalion)
CG	Civil Guard
CLC	Central Logistics Command
CMD	Capital Military District
COMUSMACV	Commander, U.S. MACV
CTC	Central Training Command
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DAO	Defense Attache Office (U.S.)
DOD	Department of Defense (U.S.)
DTA	Division Tactical Area
FAEO	Force Armées en Extrême Orient (Far-East Armed Forces)
FTX	Field Training Exercise
FULRO	Front Unifié pour la Libération des Races Opprimées (Unified Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races)
FY	Fiscal Year
GPWD	General Political Warfare Directorate
GM	Groupe Mobile (Mobile Group)
GVN	Government of South Vietnam

ICCS	International Commission of Control and Supervision
ICP	In-Country Procurement
IRC	International Red Cross
JGS	Joint General Staff
KIA	Killed in Action
LAW	Light Antitank Weapon
LOC	Lines of Communication
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MDAP	Mutual Defense Aid Program
MASF/MILCON	Military Aid, Service-Funded/Military Construction
MIA	Missing in Action
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MR	Military Region
MSS	Military Security Service
NMA	National Military Academy
NMMA	National Materiel Management Agency
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OJT	On-The-Job Training
PAE	Pacific Engineers and Architects
POI	Program of Instruction
POW	Prisoner of War
QD	Quan Doi (Armed Forces)
PDO	Property Disposal Office
PF	Popular Forces
PSDF	People's Self-Defense Forces
RAMMS	Republic of Vietnam Automated Materiel Management System
RF	Regional Forces
R&R	Rest and Recreation
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SDC	Self-Defense Corps
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TDKQ	Tieu Doan Kinh Quan (Light Infantry Battalion)
TDY	Temporary Duty
TOE	Table of Organization and Equipment

TOW	Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided (Missile)
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
VNAF	Vietnam Air Force
VNMC	Vietnam Marine Corps
VNN	Vietnam Navy
WIA	Wounded in Action