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NEWSLETTER #9

THE ROLE OF THE VIET CONG  
INFRASTRUCTURE IN ENEMY OFFENSIVE PREPARATIONS

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BRANCH  
**COMBINED INTELLIGENCE CENTER**  
**VIETNAM**

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MACJ231-5

7 DEC 1968

SUBJECT: CICV Newsletter: The Role of the Viet Cong Infrastructure in  
Enemy Offensive Preparations

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1. Forwarded for your information is the ninth newsletter of the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam, concerning VC political infrastructure.
2. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide the intelligence community with the latest trends, capabilities, and vulnerabilities of the VC political infrastructure. The ultimate goal is more effective and timely identification and neutralization of the enemy's infrastructure.
3. This issue provides a study of offensive preparations by the VC Infrastructure.
4. Subsequent newsletters will be published as new information, trends, and developments warrant. Comments and additional information pertaining to the newsletters should be submitted to HQ MACV J2, ATTN: MACJ231-5.

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7 DEC 1968

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Enemy Offensive Preparations

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BRIEF

THIS NEWSLETTER IS ADDRESSED TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE VIET CONG INFRA-STRUCTURE (VCI) IN SUPPORT OF PHASES ONE AND TWO OF THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE. (PHASES ONE AND TWO OF THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE REFER TO THE INCREASED VC/NVA OFFENSIVE ACTIVITY OCCURRING AT TET 1968 AND IN MAY 1968.)

THE VCI PLAYED AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE PREPARATION FOR AND THE CONDUCT OF PHASES ONE AND TWO OF THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE IN BOTH RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

THE VCI CONCENTRATED ON METHODICAL BUILD-UPS AND STRENGTHENING OF THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY, ACCELERATED RECRUITING, PREPARED CACHES ALONG ROUTES OF INFILTRATION, ESTABLISHED MEDICAL EVACUATION PROCEDURES, GREATLY EXPANDED PATHFINDING AND INTELLIGENCE FUNCTIONS, AND INCREASED PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES ATTEMPTING TO STIR THE POPULATION INTO ARMED REBELLION. FINALLY, THEY PLANNED TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR GAINS BY FORMING PEOPLE'S LIBERATION COMMITTEES.

CONCLUSIONS: THE VCI SUPPORTS THE VC/NVA MILITARY ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- (a) TROOP RECRUITMENT.
- (b) SUPPORT OF THE FINANCE AND LOGISTICS MISSION OF THE REAR SERVICES STAFF SECTION OF HQ, SVNLA, BY PROVIDING THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE FOR MEDICAL EVACUATION AND THE PORTAGE OF MATERIEL.
- (c) RECONNAISSANCE AND INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT, TO INCLUDE THE PROVIDING OF CIVILIAN GUIDES TO LEAD MILITARY UNITS TO THEIR TARGETS.
- (d) PROPAGANDIZATION AND INDOCTRINATION TO INCITE REBELLION AGAINST THE GVN AND THE ALLIES, TO INCLUDE THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF KEY PUBLIC OFFICIALS.
- (e) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEOPLE'S LIBERATION COMMITTEES TO CONSOLIDATE HOLDINGS.

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THE ROLE OF THE VIET CONG INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN ENEMY OFFENSIVE PREPARATIONS

I. (C) INTRODUCTION.

A. This newsletter is the ninth in a series concerning the VC political infrastructure. The purpose of these newsletters is to provide various elements, particularly at the sector and subsector levels, with intelligence on the trends, strengths, organizations, and vulnerabilities of the VC political infrastructure.

B. Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) preparations for offensives concentrate on methodical buildups and strengthening of the political and administrative machinery used to implement the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) directives. Political boundaries may be changed, the chain of command may be streamlined, higher echelon cadre may be assigned to supervise additional lower echelons, new VCI organizations may be created, and agitation and propaganda may be intensified.

C. The Viet Cong accelerate recruiting, inducing teenagers to join Revolutionary Youth Associations (RYAs), and upgrade older RYA members to guerrilla status in Local Force (LF) or Main Force (MF) units. Caches are prepared along infiltration routes by civilian volunteers or impressed workers. Casualty evacuation procedures are established, and pathfinding and intelligence functions are greatly expanded to include extensive reconnaissance of the objectives.

D. Urban area preparations include the selection of collaborators to guide VC/NVA troops to their target areas, the organization of agitation groups and propaganda teams, and the selection of targets for terrorist actions.

E. The VC continue to plan for a general offensive and a general uprising. Through mass demonstrations they hope to concurrently stir the population into armed rebellion and to mobilize the rural population through mass associations. Finally, they plan to consolidate their gains by forming People's Liberation Committees (PLCs) which take on the outward appearance of spontaneous popularly elected governments together forming a National Liberation Government. This government eventually may demand representation on a national level or in any international negotiations affecting South Vietnam.

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## II. (C) DISCUSSION.

### A. Preparations for the General Offensive.

#### 1. Organizational Preparations.

a. Before COSVN issued the resolution calling for Phase One of the General Offensive, it ordered three changes within the VCI in preparation for the offensive.

(1) Starting in July 1967, the enemy conducted extensive political boundary changes in the area around Saigon. What had formerly been Military Regions (MRs) 1 and 4 vanished, and in their place appeared five wedge-shaped subregions (SRs) with all the points directed at Saigon. The capital city became Subregion 6. These new subregions were not subordinate to any region. SRs 2, 3, 4, and 5 were subordinate to a COSVN forward headquarters, and SR 1 became directly subordinate to COSVN. Upon completion of this boundary change, every subregion military commander had administrative control over his routes of supply and routes of attack into Saigon.

(2) COSVN increased reverse representation of cadre from one echelon to a lower echelon to co-ordinate plans and activities and, often, to assume command. This should not be confused with "downgrading," wherein a cadre member is given a new job at a lower echelon. In reverse representation, the higher level cadre who is sent down to a lower echelon retains his former position, thus enabling COSVN to exert tighter control over subordinate elements.

(3) Within each subregion, COSVN created a Front Party Committee. These front committees consisted of: the Military Commander, a cadre member sent down from COSVN; the Assistant Military Commander, the subregion military commander; the Political Officer, the secretary of the subregion Party committee; and the Assistant Political Officer, the subregion political officer. These front committees assumed command of the military units in the newly formed subregions. Thus, all of the military units in the area surrounding Saigon were brought under the single unified command of COSVN. This reorganization was unique in the Party command structure. Previously, the military units had received their orders from the Party Committee which governed each echelon.

b. The decision to launch a general offensive was made by the Lao Dong Party Central Committee in Hanoi and was passed to COSVN for implementation. COSVN then submitted for approval the over-all plan of attack to the Lao Dong Central Executive Committee in Hanoi. After the decision was made to launch Phase One of the General Offensive, which marked the entry into the "third phase" of the Communist theory of revolutionary warfare, a series of steps were taken to plan the forthcoming military operations.

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(1) Each military region or subregion required that the military commander of the region and the secretary of the Party committee attend a COSVN meeting. At this meeting the COSVN resolution calling for the offensive was studied, and the missions and strengths of the various units which were to be involved in the offensive were reviewed, revised, and assigned.

(2) After the Party secretary and the region and subregion commander returned from the COSVN meeting, a preliminary meeting was held at the region or subregion level. Attending this meeting were the Front Committee, which commands all military forces within the region or subregion; the chiefs of the three military staffs -- the Military Staff Agency, Political Staff Agency, and Rear Services Staff Agency; and the entire Current Affairs Committee, which is the executive organ of the infrastructure at the region or subregion level. At this meeting, the contents of the COSVN resolution were discussed, and missions were assigned to each of the three military staff agencies, as well as to the infrastructure organizations.

(3) Detailed plans for the offensive were formulated by the three military staff agencies, who in turn submitted them to the Front Committee for approval and implementation instructions. At a subsequent meeting, attended by the commanding officers of the divisions, independent regiments, battalions, and specialized units, plans were explained to the unit commanders and to the military, political, and rear services staff agencies who were to supervise the preparations of the subordinate units.

(4) Each regimental commander conducted a detailed reconnaissance of his objective and then held a meeting with his military, political, and rear service staff chiefs. During the meeting missions were assigned to subordinate units. Although the specific unit missions were assigned several weeks in advance, units were informed of the time of attack only a few days or a few hours before the attack began.

## 2. Functional Preparations.

a. Recruitment. One of the infrastructure's constant, major tasks is recruiting. The VCI has developed a system of gradual recruitment. Under this system a youth of 14 or 15 is induced to join the RYA in his village. In two or three years he joins the village defense force and may be recruited into the local guerrilla unit soon afterwards. When there is a need for troops in Local or Main Force units, the guerrilla is upgraded. This upgrading system has two advantages. First, the soldier reaches the Main Force unit after he has had some training. Secondly, he is gradually induced to leave his home and fight for the VC regardless of where he is assigned. However, gradual recruitment is not always followed. Villagers also are recruited directly into Local and Main Force units. The enemy is continually upgrading guerrillas and Local Forces. Even political cadre have been known to become soldiers prior to the offensive. NVA troops constituted the majority of replacements which were received by certain LF and MF units within 60 days prior to Phases One and Two of the General Offensive. Almost all reported VC units received

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replacements prior to these offensives. NVA replacements were requested through COSVN with the exception of Tri - Thien - Hue Military Region, MR 5, and the B3 Front. These three military regions are under the direct control of the NVN High Command for personnel, ordnance, and military clothing. NVA troop replacements for these three areas were requested through the NVN High Command in Hanoi. Requests had to be submitted 20 to 30 days prior to receipt of the men. South Vietnamese recruits were normally assigned to units which, at the time, were located in the approximate area of their recruitment.

b. Finance and Logistics.

(1) Logistical preparation for the military offensive is the responsibility of the Rear Services Staff Section of Headquarters, Liberation Army of South Vietnam (HQ, SVNLA). The VCI supports the Rear Services Staff Section through the Forward Supply Council.

(2) The Forward Supply Council (FSC) is a section of the VCI organized before an offensive to co-ordinate logistical efforts between the Finance - Economy Section of the VCI (refer to Newsletter #1) and the Rear Services Section of the military forces operating in the respective areas of the VCI's control. Cadre directing the FSC come from the members of the Party's Current Affairs Committee. FSCs are given complete authority to conscript civilian labor. However, the civilian populace is usually proselyted in an effort to induce volunteers to join the Assault Youth Groups (AYGs). The AYGs are subordinate to the FSCs, and their members are used as supply bearers to carry food and ammunition to the front, and as stretcher bearers to carry the wounded to rear areas for treatment.

(3) Evidence indicates that in the subregions surrounding Saigon, there was no change in taxation prior to either offensive. However, in some other parts of the country, tax collection was increased or special "loans" were demanded. It is not clear if these tax increases were part of a nation-wide effort or were locally enacted measures to meet local problems. There is no evidence of large-scale changes in the operations and organizations of the various finance and economy sections prior to either of the two phases of the General Offensive. Civilian volunteers recruited by the VCI transported much of the supplies used for the offensive. For instance, in Binh Dinh Province of MR 5 the AYG maintained strengths between 1,000 and 2,500 men and women during the period December 1967 to April 1968. These people worked full time at collecting rice and transporting rice, weapons, and ammunition to units and cache sites. Some of these assault youths were recruited for a period of 30 days, but many of them were semipermanent logistics personnel. This group was recruited by the VCI at district level and supervised by the VCI, in co-ordination with the rear services staff, at province level. In cases where civilians were conscripted by the rear services staff to transport supplies, for security reasons they

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were not impressed until the day before the attack began. Most Main Force units were supplied with food, money, ammunition, and weapons from central stores. Assault Youth cadre played an important role in gathering the central stores over a relatively long period of time. These stores obviated the need for crash procurement programs. On the other hand, many Local Force units were nearly neglected, and some of them gathered their own rice in liberated areas just prior to the first and second phases of the General Offensive.

c. Evacuation. VC wounded and dead were carried from the battlefield by civilians. Some of these civilians were impressed by the Forward Supply Council of the VCI, while others were hired or were volunteers recruited by the VCI. In at least one case civilians were recruited by the chiefs of their respective villages who instructed them where and when to meet the unit which they were to support. The evacuation effort was enormous; for instance, during Phase One of the General Offensive, 31,000 civilian laborer workdays were needed to evacuate wounded and sick soldiers to the rear from dispensaries in the northern area of the city of Hue. Wounded were carried to the rear by two to four men, and in some cases evacuation took 12 days or longer. The enemy dead were evacuated by civilians to Local Force burial units or to hired gravediggers. The VC subdivided their evacuation teams into small groups in order to prevent disclosure of the number of KIA.

d. Medical Service. In theory, the enemy has both a military medical component and a civilian medical component. The former consists of the medical sections which are subordinate to the rear service staffs of most Main Force divisions, regiments, and battalions, and of the hospitals and other facilities maintained by the rear service staffs of some military regions. Most enemy doctors are military doctors. The civilian health section consists of medical facilities which are scattered throughout the countryside and manned mostly by civilian medical personnel. The civilian health section is maintained by the VCI; it has the primary purpose of treating civilians and casualties in guerrilla and Local Force units. In practice, however, no rigorous distinction between the two medical systems is maintained. In some subregions surrounding Saigon there is a combined Military and Civilian Medical Section which treats both soldiers and civilians. To prepare for an offensive, the VC use all available medical facilities, both military and civilian, and many medical facilities are expanded. For example, in Tri - Thien - Hue Military Region, the Civil Health Section was enlarged and placed under the operational control of the Regional Party Committee. This Civil Health Section was a combined agency operated by both civilian and military medical cadre. A civilian doctor in SR 3 was given 24 hours' notice by the Civilian and Military Section of MR 3 to prepare for the additional patient load caused by the second phase of the General Offensive. At the B3 hospital, which is located in Cambodia and subordinate to the COSVN Civil Health Section, staff members prepared for Phase One of the General Offensive by building facilities for 50 extra

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patients, thus increasing the installation's capacity to a total of 150 patients. Ten to twenty routine cases were released early to increase the space available to wounded soldiers, and extra quantities of food and drugs were stocked. Prior to Phase Two of the General Offensive, Hospital #5 in SR 5 was enlarged, and transportation personnel brought in some 2,000 kilograms of rice. Four new aid stations were built, and a mobile surgery unit was organized.

e. Intelligence.

(1) Generally, intelligence requirements included information concerning patrol activities, special forces activities, reconnaissance team activities, sweep operations, air and artillery strikes, activities in and around New Life Hamlets, enemy security along roads, and personnel drafted into the ARVN. Before the first two phases of the General Offensive, VC military commanders were particularly interested in locations, movements, and activities of ARVN/FWMAF troops. The co-operation of village chiefs varied from area to area. The Military Proselyting and Security Sections of the infrastructure have attempted, incessantly, to place penetration agents in the ARVN through military proselyting operations, but there is no evidence that these operations have met with significant success.

(2) Besides detailed reconnaissance, each unit depended upon an intelligence network which consisted primarily of low-level agents, and which was organized and maintained by the VCI. In VC U-1 Province (GVN Bien Hoa), the chain of intelligence collection consisted of four steps:

- (a) The province Military Affairs Committee levied requirements on the Party Committee of the two districts in the province.
- (b) The two district Party Committees levied individual sources, often through individual village chiefs.
- (c) The village chiefs submitted reports to the district Current Affairs Committee at five-day intervals, although some reports were late.
- (d) The day after the chiefs' reports were received, the Current Affairs Committee issued a report to Local Force military units and to the Chiefs of the Military Intelligence Sections, who forwarded the report to higher headquarters through military channels.

f. Route Reconnaissance. After receiving their targets, all military units conducted extensive route reconnaissance. During the first two phases of the General Offensive, units were led to their objectives by

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members of their own reconnaissance elements. Once in an urban area, however, many of the units were met by guides provided by the local VCI cadre, who led them to their specific targets.

g. Propaganda and Indoctrination.

(1) Military. Political indoctrination of the VC troops varied from unit to unit. Before the first phase of the General Offensive, some units received seven days of intensive political training, 10 hours a day. Other units received only two or three days of political training. All political training was planned and conducted by the political staff of the military headquarters. Themes included obedience to superiors, glorification of past victories, problems which beset the GVN and its allies, and exaggerated claims of the importance of the coming battle.

(2) Civilian. A propaganda campaign aimed at the civilian population was co-ordinated with each offensive. Varying in intensity from area to area, the campaign was conducted by either the VCI or by the NFLSVN. In some places special meetings were held to co-ordinate the propaganda with the military action. In others, co-ordination was obtained in the series of staff meetings held at military region and subregion level discussed above.

(3) Cadre. COSVN sent entertainment groups to various rear service installations, especially hospitals, before Phase One of the General Offensive. These groups showed films and presented plays which encouraged cadre and patients to strive harder.

h. Urban Area Preparations. In the countryside, staff agencies of the Military Headquarters made most of the preparations for a military offensive. But in the cities there were no regular military units; therefore, all of the urban preparations were the responsibility of the VCI. The VCI in the cities attempted to accomplish the following missions during the first two phases of the General Offensive:

(1) The VCI provided guides to conduct the attacking units to their objectives.

(2) The VCI tried to win popular support in the cities for a general uprising against the GVN. By distributing leaflets, giving speeches, and waving flags, the VCI hoped to incite certain dissatisfied elements of the urban population to public demonstrations, or even armed rebellion, against the GVN. By announcing the formation of a new, ostensibly neutral front organization, the VCI hoped to deprive the legal government of a broad base of support among the populace. To encourage neutrality among the citizens, the VC announced the formation of the Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces (AND and PF). During both phases of the General Offensive people were urged to support this new front rather than the GVN.

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(3) Acting under orders from COSVN, the VCI in the cities attempted to assassinate important public officials. The Security Section in Saigon was given the mission of assassinating Ambassador Bunker, President Thieu, and a number of ARVN general officers. There is evidence that the enemy relied on popular rebellion and assassination to counter the tactical superiority of the Allies. During the first and second phases of the General Offensive, the urban VCI achieved limited success in providing guides for attacking units, but their efforts to arouse revolt and to assassinate Allied leaders failed. Three reasons can be found for these failures:

(a) The VCI greatly misjudged the mood of the urban population.

(b) For security reasons the VCI in the cities were given inadequate time to prepare for the first phase of the General Offensive.

(c) Most important, the VCI city organizations were, and still are, weak. For example, the Saigon infrastructure has never been able to support itself; instead, it has depended on the surrounding sub-regions for contributions of both men and money. During the first and second phases of the General Offensive, much of the urban infrastructure was exposed and neutralized by the city police. The Nha Trang infrastructure was almost completely eliminated after Tet. The entire Gia Dinh Security Section, with the exception of the leader, was neutralized after the second phase of the General Offensive.

i. People's Liberation Committees. The VC see their attacks as two-phased: the general offensive and the general uprising. This concept has at least four parts:

(1) Mass demonstrations and armed rebellion in the cities.

(2) Mobilization of rural people through mass associations under the NFLSVN.

(3) The elimination of "wicked enemy administrative personnel" through mass action, people's courts, and the action of some Local Force units who were especially assigned to assassinate local GVN administrators.

(4) Consolidation of gains after the offensive through the formation of People's Liberation Committees (PLCs). All military regions and subregions throughout the country have received directives to form PLCs at every government echelon from hamlet to the regional level. The Party, in all cases, controls these committees. The purpose of the PLCs is to

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create a government-in-being with a semblance of legitimacy. The significance of these committees is threefold:

(a) In future offensives the VCI can be expected to follow up any gains in the countryside with either VC occupation or the formation of PLCs.

(b) As a government-in-being they can demand representation in peace talks, negotiations, and in any future coalition government.

(c) By posing as the legitimate government, the VCI will be able to exploit the resources of the areas they control more efficiently. For instance, in a village in SR 3, an appointed PLC re-apportioned land among the farmers, thus it won the good will of the people. Consequently, when the PLC asked for volunteers, many villagers offered their help.

## B. The Direct Role of the VCI in Support of the General Offensive.

1. The Central Office of South Vietnam, the command element of the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party of North Vietnam, directs and commands both the military and the infrastructure in South Vietnam.

2. The primary responsibility for planning and preparing a military offensive lies with the military commanders and the three military staff agencies: Military, Political, and Rear Service.

a. Preparation. At COSVN, military region, subregion, province and district levels, the Party Committee chairmen and other infrastructure personalities are closely involved in the planning and decision making which precede an offensive. In the five subregions surrounding Saigon, the enemy created Front Party Committees which supervised the preparations for the offensives. Thus, COSVN bypassed the Party Committee at each echelon and created a direct chain of command from itself to district level.

b. Recruitment. The VCI maintains an extensive recruiting net in order to supply villages with guerrilla forces and to supply replacements to Local and Main Force units. The preferred method of recruiting for Local and Main Force units is upgrading. Occasionally, political cadre will transfer to military units. Most of the replacements which arrived just before Phases One and Two of the General Offensive were North Vietnamese.

c. Logistics. While local logistical preparations are the responsibility of the military rear service staff agencies of each echelon, the infrastructure supplies much of the civilian labor force.

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d. Taxation. Although taxes and contributions were increased in some localities before the offensives, there were no large-scale changes in the operation of the Finance - Economy Section.

e. Propaganda and Indoctrination. Military indoctrination is handled by the political staff of HQ, South Vietnam Liberation Army (HQ, SVLIA). However, propaganda campaigns co-ordinated with military offensives are the responsibility of the Propaganda, Indoctrination, and Culture Section of the VCI at each level.

f. Casualty Evacuation. Civilians are recruited by the VCI to evacuate enemy casualties from the battlefield.

g. Medical Service. In preparation for an offensive, the VC military and civilian medical components co-operate closely and expand rapidly. The VCI provides medical and supervisory personnel, as well as logistics support, to the enemy's combined medical effort during an offensive.

h. Intelligence. The Military Commanders of maneuver units rely upon agent nets operated by the infrastructure of each subregion and military region.

i. Route Reconnaissance. From their base camps to the urban areas, attacking units depend on military reconnaissance elements. Within the cities and urban areas, the VC often depend upon guides recruited and trained by local infrastructure organizations.

3. The VCI plays a major role in the cities. It provides intelligence, plans assassinations of key personalities, provides guides for incoming military units, and attempts to foment rebellion.

4. During the periods between offensives, the VCI attempts to consolidate its holdings in the countryside by establishing People's Liberation Committees. If the VCI succeeds, it is in a better position to accomplish its political objectives and to support future operations.

### III. (C) CONCLUSION.

A. The Viet Cong Infrastructure has an important role in enemy offensive preparations.

B. Important VCI missions involving the implementation of COSVN directives include:

1. Troop recruitment.
2. Support of the finance and logistics mission of the Rear

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Services Staff Section of HQ, SVNLA, by providing the civilian labor force for medical evacuation and the portage of materiel.

3. Reconnaissance and intelligence support, to include the providing of civilian guides to lead military units to their targets.

4. Propagandization and indoctrination to incite rebellion against the GVN and the Allies, to include the attempted assassination of key public officials.

5. The establishment of PLCs to consolidate holdings.

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