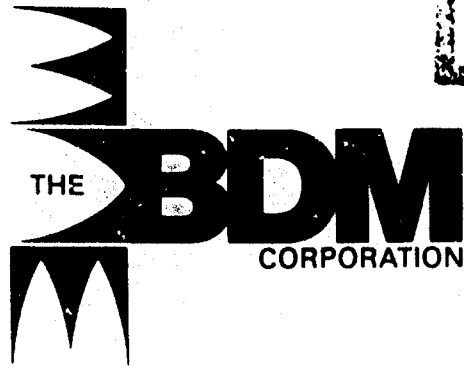


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*A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned  
in Vietnam*

# VOLUME V PLANNING THE WAR

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
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REPLY TO  
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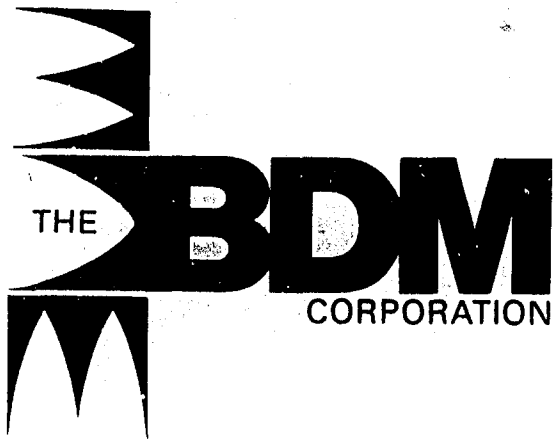
SUBJECT: Declassification of the BDM Study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam"

Defense Technical Information Center  
ATTN: Ms. Betty Weatherholtz  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, VA 22314

1. Your organization was on the distribution list for the BDM study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam." The study was assigned AD numbers B048632L through 641L.
2. In December 1980, the Army War College Security Office notified all recipients of the study by telephone that it contained classified information and should be secured.
3. BDM now has revised the appropriate pages of the study to delete all classified information and has conformed to all other requirements required by the clearance review.
4. A revised copy of the study which is unclassified and approved for public release is inclosed. DTIC Form 50's are inclosed for assignment of new AD numbers.

Incls  
as

  
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April 4, 1980

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A STUDY OF STRATEGIC LESSONS  
LEARNED IN VIETNAM.  
VOLUME V,  
PLANNING THE WAR.

This draft report is submitted to DAMO-SSP.

4841/78W

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FOREWORD

This Study is a final draft submitted to DAMO-SSP in accordance with the provisions of Contract No. DAAG 39-78-C-0120.

The task is to identify and analyze lessons that should be learned from three decades of US involvement in Vietnam. This is Volume V of the Study.

Volume I	The Enemy
Volume II	South Vietnam
Volume III	US Foreign Policy and Vietnam 1945-1975
Volume IV	US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making
<b>Volume V</b>	<b>Planning the War</b>
Volume VI	Conduct of the War
Volume VII	The Soldier
Volume VIII	The Results of the War

The views of the authors do not purport to reflect the positions of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

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PREFACE

A. PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This volume, Planning the War, is the fifth of an eight-volume study entitled A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam undertaken by the BDM Corporation under contract to the US Army. This comprehensive research effort is aimed at identifying lessons which US military leaders and US civilian policy makers should have learned or should now be learning from the US experience in Vietnam.

Volume I of this study, an examination of the enemy, includes discussions of the DRV leadership and party organization, Communist Vietnamese goals and strategies, and internal and external channels of support established to aid the North's war effort. Volume II focuses on the RVN, the country's societal characteristics and problems, its government and its armed forces. Volume III assesses the US's involvement in Vietnam by examining the global context in which that involvement occurred, the major historical precedents influencing US involvement, and the US national-level policy process which shaped that involvement.

Volume IV explores the US domestic scene, including its political and economic components, the role of the media during the Vietnam conflict, and the extent of domestic support for the war. Volume VI, Conduct of the War, includes discussions of US intelligence, logistics, and advisory efforts; US counterinsurgency programs; and ground, air, naval and unconventional operations. Volume VII examines the US soldier, including the war's psychological effects on the soldier, drug abuse and race relations in the US military, and leadership and personnel policies in the US armed forces. Finally, Volume VIII discusses, in broad terms, the results of the war for the US in terms of domestic, foreign, and military policies.

This eight-volume study effort is analytical, not historical in nature. Its focus is primarily military in orientation. The purpose of the entire eight volumes is not a retelling of the Vietnam conflict, but a drawing of lessons and insights of value to present and future US policy makers, both civilian and military.

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### B. PURPOSE OF VOLUME V, "PLANNING THE WAR."

The purpose of this volume is to provide the reader with separate analyses of important lessons learned in Vietnam related to planning the war. As outlined in the US Army's Request for Proposals (RFP) for this study, Volume V is a collection of eight separate analytical taskings, the details of which are given below:

- Objectives and Strategies - a comparison shall be made of US and allied objectives and strategies and those of North Vietnam and its two principal supporters, the USSR and the PRC.
- US Foreign Policy - an examination of the effectiveness of US foreign policy in providing support for US objectives in Vietnam will be performed.
- Contingency Planning - a description shall be provided giving the scope and general content of US contingency planning for Southeast Asia in the period preceding large-scale US involvement and a description of the ways the actual commitment differed from the conditions assumed or projected in the contingency plans.
- Mobilization - a determination will be made as to the extent to which mobilization of National Guard and Reserve Forces was considered. The decision not to mobilize until the Pueblo crisis will be assessed as well as its subsequent impact on the war, the US Armed Forces and US society.
- Pacification and Vietnamization - a description and analysis of the evolution of the Pacification and Vietnamization programs, their impact on the war effort and degree of success will be provided.
- US Withdrawal - The primary influences that led to the US withdrawal will be identified and described; also a description of the consequences of that withdrawal on the war, on US international relations and on Asian power relationships will be provided.

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- Negotiations - a description of the extent to which the negotiating process assisted or detracted from attainment of US goals will be given. The strengths and weaknesses exploited by each side in the negotiating process will be identified. A description will be given of the different approaches to negotiation taken by the US, North Vietnamese, GVN and VC Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). Recommendations of how the United States should approach or conduct such negotiations in the future will be provided.
- Follow-on Effort - a description of the post-withdrawal US commitment to aid South Vietnam and the degree to which it was carried out will be provided. The physical and psychological results will be described in detail.

### C. THEMES THAT EMERGE IN VOLUME V

Several patterns or themes emerge from the analyses developed in this volume. In brief, they are as follows:

- Neither the fundamental US objectives nor the USG basic policy with respect to the RVN were understood completely, and subtle changes (i.e., from an independent, non-communist RVN to an RVN not necessarily non-communist) that occurred over time were apparently not transmitted to the US leadership in the field.
- As long as the fundamental doctrine of military containment of communism was the official US foreign policy, the decision to intervene in Vietnam has to be considered a logical reaction. The "domino" theory saw any conflict with the communists as a test of the US's national resolve and credibility. The communists had threatened to take over "free world" territory in Berlin, Korea, Iran, Guatemala, Lebanon and the Dominican Republic and actions taken by the US to prevent the loss of these territories were viewed by many as American Cold War successes. Conversely, the communists gaining control over China and Cuba

were viewed as Cold War defeats for the US. Each successive US president found himself bound, in large measure, by his predecessor's doctrine and thereafter often analyzed issues from the same perspectives, continuing policies long after they had outlived their usefulness.

- The policy of unreserved commitment to a particular leadership placed the US in a weak and manipulable position on important internal issues in Vietnam. The early view that there were no viable alternatives to President Ngo Dinh Diem greatly limited the extent of US influence over his regime and ruled out, over the years, a number of the kinds of leverage that might have been employed to obtain desired goals.
- Major component command contingency plans and the corresponding plans of supporting component commands did not appreciate nor did they assess the true nature of the threat existing in Vietnam before the mid-sixties.
- There is little doubt, having the advantage of hindsight, that programs like Pacification and Vietnamization finally worked. The North Vietnamese ultimately could not have won the war via insurgency, but rather had to resort to conventional military offensives by PAVN troops.
- Early on, American leadership mistakenly believed Vietnam to be vital not only for itself, but for what they thought its "loss" would mean internationally and domestically. Once the commitment was made, each subsequent president re-affirmed the commitment rather than reassessing the basic rationale as to whether vital US interests were involved or not. Furthermore, US leaders wanted a negotiated settlement without fully realizing (though probably more than their critics) that a civil war cannot be ended by political compromise alone. The attainment of a stalemate on the battlefield and the effective isolation of the enemy from his suppliers were the keys to bringing the negotiations to a conclusion. It was unfortunate that US military strength had



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no political corollary in RVN. The cease-fire agreement failed to stop the DRV from eventually pursuing their ultimate goal -- military victory over the South.

## D. HISTORICAL-CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF VOLUME V

Figure V-1 provides an encapsulation of the data and analyses appearing in Volume V. The figure offers a time-sensitive depiction of major US foreign policy interests and objectives, perceived threats, and strategies for the period 1945 through 1975. The graphic also highlights the Vietnam decision-makers: President, Ambassador and Senior US Military commander. In addition, the figure plots key decision points on mobilization and US combat forces withdrawal, negotiations initiatives, pacification programs, and bombing pauses, as well as other significant data which will allow the reader to gauge their development within the context of the material developed herein.





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The chapters of Volume V develop a number of key insights and lessons relating to the planning for the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict. In addition to identifying the roots and origins of US planning and policy initiatives for Vietnam, this volume describes and assesses the efficacy of US contingency planning; the US foreign policy objectives and strategies for Vietnam, national mobilization policy during this critical period, the planning and implementation of pacification and Vietnamization programs, the planning and implementation of US combat forces withdrawals, the objectives and strategies of US negotiations to end hostilities, and the impact of the US's follow-on efforts in support of South Vietnam.

The insights are specific, focusing on such issues as the need for maintaining clarity and consistency in directives issued by the National Command Authority which state policy objectives and strategies, the need for a mechanism whereby US foreign policy can be thoroughly reassessed on a periodic basis, and need for US leaders and planners alike to be able to sample or test the national will to keep plans and policies in line with their desires and direction, all of which surfaced during the planning of the war. The lessons, on the other hand, are general in nature and concentrate on the broad issues and themes discussed in the volume.



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## INSIGHTS

### Objectives and Strategies

When trying to translate broad national objectives and strategies into specific programs that can be implemented successfully in a foreign country, the US is likely to encounter problems, the nature and seriousness of which are affected by many factors. The most significant of these factors are included below:

- The maintenance of clarity and consistency in directives issued by national authorities which state national objectives and strategies.
- The willingness of, and the time available for, in-country planners, analysts, and decision makers to assess the local situation in all its social and political complexity.
- The nature of the local situation, including its social, political, economic, and military factors.
- The environmental or external factors influencing the nature of the local situation (for example, USSR and PRC assistance to the DRV and factors associated with such alliances).
- The ability and adequacy of resources available to in-country personnel (including intelligence functionaries) to perform assessments, to provide realistic and honest appraisals, and to make decisions on implementation.
- The clarity and early presentation by in-country analysts and decision makers of any information relevant to national level decision-making concerning global and in-country objectives and strategies.

## LESSON

In conflicts involving the US and allied forces against other powers, inconsistencies and incoherence in US and allied objectives and strategies are likely to arise and pose problems for in-country and national level US and allied military planners. US national policy makers could greatly assist in-country planners by ensuring the maximum reasonable clarity, consistency, and specificity in any directives they transmit. The precise determination of what is maximally reasonable must be made at both the political and military levels, where explicit interpretation of national policy should occur before in-country planners are engaged. It is important that this determination be the result of prior, conscientious deliberation, rather than of default or over-rationalization as sometimes occurred during the Vietnam conflict.

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## INSIGHTS

### US Foreign Policy

- As long as containment of communism was the official US policy, the decision to intervene in Vietnam has to be considered a logical reaction. The domino theory saw any conflict with the communists as a test of the US's national resolve and credibility. The Communists' gaining control over China and Cuba were viewed as Cold War defeats for the US. Each successive US president during this period found himself bound, in large measure, by his predecessor's policies.
- Throughout the entire period of US involvement in Indochina, from 1954 through 1975, the policy of containment worked and South Vietnam was not lost to communism. At each key decision point, following the initial commitment, US policy makers focused on how to contain or defeat communism in Vietnam and not on the wisdom of being there in the first place. Each escalation was seemingly in response to the progressive escalation of the price of keeping the original commitment to help Vietnam. It was not until the "A to Z" reassessment in 1968 that there was a thorough review made of the US commitment.
- A policy of unreserved commitment to a particular leadership placed the US in a weak and manipulable position on important internal issues in Vietnam. The early view that there were no viable alternatives to President Diem greatly limited the extent of US influence over his regime and ruled out, over the years, a number of kinds of leverage that might have been employed to obtain desired goals.
- The politico-military actions in the November 1963 coup against Diem would not have been possible without US connivance. To acquiesce in or to promote a coup makes sense only if positive results can reasonably be expected. The US Country Team in Saigon, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Council failed to identify a successor to Diem who might have been acceptable to the Vietnamese people as well as to the US and who might have provided effective leadership.



LESSON

As long as US policy is defined in negative terms - e.g., anticommunism or anti-Diem -- it will be limited in coherence, continuity and relevance to US interests by the need to respond to situations rather than to consciously shape them. Thus despite the overwhelming power implied by "superpower" status, the United States' foreign policy will suffer humiliating defeats unless or until it is designed to exploit US strengths in pursuit of positive goals.

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### INSIGHTS

#### Contingency Planning

- Operation plans prepared by component commands in the Pacific Theater and their principal subordinate commands failed to appreciate and assess the true nature of the threat existing in Vietnam before 1965.
- OPLAN 32 was never implemented, although it did provide a handy "rule of thumb" concerning the US logistical buildup in Vietnam. One major reason for not implementing contingency plans as written was the wide variance between the anticipated conflict (as viewed by planners in the 1950s and early 1960s) and the insurgency-type conflict that the United States actually found. Another major reason was emphasis by the president to play down the scale of US involvement in Indochina during the 1961-1965 time period.
- Each situation requiring a contingency plan is unique and different from others which appear at first glance to be similar.

### LESSONS

Clear and definitive national security policy guidance is essential for strategic planning. Once established, national security policy with regard to any one region should be frequently subjected to scrutiny and debate to assure that policy goals are consistent with actual external conditions and with domestic political realities.

Contingency plans should not be shaped by the "last war" but by the realities of the threat and US objectives in the area of the proposed contingency.

Those who prepare contingency plans should be aware of possible domestic planning constraints and even the predispositions of top policy makers.

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## INSIGHTS

### Mobilization

- Failure to mobilize during the Vietnam War caused repercussions that impacted on the US economy, the Congress, the executive branch, the draft-age young men and their families, and -- to an extent that cannot yet be measured -- on the military Services.
- Historically, mobilization connotes a sense of national determination, and therefore it provides a strong signal to an enemy; lack of mobilization conveys a sense of irresolution in circumstances such as the Vietnam War.
- The actual US commitment of combat troops to Indochina differed from that foreseen in contingency plans. All early US plans anticipated a mobilization of Reserve Components. The failure to call up critically short technical skills, especially logistics and engineer units, contributed significantly to delays in the deployment of combat troops to Vietnam.
- The decision not to mobilize but to depend on increased recruitment and draft calls proved to be the "lesser" of two political "evils" for President Johnson. Militarily, the decision proved less than effective, and it exacerbated Selective Service inequities, morale problems, personnel turbulence and shortages of qualified leaders and technicians. That decision, among others, contributed to his political demise.
- The call-up of the Reserves would not significantly have altered the final outcome of the war, assuming that the war would have been prosecuted in essentially the same way that it actually unfolded. (Conversely, had the Reserve Component been mobilized at the outset, with concomitant public support, the war might have been prosecuted in more vigorous fashion and with different results).
- The mobilization during the Korean War and the Berlin Crisis made call-ups appear to US political leaders to be politically unacceptable. The end of the Vietnam war brought with it an end to the draft and initiation of the War Powers Act. Future American presidents will be faced with a serious dilemma if confronted with a crisis situation requiring rapid buildups in military manpower.

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### LESSONS

"Banana" wars or other small-scale, protracted but undeclared wars are politically difficult to justify and sustain. Only a radical change in US attitudes and perceptions might enable a US president to engage in such wars in the future.

Small-scale, intense, short-term combat operations are possible, using regular forces, assuming that the forces in the proper combinations are available and ready to fight. But any commitment of appreciable size or duration will require mobilization and the full support and understanding of a majority of the American people.

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## INSIGHTS

### Pacification and Vietnamization

- Pacification
  - Early GVN attempts at establishing pacification and rural development programs failed because they were little more than ill-devised blends of stop and start:
    - military and police operations
    - social control techniques
    - emergency welfare efforts
    - attempts to extend political-administrative linkage from Saigon to the countryside.
  - During the period, the GVN failed to come to terms with the communist movement and their own fundamental political weaknesses, which were:
    - their inheritance of France's colonial legacy
    - their debilitating internal pursuit of power
    - their reliance on US aid and doctrine rather than internal political support.
  - In turn, the US efforts to support GVN pacification programs were the product of:
    - reliance on conventional military methods, equipment and training
    - culturally unsuitable and impractical approaches to development
    - an inability to devise conceptually relevant programs
    - ineffective and insufficient application of leverage on the GVN.
  - After 1968, the GVN, with strong US aid, turned things around, and achieved success in their pacification and development programs primarily because:
    - priority was finally given to security -- protecting and involving the people in their own defense
    - policies of land reform and economic redistribution were promoted
  - The one key thing which the Thieu government failed to do during this period of pacification progress was to fashion a political community. President Thieu failed to institutionalize his government, thereby losing the gains made through pacification. Regardless, there is little doubt, having the advantage of hindsight, that pacification finally worked. The North Vietnamese ultimately could not have won the war via insurgency, but rather they had to resort to conventional military offensives by PAVN troops. In that sense

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pacification did succeed, although it alone, without a strong political base, military and geostrategic, could not withstand the final DRV onslaught.

### Vietnamization

- After the Tet Offensive in 1968, President Thieu and General Abrams (then COMUSMACV) threw their support behind the buildup of the territorial forces, the National Police and the attack against the VC infrastructure. And so, some ten or twelve years after the initiation of the insurgency against the RVN, there was a coordinated approach to the security phase of pacification.
- The US goal to increase the RVNAF's military forces and ability to hold off the enemy through the Vietnamization program was thwarted in the end by the RVNAF's increased dependence on continuing US military aid and technical support. The more massive the aid, the more dependent they became. The RVNAF soldier had been "conditioned" by the US presence to rely on the almost ubiquitous air and artillery support in combat and had forgotten "how to walk," being used to vehicular and helicopter transportation, which became scarce after the US pullout in 1973. Former ARVN leaders felt that their army had been organized along the wrong pattern. It had gotten a big logistics tail and it lacked the necessary equipment and mobile reserve divisions essential to counter the NVA's final assault.
- In light of the goals set by the Nixon administration (i.e., the withdrawal of US forces from RVN and to bring about a negotiated settlement of the war), Vietnamization has to be considered a success. The unfortunate aspect was that it was a decade too late.

LESSONS

A government calling upon the United States for assistance in maintaining power in the face of an internal threat, as did the Vietnamese government, is unlikely to be efficient or effective or to meet American ideals of democracy or probity. American commitments to assist such governments must be made with the recognition that the act of commitment and US advice cannot change the nature of the client regime or the society of the host country. In situations in which major American human and material resources are involved, the United States must be able to operate within and even to use the ally's own political and social system to assure that he keeps his side of the bargain. If the US's ally does not perform satisfactorily in the USG's view and all means of influence or pressure have been exhausted, then the US should have a credible capability to reduce or withhold further support and, if possible, to disengage.

Before committing itself to supporting an ally besieged from within, the United States should be confident that it knows the composition and the motivation of the threatening forces and the problems at issue. Only through such knowledge will the US be able to assess the dimensions of the problem. Simple prudence requires that the US know in advance whether the government's cause is dubious or its prospects hopeless. The US should help, not substitute for, the government of its ally. To the extent that the US "takes charge," we postpone (and may even jeopardize) the achievement of the US's ultimate objectives. The application of this lesson in practice, as was discovered in Vietnam, is difficult and calls for a careful selection and training of advisers. If the US could turn back history, the process of "Vietnamization" probably would have been started in 1961, not 1969.

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### INSIGHTS

#### US Withdrawal

- The president, driven by domestic considerations, set the pace of US withdrawal and announced the rate of withdrawal to MACV planners virtually without warning. This procedure left MACV too little flexibility to design withdrawal plans which would ensure that the RVNAF could successfully assume the diverse responsibilities which it was now required to fulfill.
- MACV was forced to serve two different masters with different aims: the Secretary of Defense who pressed for accelerated withdrawal, and the National Security Adviser who needed continued US combat presence in Vietnam as a negotiating chip.

### LESSON

Withdrawal plans must be designed to respond not only to US needs and considerations, but also to conditions in the host country, specifically to the host country's ability to adjust effectively to US withdrawal.



INSIGHTS

Negotiations

- During President Johnson's Administration, the hope for ending the war depended on being successful on the battlefield. Achieving a position of military strength became the US prerequisite for negotiations. This strategy suffered from two disabilities: (a) the nature of guerrilla warfare; and (b) the asymmetry in the definition of what constituted acceptable losses. As a result, American/FWMAF military successes could not be translated into permanent political advantage.
- President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger recognized that a military solution for the war was not available; therefore they set about to attain a stalemate on the battlefield, to cause the DRV to be isolated from their communist benefactors and to arrive at a political solution in the negotiations.
- As a venture in strategic persuasion, the early bombing of North Vietnam did not work. Limited and graduated air attacks met with little success. The symbolic rationale for bombing halts backfired and the DRV used negotiations as a means to get the bombing stopped. Only when the president decided to go with a heavy bombardment of Hanoi/Haiphong in December 1972, did US airpower prove its effectiveness in getting the DRV to negotiate in earnest.
- When negotiating a settlement on behalf of our allies and ourselves as we did in Vietnam, the US must not only be actively cognizant of their established negotiating positions, but also of their input and reactions to alternatives.
- Early on, American leadership mistakenly believed Vietnam to be vital not for itself, but for what they thought its "loss" would mean internationally and domestically. It also meant that US leaders wanted a negotiated settlement without fully realizing (though probably more than their critics) that a civil war cannot be ended by political compromise alone. The attainment of a stalemate on the battlefield and the effective isolation of the enemy from their suppliers were the keys to bringing the negotiations to a conclusion. It was unfortunate that US military strength had no political corollary in RVN. The fact that the agreement failed to stop the DRV and the PRG from eventually pursuing their ultimate goal -- military victory over the South -- reinforces this insight.

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### LESSON

An incremental military strategy and conciliatory negotiating strategy with a communist adversary who equates restraint with weakness and with whom compromise is inconceivable will make a meaningful settlement unlikely. Furthermore, it should be remembered that communist nations do not view war and negotiations as separate processes, but consider them one and the same. Before engaging in talks or negotiations with a communist nation, key negotiators must give careful thought to strategy, objectives, and the "balance of forces" on the battlefield, always keeping in mind the fact that communist negotiators will be intransigent and unyielding if they perceive a military, political, psychological or economic edge over their adversaries.

INSIGHTS

Follow-On  
Effort

- President Nixon failed to ensure or establish congressional support for his post-war military-economic aid program for the GVN, and the success of the US follow-on effort in RVN depended on the continuing ability and willingness of the US government to meet the private commitments made by the administration; public and congressional distaste for the war, and, in particular, for the Thieu regime made it unlikely that the administration's program could be maintained over the long haul, a situation that was apparent at the time to many interested observers.
- While secret diplomacy has its merits, the US executive's refusal to brief congressional leadership more amply on the specifics of the negotiations, (including the executive branch's expectations regarding future US commitments to Vietnam), gave rise to South Vietnam's false security, diminished US credibility as an ally in the long run, and caused an extreme degree of confusion in both Saigon and Washington concerning the actual nature of the US commitment.
- While the US effort to enhance RVNAF in 1972-1973 did augment Saigon's hardware stockpiles for a period of time, the crash supply program had a decided negative impact on RVNAF morale and contributed further to the GVN reliance on the United States. Equipment deficiencies also diminished the effectiveness of American efforts to enhance South Vietnam's military capabilities.
- The divisive nature of Watergate severely constrained the US follow-on effort and further complicated Saigon's perspective on and understanding of the US desire to get on with detente (and its subsequent impatience with the Saigon leadership) and gave rise to the impression that South Vietnam was no longer of importance to the US -- merely a "sideshow" -- and, hence, further demoralized the GVN.
- The RVNAF's inability to adjust to a more austere style of fighting after the US withdrawal intensified the impact of US congressional aid cuts in military appropriations for South Vietnam at a time when the PAVN forces were completing their modernization program under Soviet tutelage. The Vietnamese propensity to "make do" and endure was shattered by its exposure to US opulence and "pour-it-on" style of combat.

LESSONS

This subtask, Follow-On Effort, is unique to the Vietnam experience and, therefore, it does not provide a suitable vehicle for developing lessons for other situations. If there are lessons in follow-on efforts, they must be these:

- Such efforts can only be successful in cases where the indigenous government has a stronger base of support than does its opposition.
- The US public and Congress must perceive the recipient nation and its leaders to be deserving of aid or it will be reduced or turned off.
- Foreign aid cannot be a substitute for efforts by the supported nation to carry its own weight -- that is, defend itself and feed its own people. The American people have historically rejected long-term aid programs.

OVERALL LESSON

There are limits to American Power. Being a super power with an extensive arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles plus a powerful modern armed force does not guarantee that a foreign policy which is designed to exploit those as well as other national strengths, such as economic and technological powers, will be successful. The limitations extend to the American Chief Executive, whose responsibilities have not diminished with regard to the formulation of US foreign policy or for the security of the US, but whose power to wage war or commit US combat forces will require the support of the American people and the Congress in the future.

Planners, be they military or civilian, must be attuned to these factors as they prepare for the contingencies of the future.

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## CHAPTER 1 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Top-level US leadership has never been very subtle when it comes to war. Strategy takes a back seat to physical strength and tactics in the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department. When the "chips are down," we've always poured on the power until opponents were crushed. Our ruling councils, whose members were schooled in conventional combat before the showdown in Vietnam, subscribed to that approach.

Threats in earlier US wars were classically military. Direct strategies on both sides featured force, not fraud or finesse. Political, economic, social, and psychological pressures were strictly secondary, once the shooting started. 1/

Colonel John M. Collins, US Army,  
Ret. Vietnam Postmortem: A Senseless Strategy.

Our military art has successfully solved a number of questions relating to strategy, operations, and tactics, with a view to defeating a strong enemy; it has correctly determined the relations between man and weapons, politics and technique, regarding the human factor, as the decisive factor, while considering weapons and technique also important. Now that the people's armed forces have the possibility of having better equipment, of being strengthened materially and technically, our military art is still firmly maintaining the above guiding principles, combining politics and technique on the basis that politics and fighting spirit are the essential factor, which enhances to the highest degree the fighting power of the armed forces. 2/

General Vo Nguyen Giap, The Military Art of People's War, Emphasis in the Original.

### A. INTRODUCTION

National strategies are ideally devised to provide maximum support to the pursuit of a nation's own interests and objectives -- communist or

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non-communist, Third World nation or superpower. The dictates of domestic and international politics, however, impinge upon both the formulation and ultimate effectiveness of national strategy. A nation may pursue two objectives simultaneously which, in reality, are contradictory or work at cross-purposes. Likewise, a strategy devised by a nation for the attainment of a specific objective may cause the desired goal to appear, or, in fact, become, more elusive.

The powers involved in the Vietnam conflict were often confronted with problems such as these. This chapter provides a brief review of each participant's respective objectives and strategies during the period 1960 - 1975. These parameters are chosen because problems such as these are the most readily apparent during this timeframe. The major portion of the discussion will focus on a number of the contradictions inherent in the participants' stated objectives and strategies, on the deficiencies or merits of strategies designed by the participant to meet their objectives (primary focus will be placed on the US), on the incompatibilities of objectives and strategies pursued by assumed allies, and on the perceptions and misperceptions that the powers involved had of both enemy and allied powers.

### B. A REVIEW OF DRV, NLF (PRP & PRG), USSR, AND PRC OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Detailed analytic discussions of each participant's national objectives and strategies in the Vietnam War appear in other chapters of this eight-volume study.<sup>3/</sup> Therefore, for the purposes of this discussion, only a brief review of these concerns will be included here.

#### 1. The Objectives and Strategies of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Review

One of the most salient features of the Hanoi regime was its capacity to integrate and coordinate its political and military strategies during most, if not all, of the time period under consideration. Moreover, with respect to its military strategy, Hanoi appreciated the merits of

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flexibility, allowing for a fluid interchange between guerrilla and conventional modes of warfare in meeting its combat requirements of the moment.4/ The DRV's dedication to the revolutionary concept of protracted struggle and its commitment to tactics aimed at creating a maximum sense of insecurity throughout the countryside were also significant aspects of the regime's strategic approach to the war.5/ The degree of insecurity created by DRV and NLF forces was a reflection of their ability to exploit the country's geography, available logistics, and the existing hostilities between the Vietnamese people and the Highland tribes.6/

The regime's primary objective, as Figure 1-1 illustrates, was the reunification of Vietnam and its eventual communization.7/ To achieve this ultimate objective, a number of secondary goals were formulated: the elimination of US presence in Vietnam, the overthrow of the government of South Vietnam, and the maintenance of the aid flow from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union (USSR).

The attainment of military objectives was consistently stressed by the regime as a prerequisite to negotiations.8/ This orientation evolved as a direct result of the leadership's experience at the 1954 Geneva talks.9/ (See Chapter 7 of this volume for a detailed discussion of negotiations.) From this point on, negotiations fit the DRV strategic scheme as an ideal step to be undertaken only when military victory appeared certain or had already been achieved. The realities of the conflict, however, often dictated modifications in DRV strategy.

### 2. The Objectives and Strategies of the National Liberation Front in Review

While the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was not an autonomous entity, but a creature of Hanoi's making in many respects, it did establish its "own" set of objectives and strategies.10/ Many coincided neatly with those of the North; some underwent subtle modification or were allotted a level of priority at variance with those of Hanoi. A comparison of Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2 illustrates both the similarities between DRV and NLF objectives and their asymmetries.11/ The NLF concurred with two of the DRV's major goals: the removal of the United States from Vietnam and the toppling of the Saigon government. The reunification of



OBJECTIVES		1961 - 1963	1964 - 1968	1968 (TET) - JAN 1969	JAN. 1969 - APR 1975
DRV LONG TERM OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reunify and communize Vietnam</li> <li>• Neutralize SVN on Laotian model</li> <li>• Maintain aid pipeline with PRC and USSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reunify and communize Vietnam</li> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Maintain aid pipeline with PRC and USSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reunify and communize Vietnam</li> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Maintain aid pipeline with PRC and USSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reunify and communize Vietnam</li> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Maintain aid pipeline with PRC and USSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Reunify and communize Vietnam</li> <li>• Maintain aid pipeline with PRC and USSR</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen and organize the southern resistance movement (Create NLF)</li> <li>• Overthrow Diem regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halt US bombing campaigns</li> <li>• Avoid invasion of North Vietnam</li> <li>• Exploit world opinion against US bombing</li> <li>• Overthrow Saigon government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain strong North Vietnam</li> <li>• Halt US bombing campaigns</li> <li>• Exploit world opinion against US bombing</li> <li>• Overthrow Saigon government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate settlement favorable to Hanoi</li> <li>• Overthrow Saigon government</li> </ul>	

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Figure 1-1. DRV Long and Short Term Objectives, 1961 - April 1975 8/

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OBJECTIVES	1961 - 1963	1964 - 1968	1968 (TEF) - JAN 1969	JAN. 1969 - APR. 1975
NLF & PRP (PRG) LONG TERM OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberate South Vietnam</li> <li>• Establish coalition gov't in SVN under NLF control</li> <li>• Remove US military presence from SVN</li> <li>• Promote general uprising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Reunify VNM without foreign interference</li> <li>• Promote general uprising</li> <li>• Establish coalition gov't in SVN under NLF (PRP) control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Overthrow the Saigon gov't and replace with PRG</li> <li>• Eventual reunification of VNM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Force US withdrawal</li> <li>• Overthrow the Saigon gov't and replace with PRG</li> <li>• Eventual reunification of VNM</li> </ul>
NLF & PRP (PRG) SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overthrow Diem regime in SVN</li> <li>• Obtain Hanoi's recognition of NLF political authority</li> <li>• Develop strong military force</li> <li>• Maintain foreign policy of non-alignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undermine US will</li> <li>• Exploit world opinion against US bombing</li> <li>• Disrupt US in-country programs such as the "Strategic Hamlet Program"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weaken Saigon gov't (TEF)</li> <li>• Disrupt pacification program</li> <li>• Undermine Vietnamization program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undermine US will</li> <li>• Disrupt pacification program</li> <li>• Undermine Vietnamization program</li> </ul>

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Figure 1-2. NLF & PRP (PRG) Long and Short Term Objectives, 1961 - April 1975

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the country was also seen as an important front goal, although the NLF program stressed a more gradual, step-by-step approach towards eventual national unification. One vehicle for accomplishing national unity was the creation of a coalition government with the National Liberation Front at its head.

Consistent with their role as "indigenous insurgents," members of the NLF gave priority to the revolutionary strategy of the general uprising. This strategy, or as Douglas Pike terms it - "social myth" - was an essential component of NLF operations, simultaneously providing it with legitimacy as a revolutionary force representative of the Southern populace, and with a propaganda weapon necessary for attracting new converts. In the political sense, therefore, this strategy has a number of potentially potent features. Militarily, it coalesced with the NVN desire to spawn insecurity in the South (for terrorism was an essential feature of the overall NLF program).<sup>12/</sup> However, its deficiencies, especially in meeting the US-ARVN high-technological capability, were obviously many.

### 3. Objectives and Strategies of the Soviet Union in Review

Moscow pursued a number of far-reaching objectives in the Southeast Asian theater during the time period under consideration. While the desire to support a fraternal socialist country certainly motivated Soviet involvement in the conflict, other reasons, perhaps more germane to the viability of the Soviet state, also influenced the USSR to support Hanoi. The balance of power in Asia, of increasing concern to the Kremlin as its relations with the PRC degenerated, could, from the Soviet perspective, be altered favorably by creating a strong Southeast Asian neighbor. The DRV was to serve, therefore, as the avenue for achieving this objective.

Competition with Communist China in other spheres - particularly in the international communist movement - also figured in the Soviet Union's decision to assist Hanoi.<sup>13/</sup> Moreover, the Vietnam conflict's merits as a "test case" - whether as a war of limited duration and magnitude or as a "war of national liberation" - enticed the USSR to supply North Vietnam its requisite military materiel.

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The introduction of US combat forces into Vietnam and the concurrent infusion of heavy US combat support equipment had an appreciable impact on the Soviet Union's strategic perspective on Vietnam. Until 1965, Moscow viewed its involvement in the conflict as an acceptable and manageable risk, particularly in 1964 when it appeared Hanoi's objectives would shortly reach fruition. By mid-1965, however, the issue came to rest on avoiding a direct military confrontation with the United States, while still maintaining previously articulated objectives. (See Figure 1-3 - "PRC and USSR Objectives in the Emerging Tri-polar World and Vietnam."<sup>14/</sup>) It was at this juncture in the conflict, when Hanoi's heavy materiel requirements increased in its efforts to counter US military power, that Soviet objectives came into cross-conflict. Hence, the Soviet leadership was faced with carefully balancing these contradictions, particularly as it entered a period of relaxed tensions with the US.

#### 4. Objectives and Strategies of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Review

Like the Soviet Union, Communist China also had an ideological motivation for assisting Hanoi in its war effort, particularly as the nature of the Vietnam conflict reflected, to a certain degree, the protracted revolutionary struggle earlier undertaken by the Peking regime.<sup>15/</sup> But the Chinese involvement in Southeast Asia was also stimulated by other, more complex concerns, the majority of which grew directly out of the PRC's anti-Soviet and anti-American posture. Figure 1-3 summarized PRC and USSR objectives and strategies in the emerging tri-polar world; from this summary, it is clear that the two leading communist powers were pursuing a number of asymmetric objectives.

In the first five years of the period under consideration, Peking not only viewed its support to Hanoi as a manageable risk, it also found Hanoi's military needs commensurate with the PRC capacity to fulfill them. In fact, there was a certain, coincidental compatibility between the respective supply capabilities of the USSR and the PRC: Moscow concentrated primarily on Hanoi's heavy materiel needs while Peking contributed light, primarily small arms weaponry.

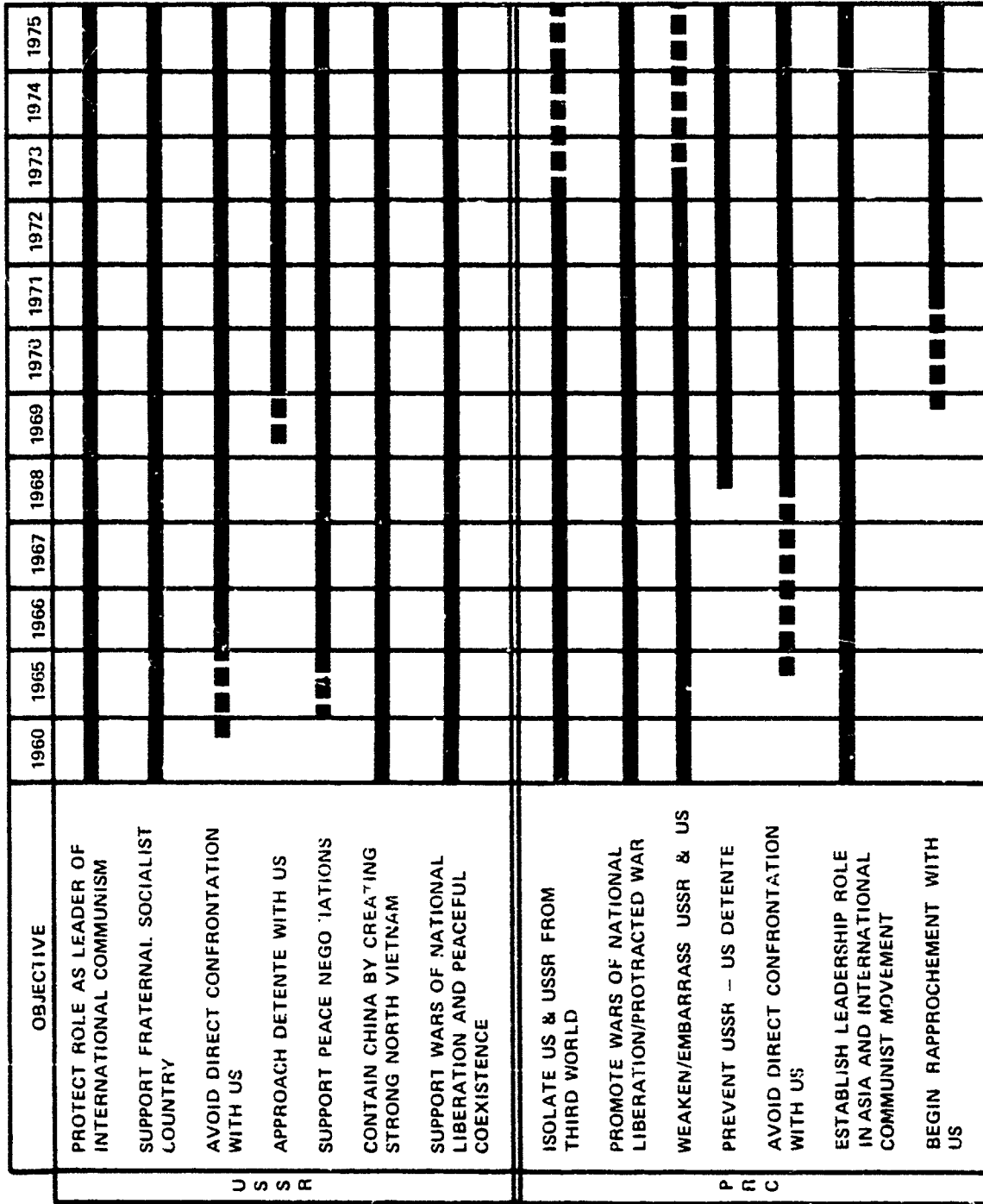


Figure 1-3. PRC and USSR Objectives in the Emerging Tri-Polar World and Vietnam

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The PRC's strategic decision to assist Hanoi was in keeping with two of its primary national objectives: the promotion of violence in the Third World and the concomitant isolation of the United States and the Soviet Union from these developing nations.<sup>16/</sup> By the mid-1960s, however, the nature of the conflict had changed significantly, dynamically altering Hanoi's supply requirements. As Peking was not equipped to supply the DRV with its requisite heavy weaponry, the PRC leadership was compelled to devise another strategy to meet its objectives. China subsequently gave even greater emphasis to driving the US and USSR into a direct confrontation. This strategy, one aspect of which was the Chinese prolonged refusal to coordinate a PRC-USSR united aid program for Hanoi, brought Peking's supposed sincerity in supporting a fraternal socialist (especially Third World) nation into question.

### C. A REVIEW OF US, GVN, AND ALLIED OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The following discussions highlight the major national objectives and strategies of the United States, South Vietnam, and those countries which provided allied military support to the US-GVN war effort. Because GVN strategies and objectives were, for the most part, symmetric with those of the US, its objectives and strategies are reviewed concurrently with those of the United States. The objectives and strategies of allied participants are treated together in the final review section, concentrating on only the major allied participants and the more significant reasons for their involvement in the Vietnam war effort.

#### 1. The Objectives and Strategies of the United States (US) and South Vietnam in Review

A number of significant factors influenced both the nature and type of national objectives pursued by the United States during this time period. Attitudes and perceptions gained from the Cold War, lessons supposedly learned from previous US combat experiences, the shifting nature of tri-polar politics, and, of course, the overall political and military behavior of Hanoi and NVN-NLF forces had a significant impact on the US leadership's formulation of Vietnam-related policies.<sup>17/</sup> The containment

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of communism, and hence, the preservation of a friendly, non-communist South Vietnamese regime were the United States' initial and primary objectives in Southeast Asia. As the conflict intensified and as the domestic and international anti-war pressures increased, the US began to pursue a number of additional goals concurrent with those above including the preservation of US credibility and honor (especially during the negotiation and withdrawal period), the maintenance of US pledges to its global allies, and the promotion of allied self-reliance. Figure 1-4 provides an overview of these and other US objectives from 1960-1975.<sup>18/</sup>

The US leadership obviously delineated between its international objectives and strategies and its in-country goals and strategies (although a certain degree of compatibility between these two planes was certainly sought.) In the international arena, the US leadership encouraged other countries to contribute to Saigon's defense. It also sought to avoid a direct confrontation with either the USSR or PRC; US forces were consistently prohibited from crossing the 17th parallel for fear of provoking a full-force response from the PRC. During the Nixon administration, tensions between these two communist powers were intentionally exploited; this approach was in keeping with Washington's efforts to curb Hanoi's militancy both on the battlefield in Vietnam, and at the negotiating table in Paris.

US civilian and military planners devised a diverse array of strategies for defeating the DRV-NLF war effort and securing South Vietnam. Figure 1-5 illustrates this diversity which occurred over time.<sup>19/</sup> The asymmetry of US strategies with the nature of the conflict in Vietnam is addressed in Section D of this chapter.

South Vietnam's goals, for the most part, reflected the United States' Vietnam-related objectives. However, a distinction can perhaps be made: a very fine line existed between the GVN's motivation for accepting US objectives and its disinterest in disputing them or devising a set of its own. Saigon's dependency on the US (and the United States' apparent willingness to accept this condition) diminished the efficacy of both GVN and US strategies, eventually bringing a number of US and GVN objectives into discord. These concerns are addressed below.

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PRES	TIME FRAME	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
KENNEDY	1960-1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>● MAINTAIN AND PROTECT US SECURITY BY PRESERVING A FREE ASIA AND FREE WORLD</li> <li>● PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN US PLEDGES OF ASSISTANCE AND CREDIBILITY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NATION-BUILDING, PROVISION OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID TO DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>● FLEXIBLE RESPONSE: ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WARS, GRADUATED ESCALATION, AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE</li> </ul>
JOHNSON	1965-1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>● STRENGTHEN US -- ALLIED RELATIONS</li> <li>● PREVENT WORLD WAR III</li> <li>● CALM TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC</li> <li>● PREVENT LOSS OF US CREDIBILITY AND INVESTMENTS</li> <li>● SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>● FLEXIBLE RESPONSE</li> <li>● INITIATE DIALOGUE WITH PRC AND USSR</li> <li>● NIXON DOCTRINE</li> <li>● PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY</li> </ul>
NIXON	1970-1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● BUILD A STABLE WORLD ORDER BASED ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESTRAINT</li> <li>● PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>● DETER AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN A STRONG DEFENSE</li> <li>● DECREASE TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC</li> <li>● PRESERVE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>● SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NIXON DOCTRINE</li> <li>● PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>● PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY</li> <li>● ASSIST SELECTED COUNTRIES IN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN INDIGENOUS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES</li> <li>● ARMS LIMITATIONS US MAINTENANCE OF BALANCE IN NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES</li> </ul>
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Figure 1-4. US National Objectives and Strategies, 1960-1975

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STRATEGY OF DRAMATIC GESTURE	STRATEGY OF LEVERAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction of Combat Support and Helicopter Personnel</li> <li>● "Tit-for-Tat" or Reprisal Bombing in Response to NLF Attacks ("Carrot and the Stick")</li> <li>● Introduction of Ground Combat Troops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pressure on Diem to Broaden Political Base and Effect Reforms.</li> <li>● "Blueprint for Vietnam": Ambassador Bunker's Program for Winning the War Through Reforms (Vietnamization/CORDS)</li> <li>● Enticement of DRV with Reconstruction Assistance Program.</li> <li>● Pressure on Thieu to Concur with Peace Accords (Possible Aid Cut-Off and Promises).</li> </ul>
STRATEGY OF DRAMATIC THREAT	STRATEGY OF PERSISTENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Saber-Rattling": A Signal to Moscow and Peking.</li> <li>● Destruction of DRV by Bombing: Force Hanoi to Cease Infiltration of South.</li> <li>● Determination and Staying Power: Commit Whatever Force Needed to win.</li> <li>● "Carrot and the Stick": Sustained Reprisals</li> <li>● New Targets: Mining Haiphong Harbor, Invasion of Cambodia, and Incursion into Laos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Grind the Enemy Down": The Sheer Weight of US Combined Military and Civilian Programs.</li> <li>● "Pile-it-On": Additional Troops, Aid, Materiel, Bombing.</li> <li>● "Search and Destroy": Gen. Westmoreland's Concept of Attrition.</li> <li>● "Clear and Hold": Gen. Abram's Approach to Population Protection and Territorial Security.</li> </ul>

Figure 1-5. The United States' Search for a Strategy, 1960-1975

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### 2. The Objectives and Strategies of Major Allied Participants in Review

The United States' desire to debunk contentions that the Vietnam war effort was predominately a US undertaking, was a major reason for its call for allied participation in the conflict.<sup>20/</sup> This in no way implies that the US coerced its allies to participate in the war effort, that all allies required solicitation prior to volunteering their services, or that allied assistance was inconsequential and inadequate. The Republic of Korea, for instance, voluntarily offered its support as early as 1954, and its overall military contribution to the US-GVN war effort was, indeed, significant, as was that of all the major allied participants.

A large number of non-communist countries aided South Vietnam during the period under consideration; those whose contributions were the most significant - Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand - are highlighted in this review. Figure 1-6 summarizes the nature of their contributions and the major objectives or motivating factors which influenced their participation.<sup>21/</sup>

The US need for allied assistance came to the forefront of Vietnam military planning in the first quarter of 1965; the importance of "doing everything possible to maximize our military effort to reverse the present unfavorable situation" served as the primary basis for the April 6, 1965, decision to seek Free World assistance.<sup>22/</sup> From this point on, the United States initiated and/or formalized its Vietnam allied military assistance programs, with the aim of coordinating a united effort against the PRC-USSR backed NLF-NVN forces.

As Figure 1-6 indicates, all of the major participants were distressed over the aggressive activities of the NLF and DRV. These countries' geographic proximity to the area motivated their serious consideration of a joint US-GVN-Allied effort in Vietnam. Yet, other factors also gave impetus to allied participation in assisting Washington and Saigon. A number of these nations, specifically the ROK, the Philippines, and Thailand, viewed their proffered participation as a way to enhance their nation's political-military well-being. To a certain degree, interest in

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ALLIED PARTICIPANT	NATURE OF SUPPORT	MAJOR OBJECTIVES/MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO US - GVN WAR EFFORT
AUSTRALIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY (GUERRILLA WARFARE)</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENTS MADE IN COLOMBO PLAN, SEATO, AND OTHER BI-LATERAL AGREEMENTS</li> </ul>
NEW ZEALAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC/TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENTS MADE IN COLOMBO PLAN AND SEATO</li> <li>● MILITARY INTEREST IN INCREASED EXPERIENCE IN COMBAT OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN JUNGLE THEATER AND IN INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OF VIETNAM</li> </ul>
PHILIPPINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECONOMIC/TECHNICAL</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND SUPPORT FORCES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● DESIRE FOR INCREASE IN US MILITARY AID, STRENGTHEN OWN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT</li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO SEATO</li> </ul>
REPUBLIC OF CHINA (ROC) (TAIWAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECONOMIC/TECHNICAL</li> <li>● PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA, PARTICULARLY COMMUNIST CHINESE</li> <li>● DESIRE TO ASSIST US</li> </ul>
REPUBLIC OF KOREA (RCK) (SOUTH KOREA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO US</li> <li>● DESIRE TO DISPLAY ITS MILITARY SKILLS LEARNED FROM US, DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL US OUTLAYS OF MILITARY MATERIEL</li> </ul>
THAILAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC/TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND SUPPORT FORCES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DESIRE TO ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBLE ROLE IN ACTIVE DEFENSE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN SEA</li> <li>● DESIRE TO MODERNIZE THAI MILITARY FORCES</li> <li>● DESIRE FOR POLITICAL GAINS DOMESTIC THROUGH MORE VISIBLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM INTERNATIONAL THROUGH PARTICIPATION BOTH IN THE AREA AND AT THE PEACE TABLE</li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO SEATO</li> </ul>

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Figure 1-6. A Summary of Allied Support to the US-GVN War Effort

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reequipping or augmenting their respective military establishments conditioned their acceptance to participate in the joint effort.<sup>23/</sup> In its attempts to make allied support more assured and attractive, the US also agreed to recompense the allied forces of these nations for expenses incurred through participation. Thus, through arrangements of this kind, the United States achieved its objectives of creating a united allied effort in Vietnam, and the ROK, the Philippines, and Thailand augmented their military arsenals.

However, such arrangements also provided these allied forces with a degree of leverage with the US, making it difficult for American military planners to elicit consistent and adequate standards of performance (and requisite degrees of accountability) from participating non-Western allied forces. This problem and others served partially to undermine the efficacy of the united effort and, hence, overall US objectives and strategies for Vietnam.

### D. AN ASSESSMENT OF US-ALLIED AND ENEMY STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES: PROBLEMS, EXPLOITABLE DIFFERENCES, CONTRADICTIONS, AND MISPERCEPTIONS

As we have seen, the national strategies of the Hanoi regime centered on the concept of protracted struggle. The leaders of the DRV had no rigid timetable for the struggle in the South. Rather, the regime was confident that the longer the war lasted, the more serious the "inherent contradictions" in the US and US-GVN relationship would become.<sup>24/</sup> Thus, while the North Vietnamese communists spoke of winning the decisive victory, their definition of victory did not imply the final seizure of power from the Saigon government. Instead, it meant either decisive victory on the battlefield, causing a turning point in the war, or partial annihilation of US and ARVN forces, forcing an American withdrawal.<sup>25/</sup> Decisive victory was, therefore, to take place within the context of protracted armed and political struggle. The modus operandi was the exploitation of contradictions inherent in the conflict (and within the "enemy" camp) thereby making possible the decisive victory as defined above. Figure 1-7 summarizes the DRV perceptions of these contradictions.<sup>26/</sup>

TYPE OF CONTRADICTION	SUBSTANCE OF CONTRADICTION	RESULT OF CONTRADICTION
1. Imperialist Camp	Distintegration of aggressive blocs and disagreement among imperialist powers vs. cohesion in socialist world over Vietnam	Weakening of imperialist camp, strengthening of socialist camp.
2. US Involvement In Vietnam	Imperialist vs. civil war; neocolonialist vs. national liberation war; exploiters vs. oppressed people. Technological supremacy vs. tactical inferiority.	"Just" struggle must succeed, "unjust" struggle must fail. People's war can prevail over technically superior foe; escalation founded on defeat.
3. US Society	US Government fights a war not supported by American people. American wealth vs. psychological incapacity to withstand long-term war.	American people will force Government to end the war. American people will react against costs of the war.
4. US-GVN Relations	US assistance vs. debilitating effects of that assistance in GVN economy, society, administration.	GVN will be recognized as having sold the country to foreigners.
5. US-GVN and Vietnamese People	US involvement vs US control of the war, the government, and society.	The people's antagonism toward the Americans increases.

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Figure 1-7. The North Vietnamese Perception of Contradictions in The 'Enemy' Camp.

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US national strategy was, in many respects, inappropriate to the conflict in Vietnam because US leaders were unwilling to wage a protracted war of indeterminate length. Short-cuts to victory were preferred. Largely as a result of this, strategy took a "back seat to physical strength and tactics ..."27/ Previous American successes with conventional warfare reinforced the United States' impatience with counterinsurgency methods necessary for fighting a protracted war. More fundamentally, as North Vietnamese strategists recognized, American society was psychologically averse to protracted war. As Major General Than Do, one of eight commanders of communist forces in the South, explained,

We can endure the hardships of a lengthy war, but they are unable to endure the hardships of such a war because they are well-to-do people. 28/

This intolerance of protracted war prompted American leaders to seek a clear and early resolution of the conflict. "There was always a sense of American urgency - the typical American proclivity to solve present problems quickly, then get on with others."29/

Most important, the US had other global interests to promote, and its involvement in Vietnam was therefore, necessarily, limited. North Vietnamese leaders, on the other hand, had no other global interests to rival their goal of reunifying Vietnam, the conflict in Vietnam was thus, from their perspective, a total war. Because the DRV had no significant competing interests (or what Hanoi called "contradictions"), its leaders believed the DRV could outlast the US in the struggle for sovereignty in Vietnam. Therefore, it did not matter that the US won nearly every battlefield confrontation. From the DRV perspective, as American manpower and materiel were thrown into the struggle and as American losses accumulated over time, the endurance of the American people would reach a breaking point. The mounting contradictions between the American people and their national leadership would, therefore, eventually be resolved by an American withdrawal from Vietnam. The problem for the North Vietnamese strategists was to determine how best to expedite this withdrawal, all the while insuring that their own staying power in Vietnam went unimpaired.

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Moscow and Peking's continual supply of economic and military aid was, perhaps, the most vital means by which the Hanoi leadership was able to assure this staying power. However, the DRV was faced with certain perplexing problems in its alliance with these two major communist powers. As tensions between the PRC and USSR intensified, each attempted to draw the DRV into the dispute. Hanoi, on the other hand, had other, more pressing concerns with which to contend and it was, therefore, compelled to walk a very delicate and thin line in its relationships with both.<sup>30/</sup>

The Soviet Union, like the US, was restrained in its support of its ally out of an interest in avoiding a direct confrontation with the US and, later, out of a desire not to jeopardize detente. Because of their limited objectives in Vietnam, the Soviet leaders chose a strategy of providing economic and military assistance to the DRV but refrained from committing Soviet combat troops. The Chinese Communists most likely felt more of a threat from the US presence in Vietnam than did the Soviets, especially in light of their direct confrontation with American forces during the Korean experience. Moreover, Chinese-Vietnamese relations were rather strained, owing to mutually shared animosity that grew out of China's earlier domination of Vietnam. The Chinese, therefore, like the Soviets, chose to participate in the conflict on a limited basis. They too chose to supply economic and military assistance to the DRV, but did not provide combat forces.

The DRV was able to single-mindedly provide its war effort a crucial element of consistency and certainty, an element which the US and GVN never truly acquired, the latter owing to political instability, corruption, and overdependence on the US. This asymmetry in global objectives created complications for the US in its planning of the war, a problem with which the North Vietnamese did not really have to cope. Of course, the problems would have been more difficult for Hanoi had the Soviet Union and PRC had less of an interest in supplying aid or had succeeded in forcing Hanoi's allegiance to one or the other power in their on-going dispute.

Problems caused by contradictions in US objectives (globally and in Vietnam) were exacerbated by the comparative discontinuity of national

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leadership in both Saigon and Washington. Each change in leadership was accompanied by some change in direction or emphasis in Vietnam policy. This often gave rise to uncertainty, hesitancy, misunderstanding and other related difficulties for in-country civilian and military planning authorities.

Perhaps the single most confusing aspect of US policy centered around the statements of national objectives with respect to Vietnam.<sup>31/</sup> An analysis, conducted by the Department of the Army in 1965, of those statements of national objectives -- as contained in documents of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Agency for International Development and the US Information Agency -- revealed differing statements and interpretations. Some objectives were not only viewed differently but were found to be conflicting (e.g., The Military Assistance Plan for 1966 indicated the reunification of North and South Vietnam, by military force, as an objective.)<sup>32/</sup> With the passage of time, and in the press of day-to-day operations, a commander can lose sight of the principal objectives; for example, after having commanded MACV for over four years, General Westmoreland asked his Chief of Staff in March 1968, "what is my objective in Vietnam?" The reply was "to assist the Government of South Vietnam and its armed forces to defeat externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression and attain an independent non-communist society in South Vietnam so it can function in a secure environment."<sup>33/</sup> A few months later, the new COMUSMACV, General Abrams, directed his staff to develop a full set of military objectives because his J-5 could find none published or on file.<sup>34/</sup> In short, neither the fundamental US objectives nor the USG basic policy with respect to RVN were understood completely, and the subtle changes (i.e., from an independent, non-communist RVN to an RVN not necessarily non-communist) that occurred over time were apparently not transmitted to the leadership in the field.

During this time period, US executive leadership changed hands four times, and the GVN executive eleven times; these leadership changes in the GVN occurred during the most important escalatory phase of the war, 1963-1967. While comparative political instability on the US-GVN side did not



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necessarily cause inconsistencies in national objectives and strategies, it certainly did make it more difficult for in-country military and civilian planners to know precisely what was expected of them. It also made it difficult for in-country planners to coordinate overall planning with their South Vietnamese counterparts. Such difficulties in coordination meant, by definition, that the cohesion of the US-SVN alliance was weaker than that of the Vietnamese communist command. In contrast, the North Vietnamese leadership underwent only one major leadership change (with the death of Ho Chi Minh in 1969) and this did not lead to any appreciable alteration in the regime's war-related policies. Moreover, the Soviet leadership changed hands only once during this period, with Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, and the Chinese leadership underwent no change during this time-frame. Of course there were power struggles and policy disputes which threatened change in the authority figures of these nations, but actual changes were at a bare minimum. On the surface, at least, continuity in the DRV, USSR, and PRC leadership allowed for a greater degree of consistency and coordination in their planning of the war than that enjoyed by US-allied military and civilian planners.

In fact, it would not be implausible to argue that GVN political instability and its concurrent over-dependence on the US were the most significant factors which contributed to the United States' inability to fashion a well-coordinated, effective, and cohesive US-SVN alliance. The United States' failure to concentrate on making the Saigon regime into a viable government, or the failure to recognize that doing so lay beyond its means, was, perhaps, America's most significant strategic mistake with regard to Vietnam.<sup>35/</sup> The South Vietnamese government was, thus, never capable of developing a national strategy independent of the US that would have enabled it to either resist or reach a satisfactory agreement with the Vietnamese communists. Simply stated, the paradox was that GVN was so dependent on the US for support that it never developed its own strategy (and capability) for successful and independent resistance against the communist forces, especially after the American withdrawal from Vietnam. At the same time, the GVN exerted enough de facto leverage over the US

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(owing to US anticommunist objectives, that made the defense of SVN seemingly imperative) that it did not have to comply with American demands for social and political reform.<sup>36/</sup> Such reform, it should be noted, might have helped the GVN to resist the communist forces once the US had withdrawn from Vietnam, by defusing popular indigenous support for the Vietnamese Communists. The ultimate strategy of President Thieu was to maintain the United States' support in order to achieve his government's overriding objective of remaining in power.<sup>37/</sup> The fatal flaw in the GVN's strategy was its assumption that the US would never allow the North Vietnamese Communists to take over South Vietnam by force.<sup>38/</sup>

### E. INSIGHTS

When trying to translate broad national objectives and strategies into specific programs that can be implemented successfully in a foreign country, the US is likely to encounter problems, the nature and seriousness of which are affected by many factors. The most significant of these include:

- the clarity and consistency of directives issued by national authorities which state national objectives and strategies;
- the willingness of subordinate commanders to request clarification of any directive or guidance considered to be too broad or vague, and the willingness and ability of these commanders to make intelligent judgments for themselves when the directives issued by national authorities remain vague, contradictory, or too broad in scope after requests for clarification;
- the willingness of (and the time available for) in-country planners, analysts, and decision makers to assess the local situation in all its social, political, economic, and political complexity;
- the nature of the local situation, including its social, political, economic, and military factors;
- the environmental or external factors influencing the nature of the local situation (for example, USSR and PRC assistance to the DRV and factors associated with such alliances);

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- the ability of and adequacy of resources available to in-country personnel (including intelligence functionaries) to perform in-country assessments, to provide realistic and honest assessments, and to make decisions on implementation; and, finally,
- the clarity and early presentation by in-country analysts and decision makers of any information relevant to national level decision making concerning global and in-country objectives and strategies.

As illustrated in this chapter, the armed forces of the DRV maintained a comparative advantage over US and GVN forces with respect to the key factors identified above. The existence of this advantage helps explain why Hanoi was comparatively more successful than the US and GVN, particularly in the long term in implementing its national objectives and strategies. One way to reduce or eliminate this advantage in the future is to insure that national objectives and strategies are translated by US leadership into clear, consistent, and concrete political and/or military terms that can be implemented by in-country civilian and military forces without the need for further radical translation.

### F. LESSONS

In conflicts involving the US and allied forces against other powers, inconsistencies and incoherence in US and allied objectives and strategies are likely to arise and pose problems for in-country and national level US and allied military planners. To some extent, these problems are, admittedly, unavoidable; the very nature of conflict embraces an incompatibility or asymmetry of objectives between principal adversaries. However, especially with respect to interrelated problems of clarity, consistency, and specificity of national objectives and strategies, US national policy makers could greatly assist in-country planners by insuring the maximum reasonable clarity, consistency, and specificity in any directives they transmitted. The precise determination of what is maximally reasonable must be made at both the national political and military levels, where

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explicit interpretation of national policy should occur before in-country planners are engaged. It is important that this determination be the result of prior, conscientious deliberation, rather than of default or over-rationalization as sometimes occurred during the Vietnam conflict.

CHAPTER 1 ENDNOTES

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3. For a detailed analysis of North Vietnamese, Soviet, and Chinese objectives and strategies, see Volume I, particularly Chapters 1, 6, and 7. For analyses of South Vietnamese and US objectives and strategies, refer to Volume II, especially Chapters 5 and 7, and Volume III, especially Chapter 1, and this Volume, Passim. For a discussion of the national objectives and strategies of other allies of the US, see also Chapter 3 of this Volume.
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6. Palmer, p. 11.
7. Figure 1-1 is adapted from Volume I - The Enemy, Chapter 6 - "External Support" and from other sources appearing in the Volume V bibliography and, particularly, those appearing in this Chapter's endnotes.
8. Gurtov, p. 63.
9. Douglass Pike, Vietnam War: View From The Other Side (Saigon: December 1967), p. 24.
10. Donald S. Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle: Moscow, Peking, Hanoi (New York: Praeger Press, 1967), pp. 132-133; and "The Viet Cong Political Infrastructure in South Vietnam" (A SEATO Short Paper - 55) History of the Vietnam War on Microfilm (Bangkok: The Research Office, South-East Asia Treaty Organization, 1972), pp. 48-49.

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11. Figure 1-2 is adapted from Volume I - The Enemy, Chapter 1 - "The Enemy's Goals," and other sources appearing in the Volume V Bibliography and, particularly, in this Chapter's endnotes.
12. Pike, p. 20.
13. See Volume I, Chapter 6.
14. Figure 1-3 is adapted from Volume I, Chapter 6; and Collins, "Vietnam Postmortem...".
15. See Volume I, Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of Peking's ideological support.
16. Zagoria, pp. 23-29.
17. See Volume III, US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975, Chapters 1, 2, 3 for a discussion of these influential factors.
18. Figure 1-4 was adapted from Volume III, Chapter 1, "US Global Policy and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia, 1945-1975;" The 5-year "slice" methodology was chosen as a neutral and clinical research tool by which to assess US global and Vietnam-related interests, objectives, perceived threats, and strategies for the period 1945-1975. See Volume III, Chapter 1, pp. 1-2 - 1-3 for a fuller explanation.
19. Figure 1-5 was based on Volume III, Chapter 1.
20. BG J. L. Collins, Jr. and LTG S. R. Larsen, Allied Participation In Vietnam, Vietnam Studies, (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1975), pp. 6-7.
21. Figure 1-6 is based on information appearing in: Collins and Larsen, and Ruth C. Lawson, ed., International Regional Organizations. Constitutional Foundations (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), Section IV - South Pacific.
22. For a more detailed discussion, see Collins and Larsen, the following sections: ROK, pp. 125-129; Thailand, p. 37; and Philippines, pp. 53-54
23. Ibid.
24. Gurtov, pp. 52-55.
25. Ibid., p. 58.
26. Ibid.

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27. Collins, "Vietnam Postmortem...", p. 1.
28. Gurtov, p. 54.
29. Collins, p. 2.
30. See Gurtov, "Hanoi on War and Peace;" also, see King C. Chen, "Hanoi Vs. Peking: Policies and Relations - A Survey," Asian Survey, Vol. XII, No. 9, September 1972. See also, Volume I, Chapter 6.
31. US Department of the Army, Study of the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam (Short Title: PROVN), March 1966., Annex F. "Trace of US Policy and Objectives in Time," pp. F-3 and F-4; and US DoD study performed by the ISA, Long Range Planning Group Prepared for the Secretary of Defense in May 1971, copy on file at BDM Corporation, McLean Virginia, with cover memorandum for Dr. N. F. Wikner, Special Assistant for Threat Analysis, Director of Defense Research and Engineering, Subject: Forming a Long-Range Group in the DoD, dated, 20 May 1971.
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35. Paul Y. Hammond, Cold War and Detente (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), p. 242.
36. Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian M. Jenkins, The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements By Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders. R-2208-OSD (HIST) (Santa Monica, California: The RAND Corporation, December 1978), pp. 11-15.
37. Interview with Ambassador Ell Bunker, conducted at the BDM Corporation, McLean, Va., on October 8, 1979.
38. Hosmer et.al.; and an interview with Ambassador Samuel Burger, conducted at his residence in Washington, D.C. on June 22, 1979.

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## CHAPTER 2 US FOREIGN POLICY

Our policy in Vietnam is the same as it was one year ago and . . . it is the same as it was ten years ago. That policy [is] to assure the independence of South Vietnam in the face of communist subversion and aggression.1/

Lyndon B. Johnson  
President of the United States,  
1965.

Aspiring to world hegemony, the US holds out dollars in one hand to entice people and brandishes the atomic bomb in the other to menace the world. The Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, NATO Pact, and Programs for Southeast Asia are all US maneuvers aimed at preparing for a third world war. 2/

Ho Chi Minh  
Selected Writings  
(February 1951)

### A. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the period of this study, the fundamental US policy with respect to Vietnam, and for that matter for the whole of Indochina, was to assure and promote its self-determination and independence in the face of communist-inspired subversion and aggression. Although the official pronouncements from six different presidential administrations reinforced this broad fundamental policy, there were some clear variations within that policy over time. Initially, the goal was an independent (that is, independence within the French Union) non-communist Vietnam, later an independent non-communist South Vietnam leading to a unified Vietnam, then simply to an independent non-communist South Vietnam, and finally an independent South Vietnam not necessarily non-communist. So too the policy with respect to negotiations changed from one of refusing to negotiate "to ratify terror", to seeking negotiations on American terms, and finally to negotiating at almost any price.3/



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Volume III of this study, entitled US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975, provides the reader an in-depth assessment of the US involvement in Vietnam through an examination of the global context in which that involvement occurred, the major historical precedents influencing US involvement and the US national-level policy process which shaped that involvement. Volume IV, entitled US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making, explores the US domestic scene, including its political and economic components, the role of the media during the conflict, and the extent of domestic support for the government's policies toward the war. In addition, Chapter 1 of this Volume provides a comparison of the objectives and strategies between the US and its allies and those of the North Vietnamese and their allies. The information developed in the foregoing will serve as the basis for the analysis of US policy developed herein.

This chapter will examine the effectiveness of US foreign policy in providing support for US objectives in Vietnam. In so doing, a phased assessment in the following major periods will be developed:

### Phase 1: 1945 to 1961

This phase was marked by the return of France to Indochina, the establishment of a Vietnam state under Bao Dai with a constitution, US provision of military assistance to Vietnam with the establishment of a MAAG, the Geneva Conference, the consolidation of the Diem "miracle" regime and national elections, growing internal dissidence and guerrilla activity.

### Phase 2: 1961 to 1965

The impact of the Kennedy years and the beginning of the Johnson Administration were the hallmarks of this period. The years find the NLF coming into being, and expansion of US military and economic support. The advisory effort to Diem is rapidly built up, coup attempts become frequent, Diem is assassinated and revolving door governments become a characteristic.

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### Phase 3: 1965 to 1969

This phase was truly the Johnson Administration; the hangover effects of the Kennedy Administration had disappeared. It was the period of the "Big War", the effort to substitute American military power for local weaknesses and inadequacies. The US built up ground, air and naval strength; the bombing of the North was initiated, and B-52's became an active weapon system for the US. Efforts were made to "internationalize" the war in Vietnam by encouraging friendly nations to dispatch troops to assist South Vietnam. The 1968 Tet attack occurred and later that year President Johnson announced he would not seek reelection. The later years of this period saw the initiation of negotiations in Paris in an effort to bring peace to Vietnam. President Nixon was elected and one of his campaign promises was withdrawal "with honor" from Vietnam.

### Phase 4: 1969 to 1975

This phase was the period of withdrawal and saw the collapse of South Vietnam. It was the era of the Nixon Administration, Watergate and the Ford Administration. It was marked by Executive-Congressional confrontation, negotiations for the withdrawal of US Armed Forces and the return of our P.O.W.s. The early years of the period were hopeful ones of signs that the South Vietnamese were succeeding militarily, politically and economically. The permanence of those signs was, however, heavily dependent on US objectives and the policies to implement them. Frequently consensus on US/GVN objectives and how they should be achieved was lacking, although Vietnamese existence and viability was contingent on that consensus.

As an added feature, the analysis herein will include an assessment of the relative effectiveness of the various US Embassy country teams (especially the functions of the ambassadors and military commanders) with respect to the implementation of US foreign policy and providing support for US objectives in Vietnam

Significant insights and lessons generated from this effort are presented in paragraph C and D below.

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## B. PHASED ASSESSMENT OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

### 1. Historical Antecedents

Ambivalence and uncertainty characterized US foreign policy with respect to Southeast Asia during World War II. On the one hand, the US repeatedly assured France that its colonial possessions would be returned to it after the war. On the other hand, the US committed itself in the Atlantic Charter to support national self-determination, and President Roosevelt personally advocated independence for Indochina by expressing a desire to place it under U.N. trusteeship after the war. Ultimately, US policy was governed neither by the principles of the Atlantic Charter, nor by FDR's anticolonialism, but by the dictates of military strategy which focused US war effort in the Pacific on the defeat of the Japanese homeland. Indochina was not perceived as "vital" to US interests in that part of the world. Notwithstanding FDR's lip service on the subject, for all practical purposes there was no US policy toward Southeast Asia when Harry S. Truman became president following Roosevelt's death in 1945.

### 2. Phase 1: 1945 to 1961

After WWII, the US acquiesced to the reestablishment of French colonial rule in Vietnam, and in so doing, embarked on a passive policy of noninvolvement. At the time, Indochina appeared to be one region in the troubled postwar world in which the US might enjoy the luxury of abstention, but events in Europe and China changed the context from mid-1947 on. A worldwide US policy evolved--containment of spreading communism. In keeping with that policy, President Truman, after much hesitation, decided that anticommunism was more important than anticolonialism in Indochina. As a result, direct US involvement in Southeast Asian affairs was formally launched when Secretary of State Acheson announced in May 1950 that the US would provide military and economic assistance to the French and their Indochinese allies for the purpose of combating communist expansion.

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### a. US Objectives (See Figure 2-1)

Late in 1949 and early 1950, the National Security Council (NSC) developed objectives for US foreign policy with respect to Asia (NSC 48/2) and Indochina (NSC-64) which served as the basis for US policy for that area until 1952. Those objectives were keyed to blocking communist expansion and internal subversion in Asia by:

- Establishing collective security arrangements between and/or with Asian nations; or
- Collaborating with major European allies and commonwealth countries; or, that failing,
- Establishing bilateral cooperation between separate Asian nations.

Following a NSC review of the communist threat in Southeast Asia in 1952, President Truman approved a new statement of objectives and policy:

To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit, and to assist them to develop the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.<sup>4/</sup>

President Eisenhower took office in the context of negotiations for a settlement in Korea and the possible defeat of France in Indochina. As the French position in Vietnam deteriorated under constant pressure from the Viet Minh, and as indications that France might accept a political settlement adverse to US interests grew, the NSC reconsidered basic US objectives with respect to Southeast Asia. On January 16, 1954, President Eisenhower approved a NSC proposal committing the US to make every effort to influence France against settling for anything inconsistent with the basic American objectives below:

To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit; to persuade them that their best interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and to assist them to develop toward stable, free governments

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INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES BY FINDING AND SUPPORTING VIABLE, NATIONALIST, NON-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP</li> <li>- PROTECT INDOCHINA AS A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT STRATEGIC REGION               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROTECT THE OFF-SHORE ISLAND CHAIN</li> <li>- PREVENT FALLING DOMINOS BY SUPPORTING VIETNAM AS ONE OF THOSE DOMINOS</li> <li>- PREVENT LOSS OF STRATEGIC MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THE COMPLETION OF US STOCKPILE PROJECTS</li> <li>- PREVENT ITS LOSS AS A CROSS-ROAD OF COMMUNICATIONS</li> <li>- PREVENT LOSS OF INDOCHINA BECAUSE IT IS A VITAL SEGMENT IN LINE OF CONTAINMENT AND AS BASE FOR OPERATIONS IN CONTAINING COMMUNISM</li> <li>- PRESERVE RESOURCE BASE FOR JAPAN AND THE FREE WORLD</li> </ul> </li> <li>- MAINTAIN WORLDWIDE RESPECT FOR US LEADERSHIP AND BE READY TO RESPOND RESOLUTELY WHEN CHALLENGED, I.E. IN INDOCHINA</li> <li>- PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION OF A FREE AND INDEPENDENT VIETNAM UNDER ANTI-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP</li> <li>- ENCOURAGE PEOPLES OF ASIAN STATES TO TAKE LEADERSHIP IN MEETING COMMON PROBLEMS OF THE AREA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLONIALISM AND BRITISH/FRENCH ATTITUDE TOWARDS COLONIES</li> <li>• THE SOVIET UNION IN ASIA:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SOVIET CONTROL OR PRESENCE IN THE FAR EAST AS THREAT TO BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA</li> <li>- THREAT OF KREMLIN-DIRECTED SUBVERSIVE COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS</li> <li>- COMMUNIST AFFILIATION OF HO CHI MINH</li> <li>- LOSS OF CHINA TO COMMUNIST ORBIT</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM OVER THE CONTINENT OF ASIA, INCLUDING CHINA, NORTH KOREA, AND NORTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• ASIANS' DISTRUST OF COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE US ATTEMPT TO CULTIVATE TIES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA</li> <li>• THE IMPROVEMENT OF VIET MINH CAPABILITIES SINCE GENEVA (1954)</li> <li>• TURBULENCE IN LAOS</li> <li>• SUBVERSION AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNIST INSURRECTION</li> <li>• COMMUNIST POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE EXPLOITATION OF WEAKER NON-COMMUNIST STATES' BACKWARDNESS</li> <li>• POSSIBLE COATHNESS OF US ALLIES TO DEFEND ASIAN STATES AS PROVIDED FOR BY UN CHARTER OR SEATO OBLIGATIONS</li> <li>• NEUTRALITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASSIST THE FRENCH IN INDOCHINA IN OPPOSING COMMUNISM           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESTABLISH MILITARY MISSION</li> <li>- COVERT OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TO INTERFERE WITH COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES</li> <li>- GENERAL NEGOTIATIONS</li> <li>- SEATO: REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>- UNITED ACTION TO CURTAIL AGGRESSION IN INDOCHINA</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE OF COLONIES           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRUSTEESHIP AND NEUTRALITY CONCEPTS</li> <li>- REQUEST FRENCH INDICATION OF GOOD WILL REGARDING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN INDOCHINA</li> <li>- ARTICLE 73 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER</li> <li>- NSC 48/2 URGE FRANCE TO ENGENDER VIETNAMESE SUPPORT FOR NON-COMMUNIST NATIONALIST LEADERS SUCH AS BAO DAI</li> </ul> </li> <li>• TRUMAN DOCTRINE DIRECT AID (ECONOMIC, MILITARY, POLITICAL) TO PROMOTE THE PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONS</li> <li>• USE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE AS PROVIDED FOR BY THE MUTUAL DEFENSE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR ASIA</li> <li>• DETER CHINESE INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA BY US THREAT OF USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS</li> <li>• FROM NSC 5809           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH-EAST ASIA</li> <li>- ASSIST POLICE FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES TO OBTAIN TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT TO DETECT AND CONTAIN COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES</li> <li>- IMPLEMENT APPROPRIATE COVERT OPERATIONS DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF US OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>- PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP SOUTHEAST ASIAN STABILITY, INDEPENDENCE AND NON-RELIANCE ON COMMUNIST BLOC FOR ASSISTANCE</li> <li>- PROMOTE MULTI-LATERAL TRADE, CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS AND US INVESTMENT IN THE REGION</li> <li>- ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL INDIGENOUS FORCES TO FIGHT COMMUNISM</li> <li>- MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF US FORCES IN THE FAR EAST ASIA AREA TO EXERT A DETERRING INFLUENCE ON COMMUNIST AGGRESSION</li> <li>- INVOKE REGIONAL SECURITY OBLIGATIONS (SEATO) WHEN NECESSARY TO HALT AGGRESSION</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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Figure 2-1. Summary of US Policy Toward Southeast Asia and Vietnam, 1945-1961

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with the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world. 5/

US intervention into the Vietnam conflict became a distinct prospect as a French defeat there became imminent. Having pressed diplomatically for a constructive outcome during the Geneva Conference of 1954, the US placed its support behind Ngo Dinh Diem and the Government of South Vietnam. Despite a series of severe tests, that government succeeded in consolidating itself and making significant progress with US support. US justification for its foreign policy objectives toward Vietnam for this period included the following:

- The loss of Vietnam, the most vulnerable state of Southeast Asia, would imperil the other nations of the region, and ultimately lead to a seriously weakened US strategic position. Vietnam was a key to continued free world access to the human and material resources of Southeast Asia.
- Communist China was pursuing an expansionist policy relying upon subversive aggression. China thus continued to reflect the unchanging Soviet objective of world conquest, and both had manifest designs on Southeast Asia.
- The US acted, through its aid programs, to help the small and weak nations contiguous with communist powers to maintain their freedom and independence.
- In the words of President Eisenhower, "We gave military and economic assistance to the Republic of Vietnam. We entered into a treaty -- the Southeast Asia Security Treaty -- which plainly warned that an armed attack against this area would endanger our own peace and safety and that we would act accordingly."

5/

- US Aid for Vietnam -- economic and military -- made possible not only its survival, but also genuine progress toward a stable society, an improved economy, and internal and external security.

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### b. US Foreign Policy

The following perceptions dominated US thinking and foreign policy-making during this period:

- The growing importance of Asia in world politics. It was thought that the withdrawal of the French from Indochina would create power vacuums and conditions of instability which would make Asia susceptible to becoming a battleground in the then-growing East-West cold war conflict.
- The tendency to give credence to the worldwide communist threat in monolithic terms. This view was based on the relatively extensive influence exerted by the Soviet Union over other communist nations and over the communist parties in non-communist states. Moreover, the West, especially the US, felt challenged by the expansionist policies openly proclaimed by leaders of virtually all communist movements of the period.
- The attempt of the Viet Minh to evict the French from Indochina as part of the communist plan of world domination. The attempt of Ho Chi Minh's communist regime to evict the French from Indochina was seen as part of the Southeast Asian manifestation of the communist worldwide aggressive intent. France was seen as taking a crucial stand against expanding world communism.
- The tendency to interpret security as a function of the internal order maintained by individual states. The policy of containing communism (Truman Doctrine) not only viewed security as a function of the balance of power between states but also of the internal order of all states. Advocates of this doctrine tended to equate security with the maintenance of a world order that, under US leadership, would ensure the triumph of American values (or at least ensure that US interests would be served).

The above perceptions contributed to a widely held assumption by the US leadership that if Indochina was lost to communism, the remaining nations of Southeast Asia would be infiltrated by communists and eventually fall by chain reaction. This strategic concept, which came to

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be known as the "domino theory",<sup>7/</sup> was developed at the time of the Nationalist withdrawal from mainland China but before the outbreak of the Korean War. A position paper developed by the NSC on February 27, 1950, launched the domino principle when it concluded with the following statement:

It is important to United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat. The neighboring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina were controlled by a Communist-dominated government. The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard.<sup>8/</sup>

The startling successes of Mao and his communist movement in China during the late forties brought the US to a new awareness of the vigor of communism in Asia, and to a sense of urgency over its containment. US policy instruments developed to meet unequivocal communist challenges in Europe were applied to the problem of the Far East. Concurrent with the development of NATO, a US search began for collective security in Asia; economic and military assistance programs were inaugurated; and the Truman Doctrine acquired wholly new dimensions by extensions into regions where the European empires were being dismantled. The following general policy set forth by President Truman prevailed during that time frame:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way....<sup>9/</sup>

Truman was determined to commit US resources to contain communism. While he clearly subordinated military aid to economic and political means, he did assert the US interest to assist in maintaining security:

We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free



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institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them a totalitarian regime.10/

The outbreak of the Korean War, and the US decision to meet the North Korean aggression, rekindled the Truman Administration's interest and concerns about Southeast Asia. The American military response in Korea symbolized the basic belief that holding the line in Asia was essential to American security interest. The French struggle in Indochina was seen as an integral part of the US policy of containing communism in that region of the world. In furtherance of that policy, Secretary of State Acheson announced the US decision to provide military and economic assistance to the French in May of 1950:

The United States Government, convinced that neither national independence nor democratic evolution exist in any area dominated by Soviet imperialism, considers the situation to be such as to warrant its according economic aid and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development.11/

The possibility of a large-scale Chinese intervention in Indochina, similar to the one experienced in Korea in late 1950, came to dominate the thinking of US policy-makers. The likelihood of such an intervention existed. The Chinese had large numbers of troops massed along the Tonkin border and they were providing material assistance to the Viet Minh. In time, however, the intelligence community forecast decreasing probabilities of the Indochina war being broadened. Notwithstanding intelligence estimates and reports of the French position undergoing deterioration, the NSC undertook in 1952 to list a course of action for the "resolute defense" of Indochina in the event of a large-scale Chinese intervention. Consideration was not given, however, to the possible collapse of the French effort and their eventual withdrawal from the area. The upshot was that the NSC recommended the US increase its level of aid to French Union forces but "without relieving the French authorities of their basic military responsibility for the defense of the Associated States."12/

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In his first State of the Union Message on February 3, 1953, President Eisenhower promised a "new, positive foreign policy." 13/ He went on to link the communist aggression in Korea and Malaya with Indochina. His Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, spoke of Korea and Indochina as two flanks, with the principal enemy--Red China--in the center.14/ In short, the new administration clearly embraced the global strategy of containment of communism, while specifically announcing its intentions to prevent the loss of Indochina by taking a more forthright, anticommunist stand. Furthermore, the "domino theory" and the assumptions behind it were never questioned. The vulnerability of the Southeast Asian nations was accepted as Eisenhower pointed out on August 4, 1953:

If Indochina goes, several things will happen right away. The Malayan Peninsula, the last little bit of the end hanging on down there, would be scarcely defensible--and the tin and tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming. But all India would be outflanked. Burma would certainly, in its weakened condition, be no defense. Now, India is surrounded on that side by the communist empire. Iran on its left is in a weakened condition ... so you see, somewhere along the line, this must be blocked. It must be blocked now. That is what the French are doing.15/

In spite of his administration's "hardline" against communist expansion in Indochina, Eisenhower tended to pursue a policy of "minimum action" to prevent the loss of Vietnam to communism. Sherman Adams, Eisenhower's White House Chief of Staff, explained how the problem was seen in the mid-1950's:

If the Communists had pushed on with an aggressive offensive after the fall of Dienbienphu, instead of stopping and agreeing to stay out of Southern Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, there was a strong possibility that the United States would have moved against them. A complete Communist conquest of Indochina would have had a far graver consequence for the West than a Red victory in Korea.16/

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The Eisenhower Administration was forced to come to full grips with the question of direct US intervention in the late 1953-early 1954 timeframe as the fall of Indochina seemed to become imminent.

The President decided against US intervention in force as proposed by Vice President Nixon and Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Further, he ruled against the advice of Army Chief of Staff Ridgway, who opposed any action that would lead to the commitment of US ground combat forces in an Asia land war. Ultimately, he treaded a middle path of doing just enough to balance off contradictory domestic, bureaucratic and international pressures. The US government paid almost all the French war costs, increased the supply of US military hardware, increased the US military advisory mission in Vietnam, and maintained the threat of US intervention, first by "United Action" (with European and Asian Allies) and then by forming the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

The fall of Dien Bien Phu, and the failure to organize an intervention through "United Action" prior to the beginning of the Geneva Conference in April 1954, led to a reappraisal of the "domino theory." The loss of Tonkin, or Vietnam or perhaps even all of Indochina, was no longer considered to lead inexorably to the loss to communism of all of Southeast Asia. Accordingly, Secretary Dulles in a press conference in May 11, 1954 (four days after the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu), observed that "Southeast Asia could be secured even without perhaps Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia." 17/

Later, as the US became reconciled to a political settlement at Geneva which would yield northern Vietnam to the Ho Chi Minh regime, the concept of "United Action" was given a new twist. It was transformed into an attempt to organize a long-range collective defense alliance which would offset the setback in Indochina and prevent further losses. The loss of North Vietnam to the Viet Minh was no longer viewed as leading to a complete communist takeover of the non-communist countries in Southeast Asia. Eventually, in SEATO, the US sought to create an alliance which would be strong enough to withstand the fall of one such domino.

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Though the Geneva Accords conformed closely to the terms proposed by the US, the settlement was viewed by some members of the administration to contain the elements of defeat. Part of the Free World's "assets" in the Far East had been "lost" to the Sino-Soviet bloc (much as China had been "lost" to Mao Tse-tung's forces). In addition, allies of the US had backed away from an opportunity to deal with the communists by force of arms (United Action). And lastly, the US had been compelled to attend an international conference which conferred to the communists by diplomacy what they had gained by force.

In public statements and later in his memoirs, President Eisenhower gave glimpses of his reasoning with respect to this period. At the time of Dien Bien Phu, he noted:

It is very important, and the great idea of setting up an organism is so as to defeat the domino result. When, each standing alone, one falls, it has effect on the next, and finally the whole row is down. You are trying, through a unifying influence, to build that row of dominoes so they can stand the fall of one, if necessary.

Now, so far as I am concerned, I don't think the free world ought to write off Indochina. I think we ought to all look at this thing with some optimism and some determination. I repeat that long faces and defeatism don't win battles. 18/

Later Ike wrote, "I am convinced that the French could not win the war because the internal political situation in Vietnam, weak and confused, badly weakened their military position." Nevertheless, he persevered, believing that "the decision to give aid (to the French) was almost compulsory. The United States had no real alternative unless we were to abandon Southeast Asia." 19/

The Geneva Accords Conference of 1954 was followed by more than a year of pessimism over the future of Indochina. Despite or perhaps because of that pessimism, the US stepped-up its aid to South Vietnam. In the fall of 1956, Secretary Dulles said, "We have a clean base there now,

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without a taint of colonialism. Dien Bien Phu was a blessing in disguise." 20/ The years of "guarded optimism" began. The French defeat had cost the US about \$3 billion and an immeasurable loss of prestige in Southeast Asia. Further, the US accepted a territorial compromise with the communists rather than chancing the direct involvement of US combat forces. However, more critically, Eisenhower had elected to replace the French and maintain a direct US presence in Indochina. With strong rhetoric, military advisors and training programs, support for Ngo Dinh Diem (especially his refusal to hold elections as called for by the Geneva Accords), and renewing military and economic assistance, the US, in effect, "created" the new state of South Vietnam. Thereafter, several years of military quiet and social progress in South Vietnam resulted.

US policy with respect to Vietnam during the balance of the Eisenhower years was announced by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs on June 1, 1956, about eight months after the US recognized President Diem as Chief of State of Vietnam.

That policy was stated as follows:

To support a friendly non-Communist government in Viet-Nam and to help it diminish and eventually eradicate Communist subversion and influence.

To help the Government of Viet-Nam establish the forces necessary for internal security.

To encourage support for Free Viet-Nam by the non-Communist world.

To aid in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of a country and people ravaged by 8 ruinous years of civil and international war. 21/

### c. Implementing Programs

The following key programs were developed and tailored for the implementation of US foreign policy in Southeast Asia during this period:

- The Mutual Defense Assistance Program. On March 10, 1950, President Truman approved more than \$10 million in urgently needed aid

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for Indochina from funds previously appropriated under the Mutual Defense Program for "the general area of China." This was followed by an official announcement in May 1950, by Secretary of State Acheson of a long-range program of economic and military assistance to France and the three countries of Indochina. On December 23, 1950, the Truman administration signed the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (Pentalateral Agreement) with France, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The agreement was authorized by Public Law 329, 81st Congress, and provided for aid through France to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Under the program the US committed itself to furnish military supplies, material and equipment for the purpose of halting the expansion of Communism in Indochina, and an American Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina was formed to administer the support. Initially, US advisers functioned only as a small logistical accounting group and exercised little, if any, supervisory authority since US supplies and equipment were generally turned over to the French Expeditionary Corps for distribution as they deemed appropriate. After Dien Bien Phu and the departure of the French "middle men", the US began sending direct assistance to the Vietnamese Armed Forces on the basis of the Pentalateral Agreement. As a result, military personnel of the MAAG became increasingly involved in the organization and training of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. An Eisenhower administration spokesman described that effort in 1956 as follows:

Our efforts are directed first of all toward helping to sustain the internal security forces consisting of a regular army of about 150,000 men, a mobile civil guard of some 45,000, and local defense units which are being formed to give protection against subversion on the village level. We are providing budgetary support and equipment for these forces and have a mission assisting the training of the army. We are also helping to organize, train, and equip the Vietnamese police force. 22/

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- Economic Aid Programs. On September 7, 1951, the US signed an agreement authorized by Public Law 535, 81st Congress, with Premier Tran Van Huu's government providing for direct US economic aid to Vietnam. On March 7, 1955, the US, under the Eisenhower administration, and the government of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem signed an agreement which supplemented the previous economic aid pact. Initially, the program was designed to help sustain and strengthen the Vietnamese economy during its struggle to overcome communist subversion. After 1955, the aid focused on the basic development of the strife-torn Vietnamese economy and on projects contributing directly to that goal.

d. In-Country Conformance and Implementation of US Policy

The US commitment to Vietnam in the early fifties was enigmatic. While the success of American policy depended upon a steady increase in the authority, prestige and popularity of a non-communist Vietnamese government, it also depended upon a continued French military effort; yet the more power the French allowed the Vietnamese to have, the less the reason for the French to stay and fight. When the US ambassador Donald R. Heath attempted to use the prospect of aid as leverage to obtain greater independence for the Bao Dai government 23/, the French countered with a veiled threat to pull out of the struggle. Both Washington and the Embassy in Saigon, conscious of the lack of leverage with the French and unsure of the appeal of the Bao Dai government to the Vietnamese people, viewed the abandonment of Vietnam to communism as their only other alternative--one which was totally unacceptable.

The first US military supplies arrived in Vietnam in June 1950 and the first contingent of American military officers and men arrived in Saigon later that year. Under Brigadier General Francis G. Brink, they formed the nucleus of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, which was subsequently redesignated the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAG-V). Their organization was of the same type as used at that time in other countries receiving US military assistance--consisting of a joint headquarters with Army, Air Force and Navy officers and men. The

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MAAG functioned as part of the US diplomatic mission. They were primarily concerned with processing requests for aid and with inspecting the use made of furnished items. Training assistance to either the French or the fledgling Vietnamese Army was not allowed.<sup>24/</sup>

The US diplomatic mission in Vietnam had moderate success in carrying out the US policy in the early fifties. There was a concerted effort made to expand the MAAG and take over the training of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, but the French were adamant against it.<sup>25/</sup> In 1953 Bao Dai convinced the French to agree to expanding his Army. The US Embassy concurred in increased aid for the French, which President Eisenhower finally approved after pressuring the French into developing a positive military plan (discussed below) that had promise of success in two years. The plan failed and the US, fearing a French withdrawal and a communist takeover, upped the ante again, hoping to salvage something. The military training of the Vietnamese Armed forces continued to be the purview of the French Expeditionary Corps, and personnel of the US advisory group had little, if any, influence and no authority in that matter. Because of the restriction, the chief function of the MAAG was to make sure that equipment supplied by the US reached its prescribed destination and that it was properly maintained by the French. It was a frustrating task at best.

To assess the value and effectiveness of US military aid and to try to exert influence in at least some proportion to the growing US commitment, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific, sent Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel, Commanding General, US Army, Pacific, on three trips to Indochina. General O'Daniel's trips were made after General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny had been replaced by General Raoul Salan on 1 April 1952, and after General Henri-Eugene Navarre had succeeded General Salan in May of the following year. General O'Daniel's efforts to observe the activities of the French command were only moderately successful. In no way was he able to influence either plans or operations.

General Navarre realized from the beginning that the French Union forces were overextended and tied to defensive positions. He developed a military plan, subsequently named after him, that called for expanding the Vietnamese National Army and assigning it the defensive missions,



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thus releasing French forces for mobile operations. General Navarre also intended to form more light mobile battalions, and he expected reinforcements from France. With additional US arms and equipment for his forces, Navarre planned to hold the Red River Delta and Cochinchina while building up his mobile reserves. By avoiding decisive battles during the dry season from October 1953 to April 1954, Navarre hoped to assemble his mobile strike forces for an offensive that by 1955 would result in a draw at least. The military plan had a pacification counterpart that would secure the areas under Viet Minh influence.

His plans were unsuccessful, however, despite increased US shipments of arms and equipment. The French politely but firmly prevented American advisers and General O'Daniel from intervening in what they considered their own business. Following instructions from Paris to block the communist advance into Laos, General Navarre in November 1953 decided to occupy and defend Dien Bien Phu. This fatal decision was based on grave miscalculations, and the Viet Minh overran Dien Bien Phu on 8 May 1954. Their tactical victory marked the end of effective French military operations in the first Indochina War, although fighting continued until 20 July, the date the Geneva Accords were signed.<sup>26/</sup>

After the Geneva Accords and the signing of the SEATO treaty the US moved to replace the French in South Vietnam. Ambassador Heath presented Ngo Dinh Diem, then premier, a letter from President Eisenhower wherein the president asserted the willingness of the US to assist the South Vietnamese "in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means," but he hinged the offer upon "performance on the part of the GVN in undertaking needed reforms "<sup>27/</sup> Furthermore, the president directed that American assistance would go direct to Diem's government and not through the French as before.

Although several key advisers <sup>28/</sup> to President Eisenhower felt Premier Diem should be replaced because he seemed to lack the leadership qualities needed to overcome divisive elements, Diem was able to dominate the opposing religious sects (Cao Dai and Hoa Hao), put down the

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powerful Saigon-based Mafia (Binh Xuyen), control dissident South Vietnamese generals and retain US support for his government.

The US embassy in Saigon under the leadership of Ambassadors G. Frederick Reinhardt (1955-1957) and Elbridge Durbrow (1957-1961), and the MAAG under Lt. Generals Samuel T. Williams (1955-1960) and Lionel C. McGarr oversaw US economic and military assistance for Diem's government during this phase. Their attempts at exercising leverage over Diem, however, were not effective. Diem had firmly ensconced himself as president of the RVN, handled the massive Northern refugee resettlement problem, promulgated a constitution and had a constituent assembly elected, and made a modest start at land reform and pacification of the countryside. All was not roses, because Diem became heavy handed and authoritarian, squelching opposing political parties, censoring the press and engaging sometimes in brutal repression. He became a confident ruler, and much to the chagrin of US officials, was able to manipulate his intended manipulators.

This era was marked by General Williams' MAAG organizing, equipping and training the RVNAF to meet a conventional military threat while countrywide RVN was facing an increasing insurgency threat. President Diem sought to increase his armed forces so he asked the US to let him have extra troops. He wanted to create a special counter-guerrilla force; however, both Ambassador Durbrow and General Williams opposed that effort. Instead, the US took the position that what was needed was not more troops but governmental reforms and better utilization of existing forces.<sup>29/</sup>

Although President Diem seemingly accepted the US recommendations, little changed and the reforms never took place. Shortly thereafter, Diem overcame a poorly-organized coup attempt. The Chief, MAAG pressed for approval of a troop increase to show continued support for Diem, and it was quickly approved. Diem got his way without having to make any concessions to the USG. Regardless of the direction and guidance from Washington, the US country team had difficulty applying effectively any leverage on Diem's GVN.

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### e. Assessment of Phase I Effectiveness

American foreign policy during this phase was based on the containment of Soviet Communism, a policy that, in its origins, was modest and limited in its geographical scope and objectives. What began as a policy that was focused on Europe, directed primarily against the expansion of Soviet power, and designed to restore a balance of power, ended as a policy unlimited in geographic scope, directed against communism (or against any radical revolution), and designed to preserve a global status quo bearing little, if any, relation to the balance of power.

US policy with respect to Indochina and specifically Vietnam was a subset of the US-Soviet strategic relationship. Over time, US leaders saw Vietnam as a vital factor in alliance politics, US Soviet-Chinese relations, and deterrence. The record of US military and economic assistance to fight communism in Indochina tells the story quite clearly. From 1945 to 1954 US aid to France totaled about \$3.0 billion. Without that aid the French position in Indochina would have been untenable. The US commitment--deny the communists control over the region--was rationalized in 1950 and was set in 1955 when the US replaced the French in Vietnam.

In his last reflections on the war, Bernard Fall concluded that US policy during this phase had "not been able to produce a coherent frame of reference within which to operate."<sup>30/</sup> He argued that the lack of a clear commitment coupled with certain ambiguities--seeking peace in Korea while providing first the French and then South Vietnam and Laos the material base for a "die-hard" attitude--contributed to US problems in Indochina. Further, he faulted the US for not applying leverage on France in Indochina (similar to the pressure applied on the Netherlands in Indonesia) to come to a peaceful arrangement with local nationalists. It remains however, that if France stopped carrying the torch in Indochina, the US might have had to pick it up and do battle on its own. Knowing this, the French even threatened Washington with withdrawal if funds were not made available.<sup>31/</sup> The US wanted the French to continue fighting communism in Indochina as well as remain as a NATO bulwark against communism in Europe. Therefore, American global priorities and alternatives set overall limits on US leverage on France in Indochina.

The progress made during this period was something of a success. This was especially true for South Vietnam in the early years of the US-supported Diem regime. The immediate US objective of preventing a communist takeover of the entire region had been accomplished through improvements in the domestic and economic stability of the anticommunist governments. Diem had promulgated a constitution, had a constituent assembly selected, put down dissident and divisive elements, and promoted social and economic reforms with much success.

The situation inherited by President Kennedy when he took office was rich in rhetoric and momentum. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles had:

- evoked the domino theory, reinforcing US international and domestic political stakes in the future of South Vietnam (containment through rhetoric).
- substituted US presence for the French presence in Vietnam (US resolve demonstrated through direct presence and aid)
- made the GVN almost totally dependent on the US (an unfortunate side effect of the US involvement) because of the increased magnitude of US presence.
- kept the US out of the war during Dien Bien Phu by making "united action" a precondition to US involvement, but also kept the US in Vietnam with his support for Diem
- had "lost" the northern part of Vietnam to communism, but through the SEATO pact contributed to improved regional security.

Only the long term goal of a regional political settlement remained, or so it appeared when John F. Kennedy assumed the Presidency in 1961.

3. Phase 2: 1961 to 1965 (See Figure 2-2)

This phase began in an aura of domestic sacrifice and international confrontation. During his tenure as president, John Kennedy deepened the American involvement in Vietnam considerably. The US had greatly increased the number of military advisers in Vietnam, napalm and other antipersonnel weapons had been authorized for limited use against the

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT PRC'S POWER DRIVE IN ASIA BEFORE MAJOR CONFLAGRATION RESULTS</li> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• PRESERVE A NEUTRAL LAOS</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• WORK TOWARD THE REALIZATION OF A PROGRESSIVE, AND PROSPEROUS PACIFIC COMMUNITY</li> <li>• PROVE THE US CAPABILITY IN CHECKING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES</li> </ul>	<p>BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION, TACTICS OF "SPREAD AND CONQUER"</p> <p>"ROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</p> <p>NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM OR ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENTS</p> <p>LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE "BAMBOO CURTAIN" WOULD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOC</li> <li>- PUSH WEST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDONESIA TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS</li> <li>- DESTROY SEATO AND UNDERMINE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>- STIMULATE BITTER INTERNAL DEBATE IN THE US AND HARRASSMENT OF ADMINISTRATION</li> <li>- LIMIT US ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WAR BY DENYING AIR, LAND, SEA BASES, COMPLICATING LOGS</li> </ul> <p>CHINESE STRATEGY OF "TALK-FIGHT" AND ITS EFFECT OF CONFUSION ON THE FREE WORLD</p> <p>US LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH LIMITED, ESPECIALLY GUERRILLA, CONFLICTS</p> <p>DIEM'S EXCESSES IN RULE AND SOUTH VIETNAM'S INTERNAL STRIFE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONDUCT COUNTERINSURGENCY, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>• INTRODUCE COMBAT TROOPS IF DEEMED NECESSARY</li> <li>• CONTINUE AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM ADVISERS, AND AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• UNDERMINE DRV/NLF MORALE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS DEVELOPING ITS OWN SELFDEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND INITIATIVE IN MEETING ITS DEFENSE NEEDS</li> </ul>

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Figure 2-2. Summary of US Policy Toward Vietnam, 1961-1965

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enemy, and the US had become identified with the increasingly unpopular regime of President Diem. President Johnson strongly reaffirmed the Kennedy commitment and continued a policy which led to massive US involvement in the war by 1965.

### a. The Kennedy Policies: Increased Involvement

When President Kennedy took office in 1961, the focus of US concern in Indochina was on Laos rather than South Vietnam. There was little to be done in Laos, however, other than to agree to a cease-fire and a neutral coalition government. Moreover, the Bay of Pigs, the Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis, among others, had put the Vietnam problem on the back burner of American global interests. It did not stay there for long, however, and President Kennedy though "skeptical of the extent of our involvement [in Vietnam] was unwilling to abandon his predecessor's pledge or permit a communist conquest. . . ."32/

Kennedy faced three basic decisions with respect to Vietnam; they were:

- (1) to decide between seeking political reforms or military reforms (fighting the war)
- (2) to decide on the possible use of US combat troops or not
- (3) to decide whether an open-ended commitment would prevent a communist takeover or not.33/

The first option found the USG military carrying the weight of making military reforms and implementing the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP). On the second issue, the US military, with support from the embassy country team, pushed hard--even urging the President to threaten Hanoi with US bombing. Opposition came from the State Department and White House Staff.34/ The last option, to make an open-ended commitment, had little support from any quarter.

### b. The Overthrow of Diem

In dealing with President Diem over the years, the US had tried two different but equally unsuccessful approaches. Under Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow from the late '50s until 1961, the US used tough pressure tactics to bring Diem to implement programs and ideas deemed necessary to

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win the war against the Viet Cong. But Diem soon learned that the US was committed to him as the only Vietnamese leader capable of rallying his country to defeat the communists. Armed with this knowledge he could defer action or ignore the Ambassador with relative impunity. By 1961, Durbrow was cut off from the Palace, with little information about what was going on and even less influence over events. Under Frederick Nolting as US Ambassador, the US pursued a very different tactic. Forewarned not to allow himself to be isolated, Nolting set out through the patient cultivation of Diem's friendship and trust to secure a role for himself as Diem's close and confidential advisor. But there had been no basic change in American belief that there was no alternative to Diem, and Diem quickly sensed this, for he continued to respond primarily to family interest, secure in the knowledge that ultimately the US would not abandon him no matter what he did. Both tactics failed because of American commitment. No amount of pressure or persuasion was likely to be effective in getting Diem to adopt ideas or policies which he did not find to his liking, since the US communicated an unwillingness to consider the ultimate sanction-- withdrawal of support for the Diem regime. The US had ensnared itself in a powerless, no alternatives policy.

With US support, the Diem government continued to show some semblance of stability and authority through mid-1963. That is in spite of the constant pressure from the Viet Cong insurgents who had seriously eroded his control over the countryside. Also, repressive action against Buddhist protestors had severely weakened popular support for his regime. Diem was in trouble and the US government was forced to reassess its position with respect to his government. The major options apparent at that time were:

- to continue to support Diem - despite his (and his brother Nhu's) growing unpopularity with the South Vietnamese (and the US public).
- to encourage or tacitly support the overthrow of Diem (taking the risk that the GVN might crumble and/or accommodate to the Viet Cong).

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- to grasp the opportunity -- with all its associated risks -- of the political instability in South Vietnam to disengage and pull out.

The first option was rejected by US leadership because of the belief that the Diem-Nhu government just could not win. The Diem government was considered to be coup-prone; it would be only a matter of time before he would fall from power. The third option was never very seriously considered as a policy alternative because of the assumption that an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam was too important a strategic interest to abandon, and because the situation was not sufficiently drastic to call into question so basic an assumption. The second course was the preferred alternative because:

- South Vietnam was thought to be too important to lose
- The US wanted to win against the communist insurgency
- The coup-plotting Vietnamese generals seemed to offer the best prospect of a military victory.

The US opted not to prevent a coup. As a matter of fact the US decided to support, even encourage the coup. In making this choice the US deepened its involvement in Vietnamese affairs.

Underlying the prevailing US view that there was no viable alternative to Diem was the belief that the disruptive effect of a coup on the war effort, and the disorganization that would follow, could only benefit the Viet Cong, perhaps decisively. Military estimates and reports emanating from MACV through the summer of 1963 continued to reflect an optimistic outlook, indicating good reason to continue support of Diem, even in the face of his inept handling of the Buddhist crisis. Actually, the GVN position in the war had begun to deteriorate seriously. This weakening was not apparent to US leadership. The then prevailing view held that the Buddhist crisis had not yet detracted from the war effort, although its potential was so recognized. Secretary of Defense McNamara on July 19, 1963, told a press conference that the war was progressing well and that the Diem government's problems with the Buddhists had thus far not affected it. The US intelligence community, however, had already begun to note depressing effects of the crisis on military and civilian morale.



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Meanwhile, the US press corps was reporting a far different view of both the war and the Buddhist crisis, one which was, in retrospect, nearer to reality. In particular, they were reporting serious failures in the Delta in both military operations and the Strategic Hamlet Program. Typical of this reporting was an August 15, 1963. story in The New York Times by David Halberstam presenting a very negative appraisal of the war in the Delta. Such reports were vehemently refuted within the Administration, most notably by General Krulak, the JCS Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency. At the lower echelons in the field, however, there were many US advisors who did not share Krulak's view of the war's progress.

Within the Kennedy Administration, no real low-risk alternative to Diem had ever been identified. The US continued its support for Diem's troubled regime because he was regarded as the only Vietnamese figure capable of rallying national support in the struggle against the Viet Cong. The Buddhist crisis shattered that illusion and increased the domestic US political price to President Kennedy for continued support of Diem. Moreover, key administration advisers, among them the Secretaries of Defense and State, the Chairmans of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the COMUSMACV, wanted to pressure Diem into dumping his controversial brother Nhu and carrying out US directed reforms--an exercise in futility. The only other option for the US seemed a coup, with highly uncertain prospects for post-coup political stability.

The following quote from a State Department cable sent by Ambassador Lodge to Secretary of State Rusk on August 29, 1963, sums up the situation as viewed from the Saigon Embassy at that time:

We are launched on a course from which there is no respectable turning back: the overthrow of the Diem government. There is no turning back in part because US prestige is already publicly committed to this end in large measure and will become more so as the facts leak out. In a more fundamental sense, there is no turning back because there is no possibility, in my view, that the war can be won under a Diem administration, still less that Diem or any member of the family can govern the country in a way to gain the support of the people who count, i.e., the educated class in and

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out of government service, civil and military--not to mention the American people. In the last few months (and especially days) they have in fact positively alienated these people to an incalculable degree.

. . . The chance of bringing off a Generals' coup depends on them to some extent; but it depends at least as much on us.35/

Although former Ambassador Nolting and Under Secretary of State Ball argued against the US encouraging a coup attempt against Diem, the US found itself irrevocably committed to getting Diem out.

A white paper which was published by the new South Vietnamese government following the November 1, 1963 overthrow of Diem delineated the US involvement in that Coup. It emphasized that the coup was planned, programmed and carried out by RVNAF officers; however, it was an American "who decided its success or failure under the immediate command of Henry Cabot Lodge . . . Besides Ambassador Cabot Lodge, another American in Saigon was in charge of activating and following up the master plan of the Vietnamese generals. He was Lt. Colonel Conein, the adviser to Colonel Le Quang Tung."36/ Conein was present in the JGS headquarters building throughout the military actions against Diem. He was in constant communication with the US Embassy.38/

Many viewed the US role in the overthrow of Diem as an unfortunate mistake. General Westmoreland's perspective is one of the stronger views:

The young president (Kennedy), in his zeal, made the unfortunate mistake of approving our involvement in the overthrow of President Diem in South Vietnam. This action morally locked us in Vietnam. Political chaos prevailed in South Vietnam for over two years. Were it not for our interference in political affairs of South Vietnam and based on pragmatic consideration, we could in my opinion have justifiably withdrawn our support at that time in view of a demonstrated lack of leadership and unity in South Vietnam.39/

## IDM CORPORATION

Few will argue against the fact that the role played by the US during the overthrow of Diem caused a deeper US involvement in Vietnam affairs. As efficient as the military coup leaders appeared, they were without a manageable base of political support. When they came to power and when the lid was taken off the Diem-Nhu reporting system, the GVN position was revealed as weak and deteriorating. And, by virtue of its interference in internal Vietnamese affairs, the US had assumed a significant responsibility for the new regime, a responsibility which heightened the US commitment and deepened the US involvement.

### c. The Early Johnson Years: Changing of the Guard

Lyndon B. Johnson assumed office as a pragmatic politician and not a cold war ideologue. He too continued to deepen the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict, following the same foreign policy which had been espoused by his predecessors. At a press conference in July 1965, LBJ clearly enunciated his views on that matter as follows:

We are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American Nation. Three Presidents--President Eisenhower, President Kennedy and your present President--over 11 years, have committed themselves and promised to help defend this small and valiant nation.40/

The objective of the Johnson Administration was to maintain an independent non-communist South Vietnam. In the later years, this was rephrased as "allowing the South Vietnamese to determine their own future without external interference."41/ As President Johnson crossed the old barriers in pursuit of this objective, he established new ones:

- while he ordered the bombing of the DRV, he would not approve the bombing of targets that ran the risk of causing confrontation with the PRC or USSR
- while he permitted the US force level in RVN to go over the half million mark, he would not put the US economy on a wartime mobilization status
- while he allowed US ground combat offensive operations in RVN, he would not allow an invasion of Cambodia, Laos or North Vietnam.42/

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### d. In-Country Conformance and Implementation

Late in 1960, US Embassy in Saigon under Ambassador Durbrow prepared an overall counterinsurgency plan (CIP) for the RVN which was supposed to coordinate the programs of all in-country American agencies--military, embassy, CIA and the US Operations Mission (a field agency of the US Information Service). Reflecting the views of General McGarr, Chief MAAG, the plan was forwarded to Washington early in 1961. It proposed many governmental reforms advocated by Ambassador Durbrow as well as improved military security.43/

The President approved the CIP shortly after assuming office in 1961 and ordered its implementation. Durbrow was to use the CIP and the money for equipping the RVNAF which would go along with it to gain governmental reforms from the Diem government. US leverage failed. Diem was ostensibly amenable to the changes called for in the CIP; however, he resisted making reforms, paying them only lip service in order to get the money and equipment for his Army. Durbrow's attempts at applying leverage were unsuccessful. His replacement, Ambassador Frederick Nolting, also did not fare well with his attempts at exercising influence over Diem.

Throughout Nolting's tenure and the first days of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge's tour, the US increased airlift support with US helicopters and crews, combat support and logistical assistance, aerial reconnaissance, communications intelligence, additional equipment and more advisers; but real administrative, political and social reforms were slow in coming from the Diem regime. To help implement the expanded military assistance program, President Kennedy had a new command created (MACV) and placed General Paul Harkins in command.

The mission given to General Harkins, the MACV commander, in the spring of 1964 was:

To assist the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces to deflect externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression and attain an independent South Vietnam function in a secure environment.44/

## 3DM CORPORATION

The mission failed to repeat earlier policy which had called for a unified Vietnam.

The body of information available to this study group clearly indicates extensive involvement on the part of Ambassador Lodge in the unfortunate overthrow of the Diem government.45/

### MATERIAL DELETED

Although a GVN "White Paper" published on November 17, 1963, claimed that President Kennedy had put his stamp of approval on the coup efforts from Washington, it appears the thrust of the collaboration and the ultimate overthrow of the Diem Regime came from Ambassador Lodge.49/

The Ambassador and other USG officials who favored the overthrow did not anticipate the disastrous effect of Diem's demise. The political turmoil and upheaval inside the GVN lasted well into 1966. Ambassador Taylor, who came on the scene on July 2, 1964, ended up in the course of a year dealing with five different governments, five different prime ministers, five different sets of province chiefs, and five different sets of generals. The embassy under Taylor was constantly having to start programs and projects over every three months or so because of the turmoil created by the revolving governments.50/

In contrast, the embassy under Ambassador Lodge (in 1963-1964) was in a state of disarray because, as General Harkins put it, "there was no coordination. . . He [Lodge] was a loner."51/ Conversely, Harkins thought Ambassador Nolting's embassy was effective and that Nolting was a

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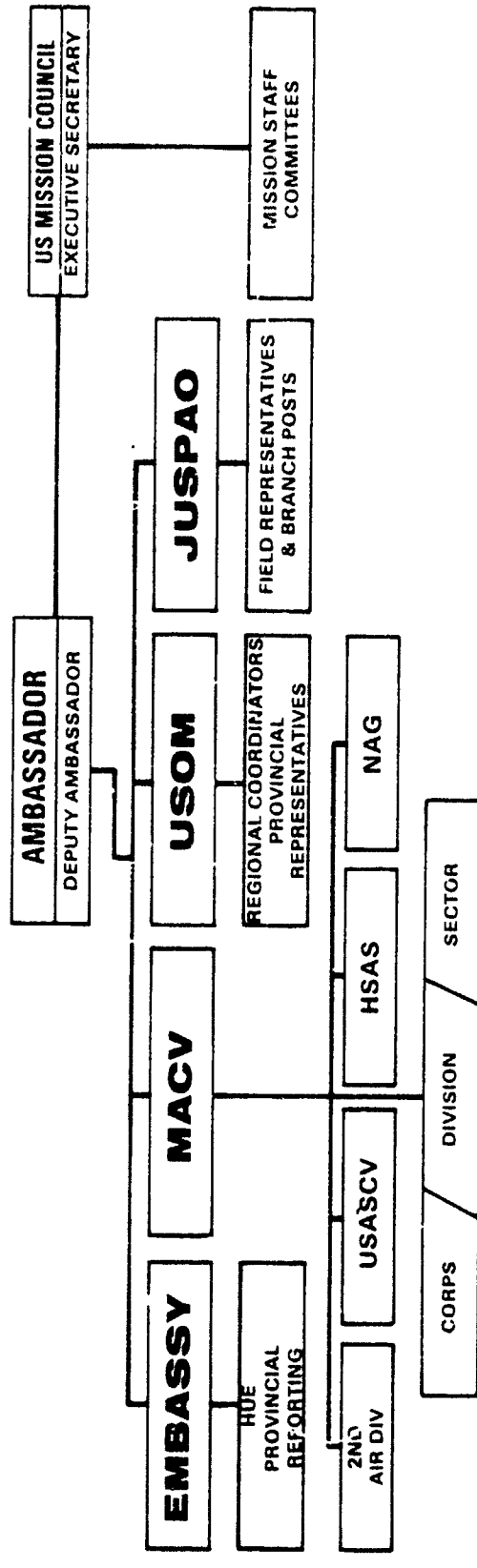
more effective Ambassador.<sup>52/</sup> Following a visit to RVN in December 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara, commenting on the organizational and administrative problems of the Country Team under Lodge, said the Embassy Country Team "lacked leadership," had been "poorly informed" and had "grave reporting" weaknesses.<sup>53/</sup>

On the other hand, the Embassy under Ambassador Taylor was a model of coordination and cooperation. Taylor arrived on station in July 1964 with a letter of instruction from the President giving him full control of both US civilian and US military activities in RVN, affording him the powers equivalent to a proconsul. Ambassador Taylor patterned the US Mission--consisting of the US Mission Council, the Embassy, MACV, USOM and JUSPAO (Joint US Public Affairs Office)--to function along the lines of a "mini-NSC."<sup>54/</sup> (See Figures 2-3 through 2-8 for the organization charts of each element of the US Mission under Ambassador Taylor.) Regardless, it was the constantly revolving RVN governments that hindered his efforts to implement US policies with respect to South Vietnam. As a consequence, a frustrated Taylor called the key South Vietnamese military leaders into his Embassy office in December 1964, and he proceeded to dress them down like first year cadets. All of which caused General Khanh to accuse the Ambassador of "meddling", "abusing his power" and exhibiting "a discourteous attitude" toward RVN leadership.<sup>55/</sup>

### e. Assessment of Phase 2 Effectiveness

During this phase, the US foreign policy with respect to South Vietnam has to be rated as something less than successful. President Kennedy embraced his predecessors' foreign policy for the region except for one major revision--he did not press for "united action" with respect to the conflict in RVN. Somehow the precondition set by President Eisenhower for "united action" was never a consideration and President Kennedy's administration embarked on the dangerous course of unilateral action in Vietnam. US meddling and heavy-handedness with regard to the internal affairs of the South Vietnamese government, coupled with the calloused participation in the overthrow of President Diem, served to deepen,

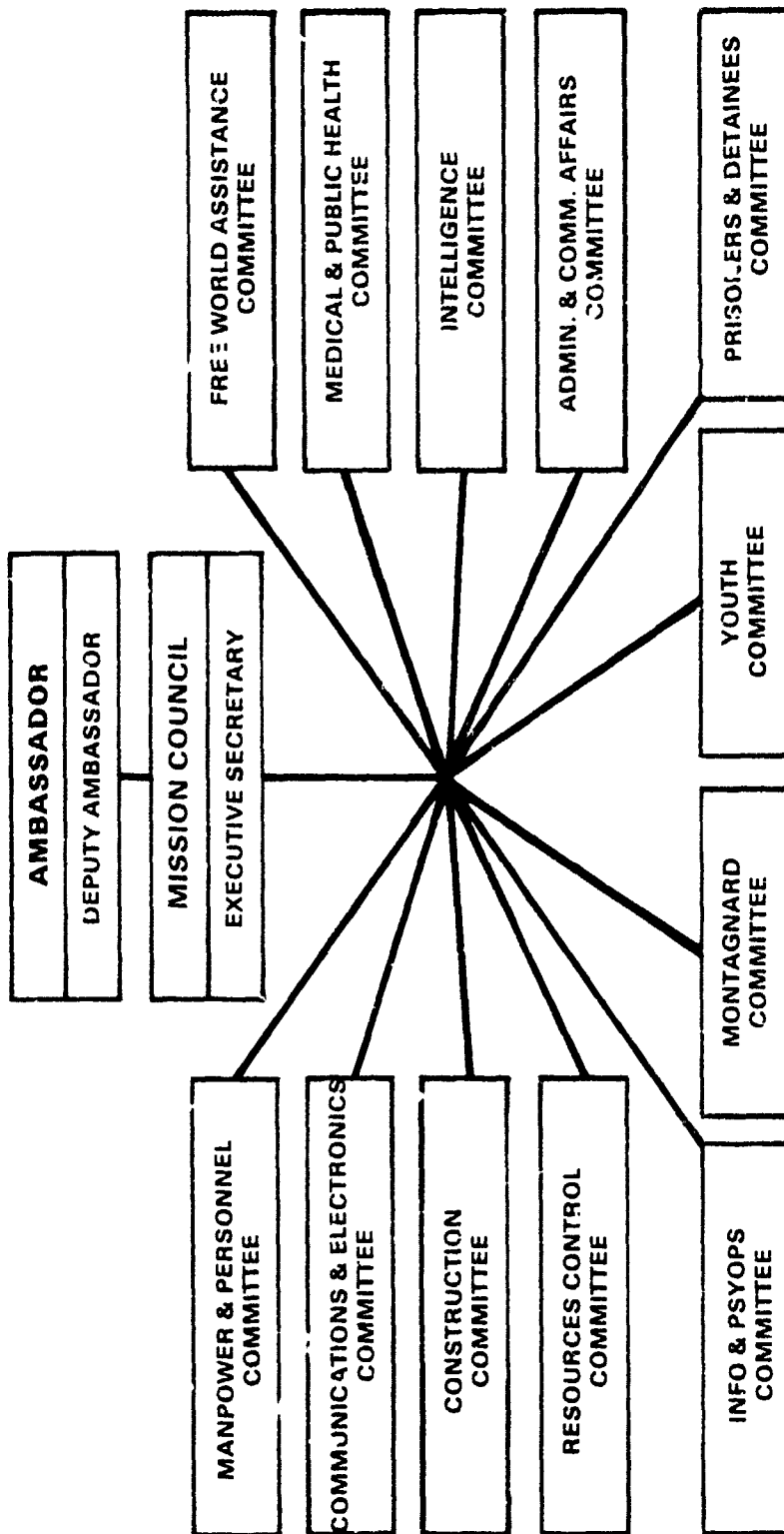
# UNITED STATES MISSION VIETNAM



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Figure 2-3. United States Mission - Vietnam

# MISSION COUNCIL AND STAFF COMMITTEES

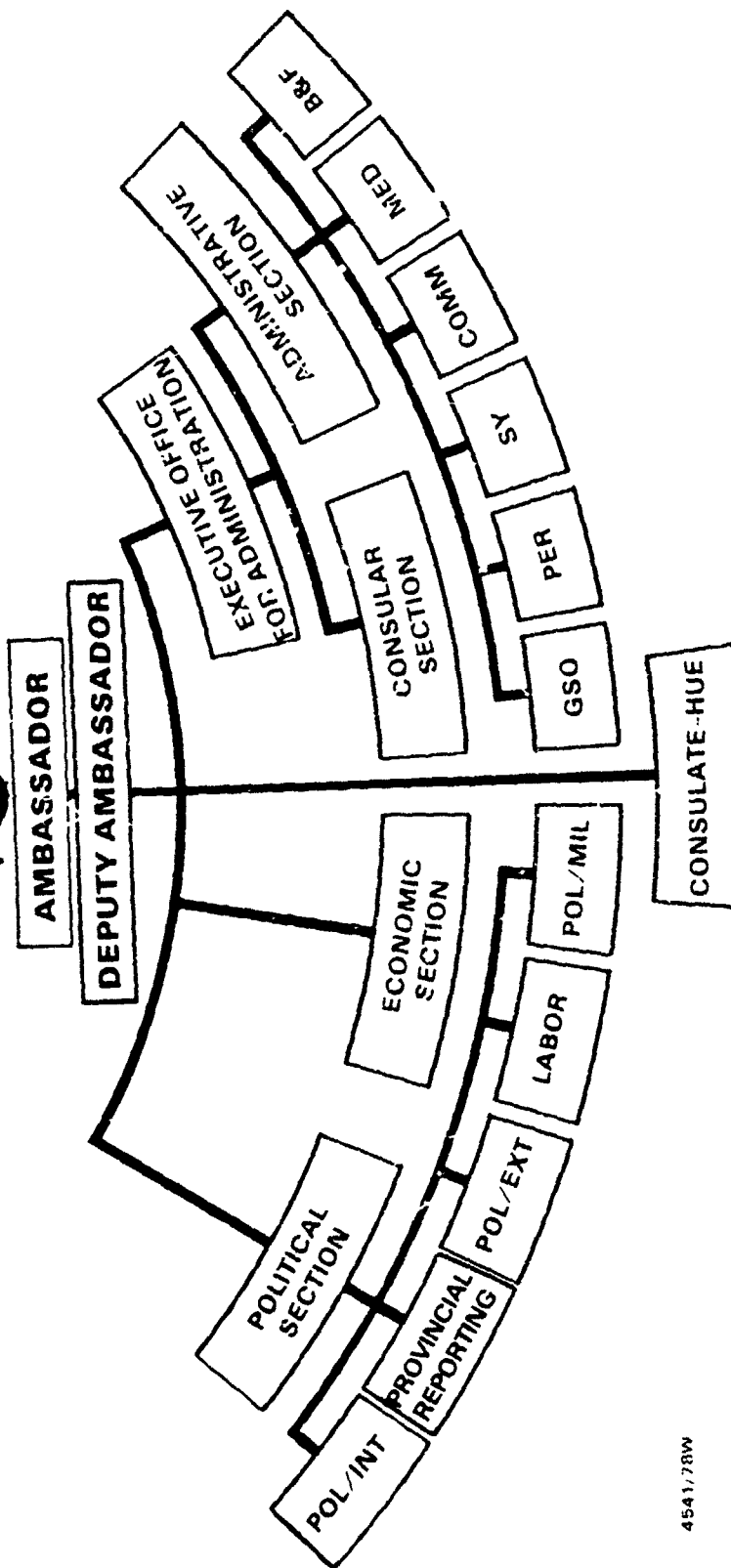


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Figure 2-4. Mission Council and Staff Committees



# AMERICAN EMBASSY--SAIGON



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Figure 2-5. American Embassy - Saigon

**US MILITARY ASSISTANCE  
COMMAND, VIETNAM  
SAIGON, VIETNAM**

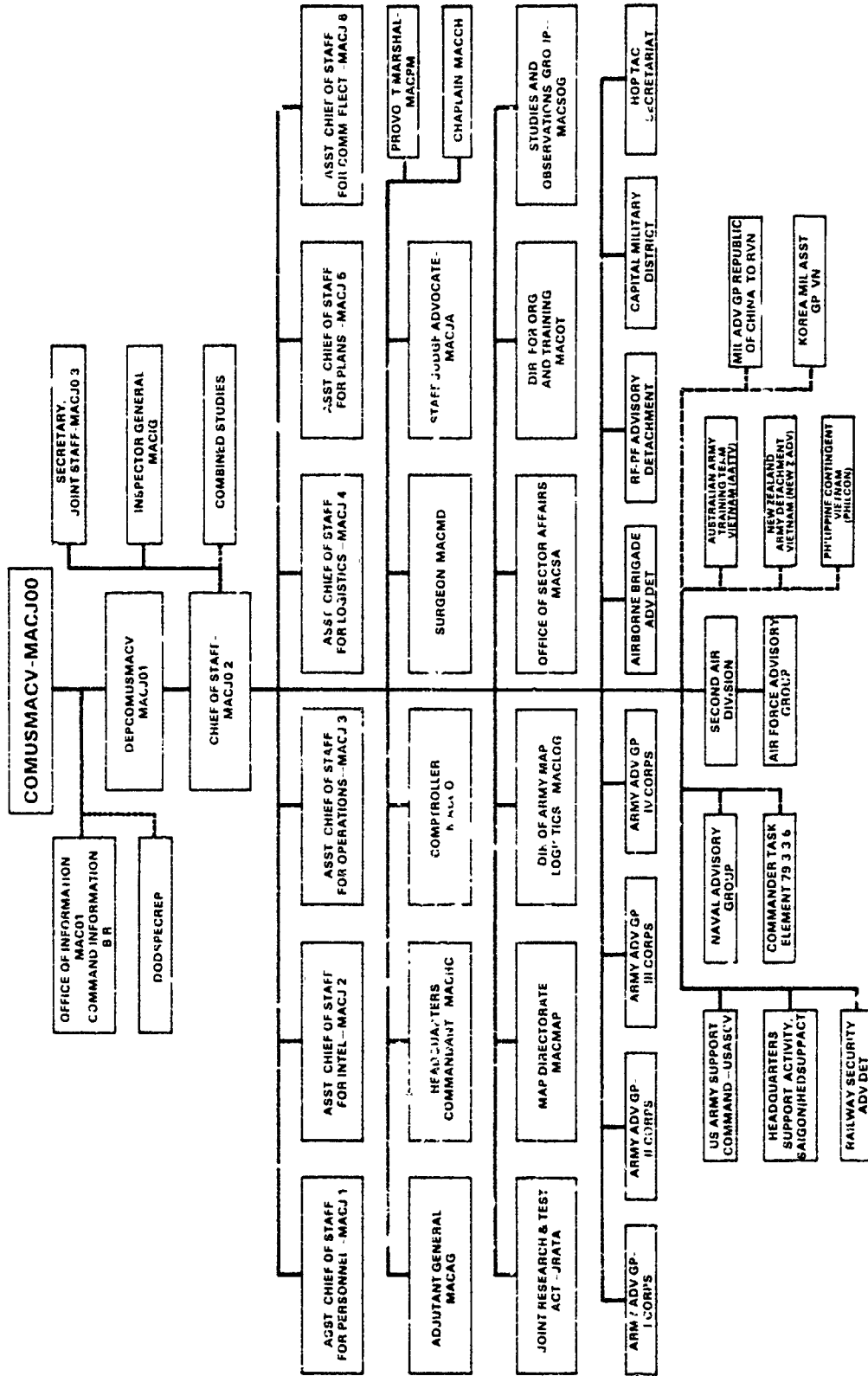
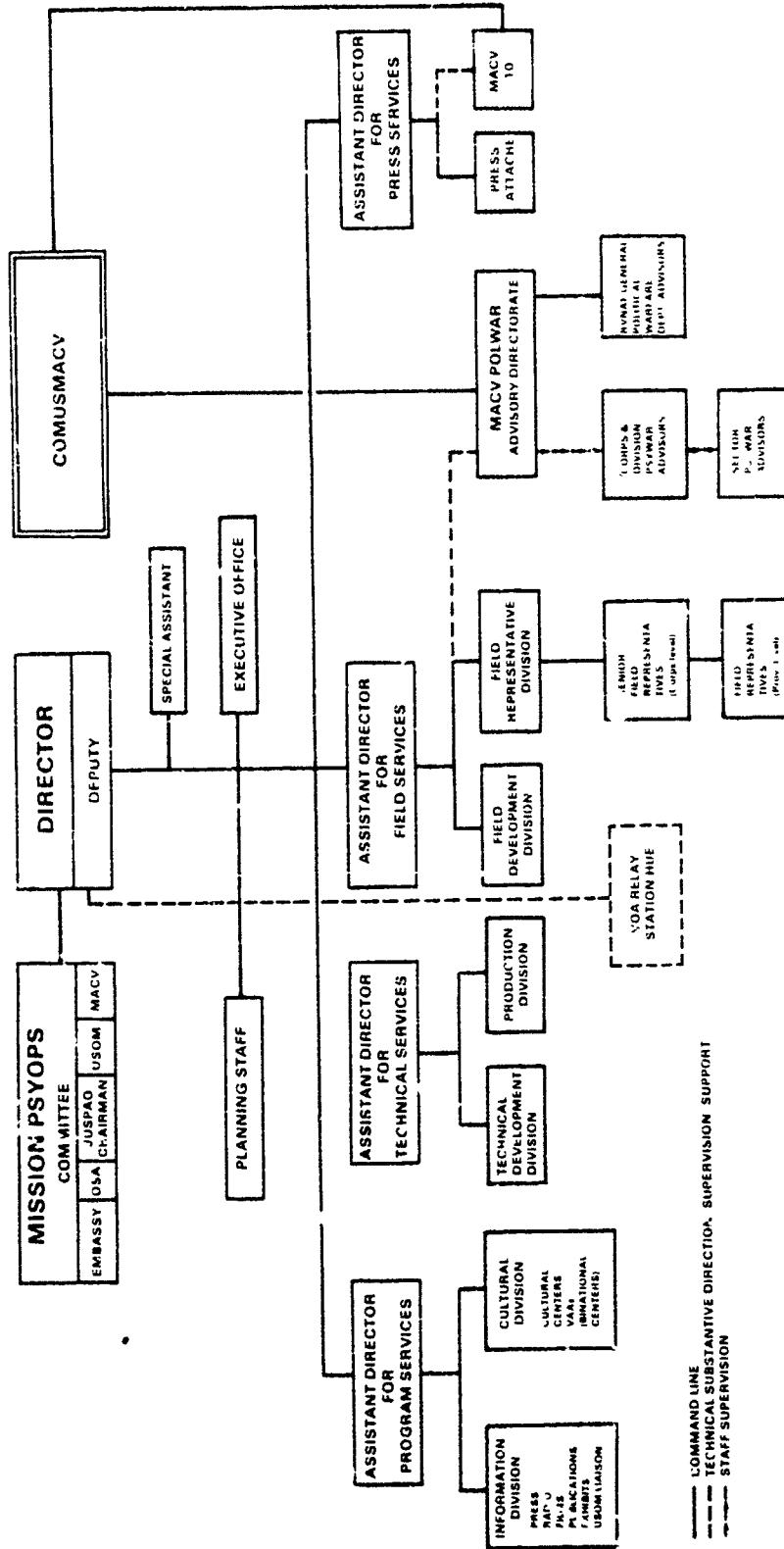


Figure 2-6. US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

# JOINT UNITED STATES PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE (JUSPAO)



- - - - - COMMAND LINE  
 - - - - - TECHNICAL SUBSTANTIVE DIRECTOR, SUPERVISION SUPPORT  
 - - - - - STAFF SUPERVISION

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Figure 2-7. Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO)

# AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNITED STATES OPERATIONS MISSION TO VIETNAM

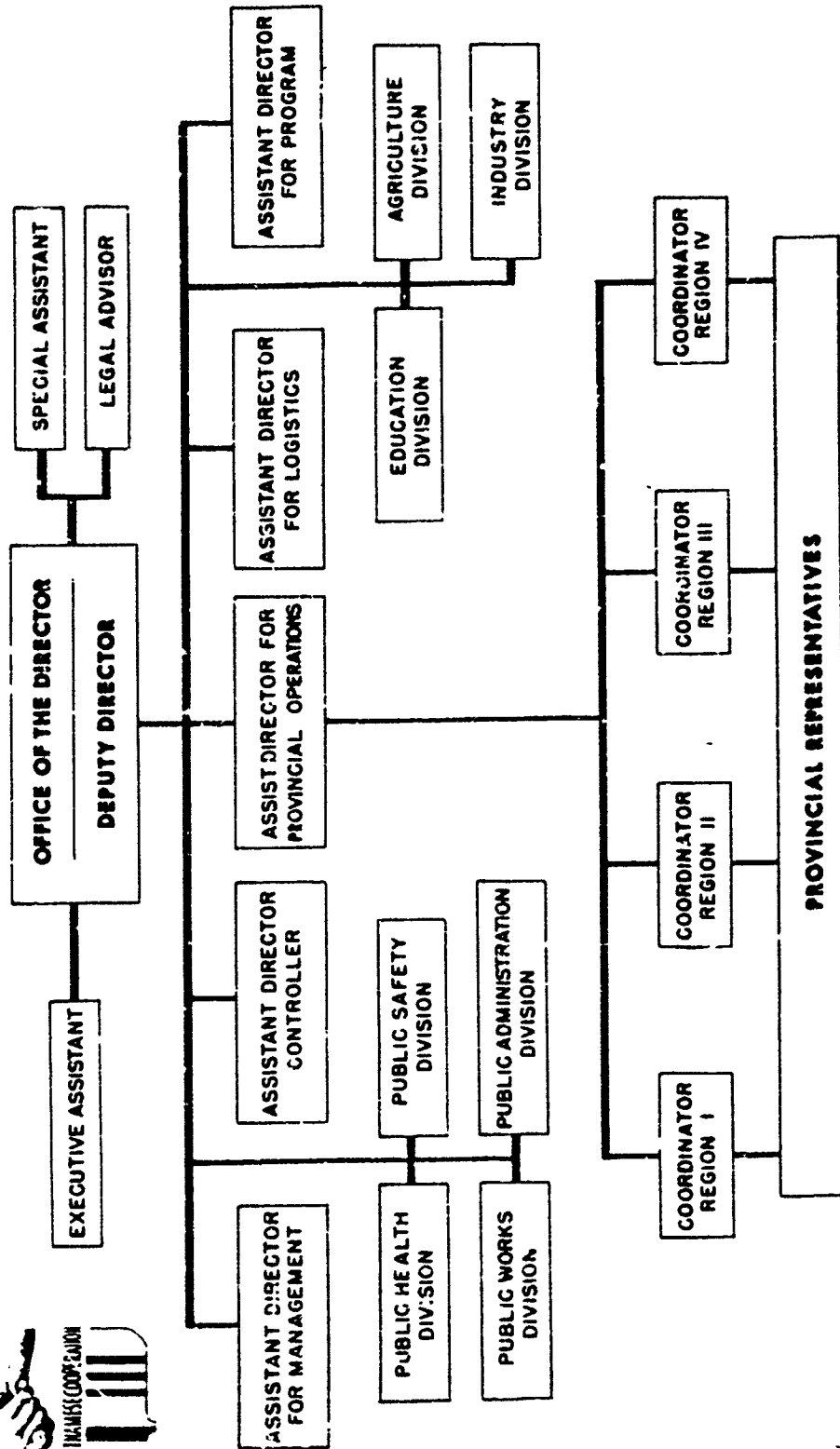
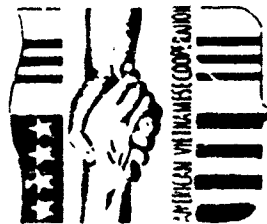


Figure 2-8. Agency for International Development United States Operations Mission to Vietnam

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rather than lessen, US involvement with that little nation's problems. The US had a big stake in the success of the military governments that followed Diem. Another amazing point, one which has been well documented, was that the US was never officially invited to send combat troops into South Vietnam in 1965, when the first contingent of Marines landed near Da Nang.<sup>56/</sup> Further, the transition of those first few combat troops from a defensive posture to offensive "search and destroy" actions was so rapid that it took awhile before most Americans realized that the US was really at war on the continent of Asia--a situation that many respected former Army Commanders and leaders had cautioned and advised against.<sup>57/</sup>

Three factors that contributed to President Johnson moving so dramatically on Vietnam when he did were:

- (1) at that time, the world was a safer place in which to live, Vietnam was the only continuing global crisis, the Sino-Soviet split had deepened, Europe was viewed as being secure, and mutual deterrence existed between the US and USSR;
- (2) the situation in Vietnam was more desperate than it had ever had been (if the US had not intervened in 1965); and,
- (3) the US conventional forces (developed under the flexible response concept) were big enough and ready enough to intervene.<sup>58/</sup>

Vietnam had become very important to the vital interests of the US; it was perceived to be in great danger of falling to the communists; and the US, at that time, was in a position to do something about it. The commitment was made, and the "Americanization" of the war began.

#### 4. Phase 3: 1965 to 1969 (See Figure 2-9)

President Johnson recognized that he was inheriting a deteriorating situation in RVN when he took over as Chief of State following the death of JFK. VC military successes and constant political turbulence, which was associated with changes of governments from 1964 to 1966, were not secrets to anyone in the US. Throughout the critical year of 1965, LBJ struck the themes of endurance and more-to-come; for example he:

- ordered bombing of the DRV in a "tit-for-tat" response to VC attacks on US and RVNAF personnel and installations in the South,

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<p><u>INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES</u></p>	<p><u>PERCEIVED THREATS</u></p>	<p><u>STRATEGIES</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT PRC'S DRIVE IN ASIA BEFORE MAJOR CONFLAGRATION RESULTS</li> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• PROVE THE US CAPABILITY IN CHECKING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES</li> <li>• PREVENT SUCCESS OF AGGRESSION, AVOID ANOTHER MUNICH</li> <li>• ACHIEVE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES</li> <li>• PREVENT LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S MORALE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SELF-HELP AND SELF-DEFENSE OF ALLIES AVOIDING OVER-DEPENDENCE ON US</li> <li>• PRESERVE A FREE AND INDEPENDENT SOUTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• SECURE AN HONORABLE, JUST, AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION. TACTICS OF "SPREAD AND CONQUER"</li> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</li> <li>• NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM ON ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND OTHER DEFENSE COMMITMENTS</li> <li>• LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE "BARBEE CURTAIN" WOULD             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOCK</li> <li>- PUSH REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDOCHINA TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS</li> <li>- DESTROY S'FATO AND UNDERMINE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>- STIMULATE BITTER INTERNAL DEBATE IN THE US AND HARASSMENT OF ADMINISTRATION</li> <li>- LIMIT US ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WAR BY DENYING A'R, LAND, SEA BASES, COMPLETING LOGS AND INTELLIGENCE EFFORTS</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CHINESE STRATEGY OF "TALK, FIGHT" AND ITS EFFECT OF CONFUSION ON THE FREE WORLD</li> <li>• OVERDEPENDENCY OF ALLIES ON US</li> <li>• US PROSPECTION AND ISOLATION IF US LOSSES IN VIETNAM</li> <li>• DRV AGGRESSION</li> <li>• PRC AND USSR ASSISTANCE TO DRV</li> <li>• SUBVERSION IN THE THIRD WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN LAOS, CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONDUCT COUNTERINSURGENCY, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>• INTRODUCE CONVENTIONAL COMBAT FORCES AND BOMBING CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DRV TARGETS, SANCTUARIES, LOGS</li> <li>• CONTINUE AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM ADVISORS AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-HELP, SELF-DEFENSE, AND SELF-RELIANCE</li> <li>• NEGOTIATE A JUST, HONORABLE, AND DURABLE PEACE</li> <li>• PROMOTE NIXON DOCTRINE</li> <li>• PROMOTE VIETNAMIZATION</li> <li>• CURTAIL DRV USE OF SANCTUARIES BY (SL RET) BOMBINGS AND GROUND OPERATIONS</li> <li>• GRADUALLY WITHDRAW US FORCES</li> <li>• INFUSE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE (MILITARY AND ECONOMIC) TO SOUTH VIETNAM</li> </ul>

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Figure 2-9. Summary of US Policy Toward Vietnam, 1965-1969

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- warned that he saw no choice but to continue on the course set by JFK when he requested supplemental appropriations for Vietnam in May of 1965,
- announced a new 125-thousand troop ceiling for US forces in RVN in July 1965,
- stated that additional US forces would be provided if needed--the beginnings of his graduated military pressure,
- remained alert "to explore negotiated solutions that [would] attain US objectives in an acceptable manner."59/

The objective of the Johnson administration was to maintain an independent non-communist South Vietnam. In the later years, this was rephrased as "allowing the South Vietnamese to determine their own future without external interference."60/

The key decisions from 1966 through 1968 appear to have been based on tactical considerations rather than strategic ones. That is, the "policy" alternatives considered by the decisionmakers focused on alternative numbers of ground forces or alternative bombing programs.60/ The attitudes and decisions of US policy makers seemed to be dominated by the issues of troop levels, selecting bombing targets, pacification efforts and battlefield statistics or "measures of progress." The rationale for such focus probably stemmed from the idea that if the US demonstrated its resolve and intention to gradually increase pressure on the DRV, they would eventually relent and either agree to a negotiated settlement or just pull back their support of the VC and leave the South.61/

### a. In-Country Conformance and Implementation

Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was reappointed to the Saigon Embassy post in August 1965, after General Taylor completed a rather disappointing one year stint. The war was quickly becoming "Americanized", the Hop Tac pacification program--successor to the Strategic Hamlet Program--had flopped. The Country Team began pursuing new programs energetically, but found them to be plagued by dispersion of authority and lack of coordination.62/ Another situation, the political instability of the GVN, which had been a prime source of frustration for in-country leadership

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after the overthrow of Diem, actually improved under the young "turk" generals--Thieu and Ky. Except for the interlude of the Buddhist "struggle movement" in 1966, when General Nguyen Chan Thi defied the Thieu-Ky leadership and another civil war was in the offing, the GVN's political problems ceased to be a central problem.<sup>63/</sup> After the General Thi and Buddhist problems were resolved, Ambassador Lodge, as quoted by General Westmoreland, likened "Vietnam to a man critically ill, yet so irascible that he throws pitchers of water at his doctor. That at least shows," Lodge continued, "that he is getting better."<sup>64/</sup>

Leverage issues continued to come up late in 1966, especially as related to corruption within the GVN and RVNAF. Variants of the old paradox remained--the US country team representatives could not twist the arms of the South Vietnamese too hard because that would cause them to look like US puppets, a situation which would run counter to and detract from the same political development ends that the leverage was originally wanting to achieve. Furthermore, as the war was Americanized, fewer opportunities to apply leverage manifested themselves. The US adviser's role diminished in relative importance as the opportunity to gain command positions with American combat units began to take priority with career-oriented officers. Proposals for the encadrement of US and RVNAF personnel were rejected and the idea for establishing a combined US-RVNAF command and joint coordinating staff (which was being pushed by DoD) failed to materialize because of Vietnamese resistance.<sup>65/</sup> Pacification was the only area where some leverage was applied with any degree of success, and that happened after Mr. Komer organized CORDS in 1967.<sup>66/</sup>

In official Washington three schools of thought began forming; they were:

- (1) continue to persevere in Vietnam
- (2) seek a way out of Vietnam by negotiations
- (3) cut our losses and get out of Vietnam

Meanwhile in Saigon, the US Mission was trying to balance the military need for more US troops against the constraints posed by the severe economic inflation caused in RVN by the introduction of US troops. Of the two, the



military problem caused the greatest concern. Throughout this phase, President Johnson continually pressed for a prediction or forecast on how long the war would last. General Westmoreland, Lodge, McNamara and all his other advisers could not answer that question satisfactorily.

Faced with girding for a longer war, President Johnson began to look (with an eye to the 1968 presidential elections) to negotiations as the way out of the conflict. That too failed to yield the desired results.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's arrival on the scene in 1967 was marked by change as well as improved US mission coordination (especially as it related to pacification). He announced the formation of COPOS as an integrated military-civil effort falling under the direct command of COMUS MACV. 66/ The Tet Offensive in 1968 created chaos throughout the RVN; however, the end results were:

- a stronger GVN under the leadership of President Thieu,
- a more confident RVNAF, and
- a pacification program which was beginning to show signs of succeeding.

c. Assessment of Phase 3 Effectiveness

This phase saw the US policy of maintaining a viable, independent and non-communist South Vietnam change to one of allowing them to determine their own future without external interference. Throughout this period of escalation the US investment in men and war materiel grew astronomically, provoking domestic convulsions and dissent. The fundamental question as to why the US continued to pour money and lives into South Vietnam and punish (by bombing) the DRV, when the strategy of escalation was failing to win the war or bring the communists to the negotiating table, was never thoroughly addressed by key US leaders (both in Washington and in the Saigon Embassy). Only after the shock of Tet in 1968 and the Secretary Clifford "A to Z" reassessment which followed thereafter, was there a leveling off and capping of US involvement.

Once the US was totally involved in the conflict, there was no easy way out. President Johnson, rather than conduct periodic reassessments of the US's fundamental commitment, accepted the fact that American

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vital interests were involved in the Vietnam struggle and based his policy decisions thereafter on tactical rather than strategic considerations.

In 1968, with his decision to persist in the struggle a failure, President Johnson ordered a limitation of the bombing on the North, withdrew his name from the presidential election race, set a ceiling on combat troops in RVN, and invited the DRV to negotiate. Though not regarded as such, those decisions became almost irreversible and any subsequent decision on the part of newly elected President Nixon to increase troop levels or renew full-scale bombing would have met with strong domestic and congressional resistance.

### 5. Phase 4: 1969 to 1975 (Figure 2-10)

The Nixon administration entered office determined to end the US involvement in Vietnam. Initially, the new chief executive proposed a negotiations policy based on the mutual withdrawal of DRV and US forces from South Vietnam. He also directed a step-up in the preparations for the RVNAF to stand alone--the Vietnamization Program--and for the development of a timetable for the progressive withdrawal of American troops no matter what progress or the lack thereof in the Paris peace negotiations.<sup>67/</sup> The two track approach--Vietnamization and withdrawal--helped silence domestic and congressional critics while it bought Nixon time to find a diplomatic solution.

In May 1969, President Nixon, showing his disappointment with the lack of progress towards a settlement, spoke to the nation. He declared that the US was not seeking to impose "a purely military solution on the battlefield" and that the US would accept any government (although not explicitly stated, not necessarily non-communist) resulting from the "free choice of the South Vietnamese people themselves."<sup>68/</sup>

In keeping with President Nixon's new policy, Secretary of Defense Laird insisted on a revised mission statement and revised objectives for US forces in RVN. The new mission statement for the MACV was to focus on providing "maximum assistance" to the RVN and help strengthen their armed forces, supporting pacification efforts and reducing the flow of supplies to the enemy.<sup>69/</sup> The statement stressed assisting the RVNAF

<u>INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES</u>	<u>PERCEIVED THREATS</u>	<u>STRATEGIES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SECURE HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE IN INDochINA FOR BOTH THE VIETNAMESE, OTHER INDOCHINESE PEOPLES, AND FOR AMERICANS</li> <li>- AVOID RELAPSE INTO ANOTHER WAR IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA</li> <li>- STRENGTHEN UNCERTAIN PEACE IN VIETNAM</li> <li>• PRESERVE SEATO AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS</li> <li>• ELIMINATE CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY INTO SOUTH VIETNAM FROM BORDERING NATIONS</li> <li>• PRESERVE A FREE, NON-COMMUNIST SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• PROMOTE THE REGION'S DEVELOPMENT, REGIONAL COOPERATION, STABILITY, SELF-DEFENSE, AND ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT VISION OF THE FUTURE</li> <li>• STABILIZE THE BALANCE (OR POWER) IN THE REGION WITH OTHER MAJOR POWERS, PROTECTING INTEREST IN THE REGION</li> <li>• REDUCE US CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM AND RESOLVE THE MIA/POW PROBLEM</li> <li>• PROMOTE STABLE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• ENCOURAGE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICT IN CAMBODIA</li> <li>• PROMOTE RECONSTRUCTION OF LAOS AND MAINTENANCE OF CEASE-FIRE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCE, AND COVERT COMMUNIST INTERVENTION, SUBVERSION, AND TERRORISM</li> <li>• BREAKDOWN OF PEACE OR FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT PEACE AGREEMENT</li> <li>• OVER-EXTENSION OF INFLUENCE BY ANY OF THE MAJOR WORLD POWERS IN THE PACIFIC, IN GENERAL, AND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, IN PARTICULAR</li> <li>• SOUTH VIETNAM'S WEAKNESS, INSTABILITY, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT</li> <li>• NORTH VIETNAM'S PURSUANCE OF WAR ACTIVITIES</li> <li>• US DOMESTIC DISTRESS GENERATED BY WATERGATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE - CONGRESSIONAL LIMITATIONS ON PROVISION OF AID TO THE REGION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO CAMBODIA, THAILAND, AND SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• VIETNAMIZATION</li> <li>• PEACE TALKS AND OTHER RELATED NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI AND THE PRG</li> <li>• BOMBING OF CAMBODIA AND NORTH VIETNAM, AND OTHER OPERATIONS IN OR OVER CAMBODIA, NORTH VIETNAM, AND LAOS</li> <li>• ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROVISION OF AID TO CAMBODIA, THAILAND, LAOS, AND SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>- STIMULATE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRIES IN THE AREA</li> <li>- RETURN REFUGEES TO PRODUCTIVE LIVES</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PROMOTION OF INCREASED ROLE OF US PACIFIC ALLIES (E.G., AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND) IN ANZUS AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS AS STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN REGION</li> <li>• MAINTENANCE OF US TIES WITH AND PARTICIPATION IN SEATO AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS</li> </ul>

Figure 2-10. Summary of US Policy Toward Vietnam, 1969-1975

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"to take over an increasing share of combat operations" and specified that the goal of military operations was to defeat the enemy's effort "to deny self-determination" to the South Vietnamese people.<sup>70/</sup>

The president recognized that a military solution of the war was not available; therefore, he set about to attain a stalemate on the battlefield, to give pacification a chance to work, to isolate the DRV from their communist benefactors, and to arrive at a political solution in the negotiations.

After finally getting the DRV and the RVN to agree to a peace accord in January 1973, the US rushed massive quantities of military equipment and supplies into RVN to beat the effective deadline date of the agreement. The agreement was initialed on January 23 and signed on the effective date four days later. President Nixon, in an address to the nation after the signing, stated that the US would "continue to recognize the government of the Republic of Vietnam as the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam" and that the South Vietnamese "have been guaranteed the right to determine their own future, without outside interference."<sup>71/</sup>

The US started to withdraw its last contingent of troops on January 28, 1973, and phased out MACV headquarters less than ninety days later. In the place of MACV, the USG established a Defense Attache's Office (DAO) which became a part of the US Embassy with an authorized strength of 50 military and about 1200 civilian personnel.

Although the US upheld its end of the Paris agreement, the DRV reneged after the release of American POWs. The war did not stop; there was no genuine ceasefire.

In the late spring of 1973, concurrent with the beginnings of the Watergate scandal and the concern of the Congress that maybe President Nixon would somehow reinvolve the US in Southeast Asia, the US legislative branch began to actively involve themselves in the US foreign policy making process. If the President had intended to use US airpower in the event of a breakdown of the agreements and the ceasefire, that course was soon denied him. The Congress passed an amendment to an appropriations bill on June 30, 1973, prohibiting as of August 15 the use of any funds to finance

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directly or indirectly combat activities by US military forces "in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia."72/ An activist US Congress passed the War Powers Resolution on November 7, 1973, over a presidential veto which further limited the chief executive's ability to wage war without their approval.

Although both President Nixon and his successor, Gerald Ford, sought to continue US military assistance to the RVN, the Congress would not cooperate. In the summer of 1974, they had cut the amount of military assistance requested by half, to about \$700 million. Early in 1975 the Congress rejected a request from the Ford administration for supplemental aid for South Vietnam and Cambodia. It became very clear to the South Vietnamese leadership that US policy had shifted, and that:

- their country was no longer vital to US interests,
- the US support was rapidly falling off, if not ending, and
- they would have to go it alone, probably without the US airpower promised by President Nixon.

### a. Assessment of In-Country Conference

The Embassy Country Team, under the steady and strong political leadership of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and the outstanding military leadership of General Creighton Abrams, was effective in executing the policies set by Washington, by:

- implementing the Vietnamization Program efficiently,
- making pacification work and stressing local security
- giving "nation building" top priority and helping the Thieu government attain political stability,
- effectively neutralizing the VC infrastructure,
- effectively implementing the President's withdrawal plans, and
- keeping the Thieu government apprised throughout on the status of the secret negotiations.73/

The years of harmony changed when Ambassador Graham Martin took the reins in 1973 74/ The dissension among the lower and mid-level embassy and DAO staff members did not surface, however, until the debacle in 1975.75/ Notwithstanding the dissension and other problems (among them

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was alleged stifling of critical reports), Ambassador Martin's embassy apparently was doing exactly what President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger wanted--reporting that the RVNAF could "hack it" alone and that Thieu's government had the support of a broad political base.

### C. INSIGHTS

The following insights were developed from the analyses and assessments drawn in this chapter:

- Until the final collapse, right or wrong, American national leadership was convinced that the US must pursue a policy which would prevent the loss of South Vietnam to the communists from the North. Those various policies provided sufficient support to accomplish that objective, at least until US ground combat forces could be disengaged and withdrawn.
- As long as the general doctrine of military containment of communism was the official US policy, the decision specifically to intervene in Vietnam has to be considered a logical reaction. The domino theory saw any conflict with the communists as a test of the US's national resolve and credibility. The communists had threatened to take over "free world" territory in Berlin, Korea, Iran, Guatemala, Lebanon and the Dominican Republic, and actions taken by the US to prevent the loss of these territories were viewed by many as American "Cold War" successes. Conversely, the communists' gaining control over China and Cuba were viewed as "cold war" defeats for the US. Each successive US president during this period found himself bound, in large measure, by his predecessor's doctrines and thereafter analyzing issues from the same perspective in continuance of policies long after they outlived their usefulness.
- Throughout the entire period of US involvement in Indochina, from 1950 until 1975, the policy of containment worked and South Vietnam was not lost to communism. At each key or crucial decision point, following the initial commitment, US policy makers

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focused on how to contain communism in Vietnam and not on the wisdom of being there in the first place. Each escalation was seemingly in response to the progressive escalation of the price of keeping the commitment. It was not until the "A to Z" reassessment in 1968 that there was a thorough review made of that early commitment.

- The direct US involvement in Southeast Asia provided a degree of stability to the region; witness the fact that Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, as well as several other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) nations enjoyed a measure of economic prosperity.
- The collapse of South Vietnam was followed by the communist takeover of both Laos and Cambodia; currently Thailand's security is threatened. Regardless of how imperfect the "domino theory" may be, in the eyes of many, its validity has been demonstrated.
- A policy of unreserved commitment to a particular leadership placed the US in a weak and manipulable position on important internal issues in Vietnam. The early view that there were no viable alternatives to President Diem greatly limited the extent of US influence over his regime and ruled out, over the years, a number of kinds of leverage that might have been employed to obtain desired goals.
- The politico-military action which happened in the November 1963 coup against Diem would not have been possible without US connivance. To acquiesce in or to promote a coup makes sense only if positive results can reasonably be expected. The US Country Team in Saigon, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Council failed to identify a successor to Diem who might have been acceptable to the Vietnamese people as well as to the US, and who might have provided effective leadership.
- There appears to be little evidence of much critical thinking about the relation of Vietnam to US security. Scholars, journalists, politicians and government bureaucrats all seemed to have

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assumed either that Vietnam was vital to US national security or that the American people would not stand for the loss of another country to communism. 76/

### D. LESSONS

The following lessons are drawn from the material developed above:

- There are limits to US power. It is unlikely that the miracle work performed after WWII in Western Europe with US Marshall Plan aid will ever be reproduced. Being a superpower with an extensive arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles, and having a powerful modern army does not automatically guarantee that a foreign policy designed to exploit those strengths will be successful.
- In the final analysis, it is the president of the US who is held responsible by the American people for the formulation of US foreign policy as well as for the security of the nation. The Vietnam legacy is such that any future commitment by an American president of US military force will require the support of the US citizenry.
- If in the future the US finds it necessary from time to time to use limited force for limited objectives in certain strategic areas, such as in the Middle East (e.g., Iran) or in Latin America, where important US security interests are directly threatened and where limited intervention would offer the prospects of effective deterrence, then the US armed forces must be structured, trained, indoctrinated and equipped to meet the anticipated threat, and the US congress, press and public must be kept apprised to retain their support for any such action.
- As long as US policy is defined in negative terms - e.g., anti-communism or anti-Diem - it will be limited in coherence, continuity and relevance to US interests by the need to respond to situations rather than to consciously shape them. Thus, despite the overwhelming power implied by "superpower" status, the United



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States' foreign policy will suffer humiliating defeats unless and until its policy is designed to exploit US strengths in pursuit of positive goals.

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21. Department of State, "The U.S. in Southeast Asia," Department of State Bulletin, June 10, 1956, pp. 210-215.
22. Ibid.
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28. A leading adviser who thought Diem should go was former Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, who was given the rank of Ambassador and sent by Eisenhower as his personal representative to Saigon in late 1954 to expedite a crash program to improve the South Vietnamese armed forces. Collins considered that Premier Diem was unable to pull the divisive elements of his society together and, therefore, should have been removed.

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41. Gelb, p. 48.
42. Ibid.
43. MacDonald, p. 43.

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44. Ibid, p. 31.
45. The GVN "White Paper" on the Diem Coup; Interview at BDM with the Vietnam Strategic Lessons Learned Senior Review Panel on September 7-8, 1979; and DOD, US/VN Relations, Book 3 of 12, "The Overthrow of Diem."
46. ENDNOTE DELETED
47. ENDNOTE DELETED
48. ENDNOTE DELETED
49. Paraphrased from The University of Virginia Interview Series conducted with General Maxwell D. Taylor by Steve Feinberg on September 27, 1972, see page 8 of the transcript. As an interesting sideight, reporter and author David Halberstam and his fellow reporter Neil Sheehan supposedly contributed to the overthrow of Diem by announcing that they were going to get Diem. They allegedly influenced The Washington Post, The New York Times and other newspapers into printing an inaccurate picture of what was going on in Vietnam. See same interview, p. 8.
50. Ibid, p. 3.
51. Interview with General Paul D. Harkins, US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, April 28, 1974, in Dallas, Texas, pp. 62-63.
52. Ibid. p. 49.
53. DOD US-VN Relations, Book 3 of 12, "Memorandum for the President," Subject: Vietnam Situation, December 1964, pp. 1-3.
54. BDM Interview with General Maxwell D. Taylor, conducted at his residence on July 11, 1979.
55. Private Papers of General William C. Westmoreland, On file at the Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH), US Army, Washington, D.C. See History Back up File (7-31 December 1964); Embtel to State #1950, dated Dec 26, 1964, subject: "Discourteous Attitude and Abuse of Power by Ambassador Taylor."
56. BDM Interview with General Taylor and General Westmoreland's Private Papers, OCMH, History Back up File, Mar 27 - May 7, 1965, See Ambassador Taylor, Washington consultation in Washington, D.C. April 1965 and General Westmoreland's concept for employment and tactical use of US combat forces in RVN.

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57. PROVN Study, Annex F; and Generals MacArthur and Ridgway both were among many former military leaders who continued against US combat involvement on the mainland of Asia.
58. Gelb, Beyond Containment, p. 47.
59. MacDonald, p. 51 and Gelb, Beyond Containment, p. 49.
60. George Ball, "A Light That Failed," Atlantic Monthly, July 1972, p. 41.
61. General Westmoreland's Private Papers, OCMH, Washington, D.C. History Back Up File (Mar 27-May 7, 1965); see Memo for the Record, Meeting of Ambassador Taylor with Secretary of State Rusk and Consultation Papers, April 1965.
62. Leslie H. Gelb with Richard Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 145; and DOD US-VN Relations, Book 6 of 12, IV, C. 11. pp. 125-127.
63. Gelb with Betts, p. 145.
64. General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), p. 176; and quoted in Gelb with Betts, p. 145.
65. Gelb with Betts, pp. 145-146.
66. DOD, US-VN Relations, Book 6 of 12, IV, C. 11. p. 127.
67. National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) Nr. 9, April 1, 1969.
68. Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston, Mass: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), pp 272-273; and, MacDonald, pp 74-75.
69. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 276.
70. Quoted MacDonald, p. 76.
71. MacDonald, p. 91; and Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1473-1476.
72. Guenter Lewy, America In Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press. 1978), p. 204.
73. Interview with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at The BDM Corp, McLean, Va. on September 11, 1979; and Interview with Ambassador Samuel Berger at his Washington D.C. residence by BDM Corp study team on June 22, 1979.

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74. Frank Snapp, Decent Interval (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 66-216; and, Richard A. McMahon, Col, USA, "Assessment of the Army of Republic of Vietnam, ARVN," Declassified Intelligence Report by the US Army Attache, Saigon, Vietnam, 5 July 1974 (DA form 2496), pp. 1-6.
75. Snapp, Ibid.
76. Gelb, Beyond Containment, p. 51.

CHAPTER 3  
CONTINGENCY PLANNING

If a commander is to grasp the essentials and reject the inessentials; if he is to split his general operation into a number of complementary actions in such a way that all shall combine to achieve the purpose common to every one of them, he must be able to see the situation as a whole, to attribute to each object its relative importance, to grasp the connections between each factor in the situation and to recognize its limits.

Charles de Gaulle, The Edge of the Sword 1/

The military proposals for Vietnam, he said, were based on assumptions and predictions that could not be verified - on help from Laos and Cambodia to halt infiltration from the North, or agreement by Diem to reorganizations in his army and government, on more popular support for Diem in the countryside and on sealing off Communist supply routes. Estimates of both time and cost were either absent or wholly unrealistic.

Theodore C. Sorenson about President Kennedy in Kennedy 2/

A. INTRODUCTION

Before 1965, US contingency planning for operations in Indochina reflected America's perceptions of its military capabilities and its role in stopping communist aggression abroad. US plans for military operations in Southeast Asia did not take shape until the mid-1950s, and at that time were consistent with the experience of combat in Korea, with the US view of the Chinese threat to Southeast Asia, and with the unquestioned US supremacy in air and naval power.

US contingency plans for operations in Indochina, drafted during the 1950s, were remarkably similar in concept to the UN campaign in Korea. These plans included provisions for countering a conventional enemy



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offensive (North Vietnamese or the combined Chinese-North Vietnamese forces), establishing defensive positions near the 17th parallel and northwest of Saigon near the RVN-Cambodia border, and mounting an eventual counteroffensive. To support those plans, provisions were made for selecting potential targets for nuclear strikes, for occupying key cities, and for interdicting the enemy's critical lines of communication (LOCs). These plans did not change markedly throughout the 1955-65 time period,<sup>3/</sup> although US planners were forced to recognize the growing importance of counterinsurgency in the early 1960s, due in great measure to President Kennedy's deep personal interest in counterinsurgency.<sup>4/</sup>

The actual US commitment of combat troops in Indochina in 1965 differed from that foreseen in contingency plans. Perhaps the greatest variation was in the incremental US commitment of combat troops. The gradual movement of men and equipment to Indochina, which one planning document characterized "on a business-as-usual basis", had little resemblance to the intensity of commitment which US planners had envisioned during the 1950s.<sup>5/</sup> The early US plans had anticipated a mobilization of reserve units; this mobilization was thought to be a cornerstone of the US war effort.<sup>6/</sup> The US commitment further differed from the planned effort in that US ground troops were not dispatched to protect northern Thailand or Laos, but only to South Vietnam. Some covert special operations were carried out, as the US had planned for, but the nuclear option was not seriously considered during the course of US combat involvement. In summary, the Vietnam conflict of the 1965-73 time period was quite a different war than that which was foreseen by US planners in the 1950s and early 1960s.

### B. PEACETIME PERSPECTIVES

#### 1. Military Strategic Planning

In 1959 and 1960 the Army took an important step in long-range planning with the development of the Army-Long-Range Strategic Estimate (ARLSE). That estimate forecast the world environment 10 to 15 years in

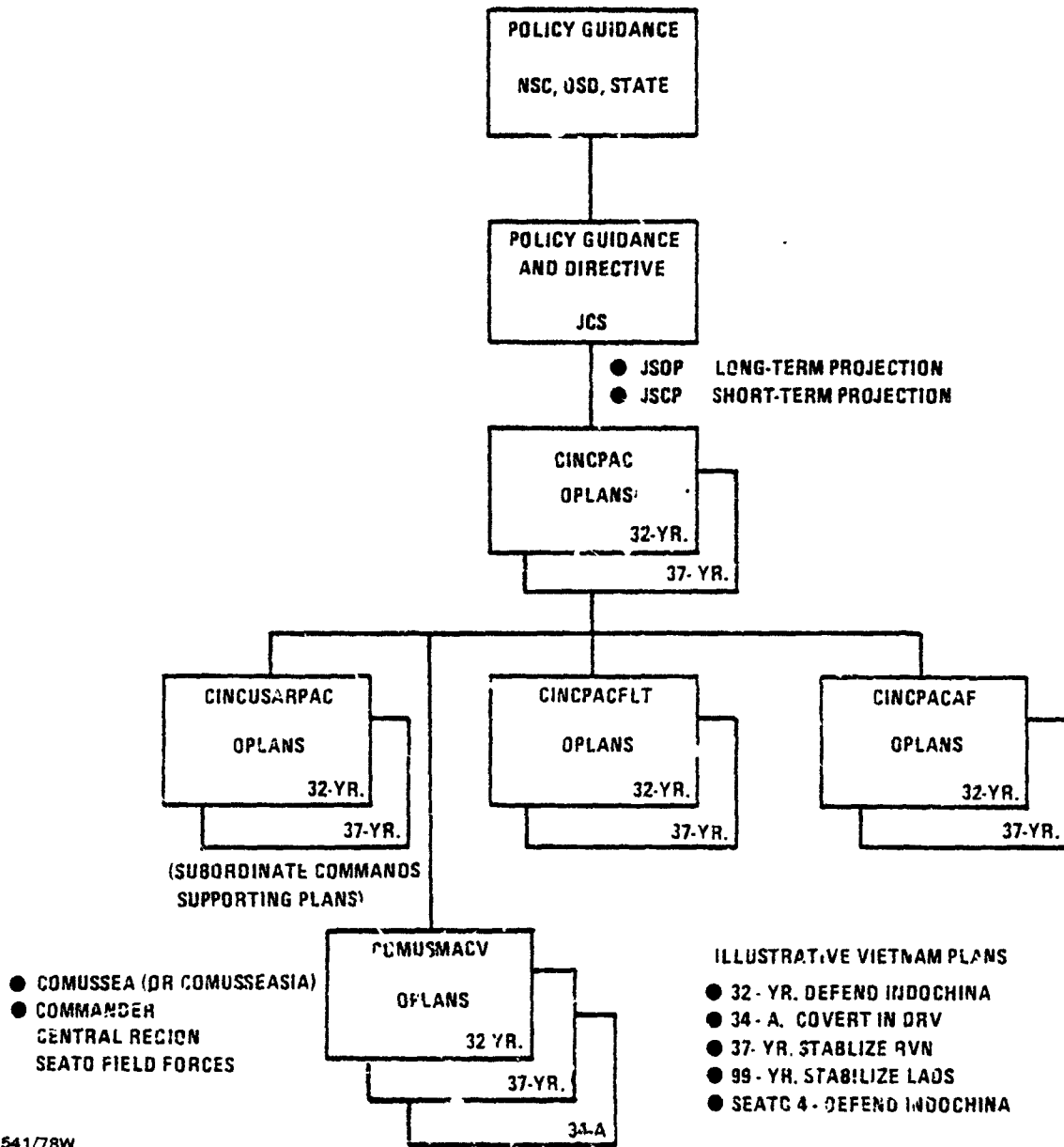
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the future.<sup>7/</sup> US joint planning for possible intervention in Indochina before 1965 fit the pattern of similar US planning for contingencies in other parts of the world. The JCS issued the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) to assign tasks, allocate forces, and provide guidance to commanders of unified and specified commands.<sup>8/</sup> Guidance issued annually in the JSCP was used by commanders of unified and specified commands to develop or revise contingency plans (operation plans, or OPLANs) for areas of concern in their theaters. (See Figure 3-1). After approval by the JCS of the unified command's plan, detailed supporting plans were developed by that command's component commanders. Concurrently, the military services determined logistic resupply requirements for each contingency plan.<sup>9/</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Army component of Pacific Command, US Army, Pacific (USARPAC), played a major role in contingency planning, since its commander was the designated joint field commander in each of the contingency plans for Indochina.<sup>10/</sup> When USMACV was formed as a subordinate unified command, its staff planning responsibilities were directly to CINCPAC.

In view of the complexity of the various contingency plans and the need for extensive coordination, considerable time was required to complete the planning sequence. In some cases, nine or more months were needed. In another case, the revision cycle for OPLAN 32-64 -- the basic plan providing for US combat participation in defense of Southeast Asia -- required over 18 months.<sup>11/</sup>

## 2. Objectives

US planners had witnessed encroachment by communist-backed forces in several parts of the globe, and some believed that the Indochinese countries would soon be ripe for a communist move. As pointed out in official documents, three major perceptions dominated US planning and policymaking on Indochina during this time: the increased importance of Asia in world politics; the tendency to view the worldwide communist threat as a monolith, centrally directed from Moscow; and the view of Ho Chi Minh's attempts to evict the French as a local manifestation of the worldwide communist thrust.<sup>12/</sup>



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Figure 3-1. Planning Relationships - Simplified (Illustrative)

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The overall objective of US contingency plans for Southeast Asia was containment of communism, specifically to prevent the takeover of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam by communist North Vietnam or by China. That objective was an integral part of the American "containment" strategy first proposed by George Kennan. This strategy provided for an "unalterable counterforce" to the communists "at every point where they show signs of encroachment".<sup>13/</sup>

The spectre of possible Chinese military intervention in Indochina was a central element of US planning. The Chinese intervention in Korea had caught some US officials, and General MacArthur in particular, by surprise. US planners were determined not to overlook the possibility of Chinese intervention in any conflict in Indochina. General MacArthur had miscalculated the PRC's intentions in Korea at first, but he later raised the possibility of Peking extending its military power into Southeast Asia. In April 1951, he stated that China was an "aggressive imperialist power" whose vigorous thrusts were evident "not only in Korea but also in Indochina and Tibet and pointing potentially toward the South".<sup>14/</sup>

At the same time, US planners were reluctant to commit American ground forces to yet another long inconclusive war such as that in Korea. The US ground forces were small in number compared to the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army, yet enjoyed a decisive superiority over the Chinese in air and naval capabilities. Therefore, the earliest US plans for operations were tailored to make maximum use of the USAF's conventional and nuclear capability, and to optimize the US Navy's ability to blockade long stretches of coastline. In that way, US planners believed that the American military force would be best employed -- with relatively few expected US losses -- to protect the non-communist states of Indochina.

### 3. Planning Highlights

Two US contingency plans in support of French forces in Indochina during the early 1950s warrant mention, as they illustrate the considerations given to joining forces against the communists. As early as 1951, G-2 and G-3 planners in Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in Hawaii, prepared a staff study (then Top Secret) dealing with US Navy and US Marine Corps

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involvement in a possible contingency requiring the evacuation of French Union forces and refugees from Haiphong.<sup>15/</sup> That planning served a useful purpose three years later, if only in the sense that a study had been made of the physical area and the problems inherent in such an undertaking. The regroupment south of about 900,000 refugees and 190,000 Franco-Vietnamese troops was facilitated by that earlier planning venture.

In early 1954, top-level US planners vigorously debated whether to come to the aid of French forces at Dien Bien Phu. A plan code-named "Vulture", was proposed in which American airpower would be used to relieve the besieged garrison. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had urged the use of nuclear weapons, a position strongly supported by Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the JCS. In mid-April, Dulles told France that the US might save the French garrison if the US received allied support -- meaning primarily British support -- and "if we gave you two atomic bombs".<sup>16/</sup> President Eisenhower and the NSC studied the situation at length and concluded that the US should intervene only on the conditions that the venture include an allied coalition (including British, Australian, and New Zealand troops), that France grant independence to Indochina following the war and that France continue in the war until its successful conclusion. Meanwhile, General Matthew B. Ridgway, having previously directed a detailed study of Indochina, expressed his doubts about the plan; General Ridgway believed that "the situation had an ominous ring. For ... if we committed air and naval power to that area, we would have to follow them immediately with ground forces in support".<sup>17/</sup> At last, President Eisenhower -- lacking the support of the British and key members of the US Congress -- disapproved the plan to intervene and Dien Bien Phu fell to the Viet Minh.<sup>18/</sup>

The concept of applying massive US airpower in Indochina was evident in the earliest US contingency plans. According to the Limited War Plan - Indochina (revised in late 1956 and since down graded to unclassified), a major role would be played by US aviation, and the possible use of up to 215 nuclear weapons was anticipated.<sup>19/</sup> This contingency plan envisioned operations by US and allied forces "to repulse the overt

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aggression by Viet Minh forces" and then "to destroy Viet Minh forces and Chinese Communist forces in Indochina".<sup>20/</sup> US planners anticipated having sufficient strength in South Vietnam by about D + nine months to counter-attack and destroy enemy forces there, to be followed by an amphibious assault aimed at Hanoi. The "overt aggression" theme is apparent in early CINCPAC plans (numbers 48 and 56) dealing with Indochina, which envisioned conventional invasions by North Vietnamese or combined North Vietnamese/Chinese units through Laos across the Mekong River (the Thailand-Laos border) or down the Laotian panhandle, eventually to threaten Bangkok and Saigon.<sup>21/</sup>

While these early plans were in preparation, most US planners lacked a firm understanding of local conditions in Indochina. According to LTG Bruce C. Clarke, USA, commander of USARPAC in 1955, his command had "no first hand knowledge on the conditions in Laos and very little material in the files on which realistic plans could be based".<sup>22/</sup> Apparently based on this inadequate knowledge, CINCPAC requested USARPAC to participate in the development of a requirement plan for the defense of Laos.<sup>23/</sup> LTG Clarke's observations of local forces were also insightful, for he noted their tendency "to pattern their armies after the United States organizational structure".<sup>24/</sup>

#### 4. CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59

Contingency planning for active US military intervention evidently began in earnest in 1959, with the first preparation of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59. According to some military historians this original "32 Plan" was a crash effort to prepare for the deteriorating situation in Laos.<sup>25/</sup> For the first time, US planning took account of counterinsurgency operations. The plan, however, retained the spatial concept of its predecessors, and called for a main US forward defense line along the Mekong River, to serve as the "jump-off point" for a counteroffensive into northern Laos. A large Army buildup in northern Thailand was foreseen by US planners.

CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 addressed the insurgency in neighboring South Vietnam. The plan, however, made no provision for dealing with the social,

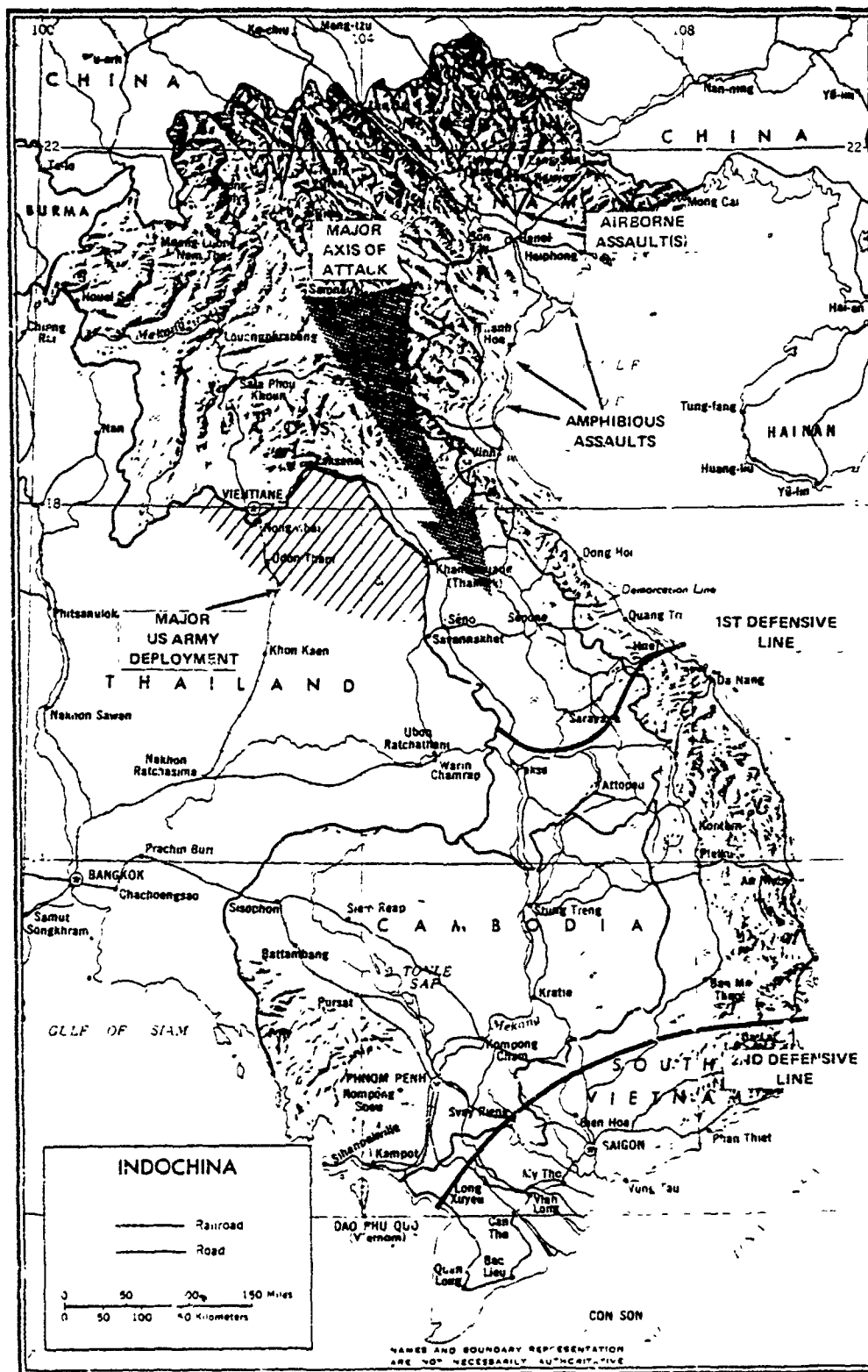
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psychological, and political aspects of the insurgency, which were presumably left to the South Vietnamese. The projected US intervention was aimed primarily at holding critical areas and facilities with conventional forces. By the 1960s, the insurgency in South Vietnam was recognized as a major threat in itself. In hopes of stemming the insurgency, the US orchestrated an expansion of RVNAF and the Civil Guard and attempted to exact political and military reforms from President Diem to shore up the regime's support, by means of the Counter-Insurgency Plan (CIP) of January 1961. The CIP was actually the US ground plan for revitalizing the GVN; in no sense was it a contingency plan.<sup>26/</sup>

The 32 Plan changed little in the early 1960s. It envisioned an enemy approach down the main axis of the Laotian panhandle, with US forces on the defensive for several months after a rapid reinforcement to the area. Major defensive lines of US forces were called for in two principal areas -- one stretching from Thailand across Laos north of the Bolovers Plateau and across RVN to the Tonkin Gulf, and the other a fallback position near the Cambodia-RVN border north of Saigon to protect the capital. A number of geographical targets were selected for ADM (atomic demolition munition) blasts to slow the enemy advance southward. The US counteroffensive would follow, with US forces making paradrops in the very heart of North Vietnam and staging amphibious landings along the DRV coastline. The "upper level" of the 32 Plan called for establishment of the position of Commander, US Forces, Southeast Asia (COMUSSEA) -- a senior commander directly under the JCS who would be responsible for operations throughout the Indochina theater.<sup>27/</sup> The 32 Plan was updated each year during the early 1960s. (See Map 3-1) When it came, the actual conflict -- as the NLF and their North Vietnamese fought it -- did not conform to this plan. US logistical support activities of the mid-1960s were, however, guided chiefly by the 32 Plan.

From this plan may be traced some of the early optimistic projections of the total US manpower which would be required to counter the enemy operations in Indochina. The 32 Plan called for a total US commitment of about 205,000 men -- about six divisions -- in the event of a joint North

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Map 3-1. Typical Early Contingency Planning for Defense of South Vietnam



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Vietnamese/Chinese invasion, Phase IV as it was called.<sup>28/</sup> (It is ironic that in 1968, without facing Chinese forces, USMACV had about 520,000 US troops augmented by over 62,000 non-US Free World forces. The early optimistic estimates apparently were based on the assumption that an enemy invasion would be sharply offset by US airpower.)

### 5. Related Plans

Under the Kennedy Administration, Laos continued to occupy center stage in contingency planning. In May 1962, the President requested contingency planning, in the event of a breakdown of the Laotian ceasefire, in two major areas: investing and holding by Thai forces with US backup in northern Laos west of the Mekong River, and holding and recapture of the panhandle area of southern Laos with Thai, Vietnamese, or US forces. President Kennedy asked that this planning be undertaken unilaterally by the US without discussion with Thai or Laotian officials.<sup>30/</sup>

The concept of "increasing pressure" on the enemy is apparent in USARPAC OPLAN 37-64, which had as its goal the stability of the RVN. In general terms, the plan called for emphasis on border control operations, some limited retaliation against the DRV, and graduated overt offensives into the North. The US assumptions for implementing this plan are noteworthy: sufficient progress by the ARVN in fighting the insurgency in the South to make it possible for them to launch raids into the DRV, cooperation by other local governments (Thailand and Laos), the availability of necessary funds, and the lifting of restrictions on US operations to permit implementation of the plan.<sup>31/</sup> A common thread running through all contingency plans for a major US commitment is the assumption of a policy decision to mobilize Army reserve units.

### 6. Constraints on Planning Options

#### a. Geneva Accords and SEATO Agreements

The Geneva Accords of July 1954, which settled the First Indochina War, imposed restrictions on American officials in Indochina. US officials had to maintain a low, unobtrusive profile in RVN, a condition which complicated early American efforts to report conditions in the countryside. In addition, General Maxwell Taylor has noted that the Diem

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regime "was very cold to American requests to poke around the countryside".<sup>32/</sup> Meanwhile, communist Viet Minh leaders had made full use of their opportunities to establish a covert armed cadre and to gather intelligence.<sup>33/</sup>

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which was organized in 1954 and came into force in 1955, had as one of its major goals the deterrence of communist aggression in Indochina. SEATO contingency plans for the collective defense of this region were incorporated in SEATO Plans 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.<sup>34/</sup> These plans dealt variously with the defense of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam (the Central Region), and with the reinforcement and defense of RVN. Many of the member states (the US, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand) were reluctant to make a military commitment to Indochina, and the organization lacked the cohesiveness and immediate sense of purpose to function as its founders had envisioned. Only token forces were pledged; therefore SEATO's operation plans were based on requirements rather than on designated forces or troop units.

### b. Neutralization of Laos and the "Secret War"

The Geneva agreement of July 1962, designed to settle the conflict in Laos, prohibited the US and other foreign powers from implementing any plan to station military forces in Laos. The very points in the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos which the North Vietnamese repeatedly violated would block US implementation of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 and CINCPAC OPLAN 99-64 (which specifically provided for the defense of Laos). These points included articles 2G (no foreign troops or military personnel in Laos), 2H (no military bases in Laos), and 2I (the prohibition on using the territory of Laos to interfere in the internal affairs of another country).<sup>35/</sup>

Rather than introduce military units in Laos, the Kennedy administration mounted a wide-ranging covert paramilitary campaign through the CIA and its proprietary organization Air America (see Chapter 6, Volume VI)<sup>36/</sup>. William E. Colby, formerly the Director of Central Intelligence, later stated that the US, having made an agreement with the USSR in 1962

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over Laos, "tried to hold onto it, which is why we gave aid through the CIA".<sup>37/</sup> This commitment continued through the Johnson and Nixon administrations, and led to a complicated series of command arrangements and restrictions on US operations which would continue throughout the period of US involvement.<sup>38/</sup>

It should be noted that COMUSMACV had given consideration in 1964 to establishing an international force below the DMZ and across Laos, generally along Route 9. In 1967 contingency plans were prepared for a corps-size force of three divisions to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Sufficient forces were not available for such an operation until 1968, by which time President Johnson was beset by war critics and was unable to expand the war.<sup>39/</sup>

### c. Cambodian Instability

US contingency plans generally had recognized that enemy forces would use sanctuary areas. Due largely to the instability of the Sihanouk government, PAVN (NVA) troops used parts of eastern Cambodia as base and sanctuary areas, from which to launch raids into RVN. As in the case of Laos, US policy-makers found no effective alternative to prevent use of those sanctuary areas. Covert, small-scale raids and intelligence reconnaissance patrols by US and ARVN troops were launched into these areas, but had no decisive effect. In efforts to deny some of the major Cambodian sanctuary areas, the US began a series of B-52 strikes in eastern Cambodia in March 1969 (see Chapter 6 Volume VI).

### d. PRC/USSR Attitudes

Early US contingency plans were based on the expectation that China could intervene at any time. In addition to warnings issued by General MacArthur not to become enmeshed on the Asian mainland in the 1950s, the Chinese road-building program in the far northern part of Laos in 1960-61 as well as the CPR's border war with India in 1962 indicated the possibility of Chinese military intervention against US forces. By the mid-1960s, however, China became internally convulsed by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and its capabilities and will to intervene in force dwindled.

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At the same time, US contingency plans did not reflect the prospect of massive Soviet support of North Vietnam's military effort. North Vietnam was treated by US planners as a vassal state or proxy of the Chinese, and the scope of the Soviet-sponsored buildup of North Vietnam's ground and air defense forces in the mid-1960s probably took some US officials by surprise.

### e. Internal US Constraints

Several constraints prevented the US from preparing contingency plans which "fit" the real nature of the war. The first constraint was the faulty nature of US intelligence during the 1950s and early 1960s (see Chapter 9 Volume VI). This prevented US planners from gaining a true insight into the capabilities and intentions of both North and South Vietnam. Another constraint was the general lack of background knowledge by US planners about the entire region (long considered to be on the "periphery", far from direct US interests). These factors combined to ensure that faulty assumptions about enemy and friendly states would be included in some contingency plans. The military services lacked the political guidance such as that required from the State Department to set goals or to define the obstacles which might be encountered in attaining military goals.<sup>40/</sup> Without this necessary guidance, the Joint Chiefs were left to develop their own concepts of future policy. According to Gen. Maxwell Taylor the JCS lacked adequate military guidance as late as 1964, when the US was turning increased attention to Vietnam. The JCS had the Secretary of Defense's encouragement, "but little guidance as to standards of sufficiency".<sup>41/</sup> Other top military planners have remarked there was no unified military view of the situation in Vietnam.<sup>42/</sup>

## C. PLANS ACTUALLY IMPLEMENTED

### 1. OPLANS 34A and 37-64

During the watershed year of 1964, the first contingency plan to be implemented was the joint MACV/CIA OPLAN 34A, an elaborate program of covert operations designed to punish the North Vietnamese for their support

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of the insurgency in the South. OPLAN 34A was first proposed in May 1963 and, after coordination by the military and CIA, was approved by President Johnson in mid-January 1964. Phase One began on February 1, and was designed to run until May 1964. Specific paramilitary operations included capture of prisoners and physical destruction of installations in the DRV, to be carried out by both US and South Vietnamese commando troops, as well as an expanded effort to collect intelligence and conduct psychological operations in the North (see Chapter 9, Volume VI). Phases Two and Three called for the same categories of action, but of increased tempo and magnitude -- all designed to punish the DRV in return for aggression. Phase One operations had little effect, and the subsequent phases were not set in motion.43/

A portion of CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 was approved for planning purposes by the JCS in April 1964. That portion tabulated the number of planes and optimum bomb tonnage required for each phase of the air strikes in North Vietnam. In June the JCS refined the CINCPAC plan and produced a comprehensive list of 94 targets in the DRV which would be most suitable for air strikes.44/ The initial airstrikes were performed by both US and South Vietnamese aircraft, but the VNAF would later be eased out of the operation and the US took near-total responsibility for conduct of the air war. Significantly, top policymakers in Washington took the lead in directing the air war, and all of the 94 prime targets on the JCS list would not be struck until 1972.

### 2. Changing Perceptions

During 1964 and early 1965, a series of increasingly pessimistic intelligence reports from SVN apparently affected the actions of top US planners, particularly with regard to the spreading insurgency in the South. In early 1964, the CIA claimed that the insurgency tide seemed to be going against the GVN in all four Corps Tactical Zones. CIA reports in early 1965 remained somber, and pointed out the lack of progress in pacification. It appears that the perspectives of most planners changed during this time, with far more focus directly on the guerrilla war in the South.45/

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### 3. No Reserve Call-up

The initial logistical buildup in 1964 reflected some elements of OPLAN 32-64.<sup>46/</sup> However, the crucial decision not to mobilize the reserves (see below) and inaction on the part of the JCS and Secretary of Defense on CCMUSMACV's 1964 request for a logistics command and engineer construction units unfavorably affected the implementation of the subsequent buildup of combat forces in South Vietnam. See Table 3-1.

Throughout early 1965, planners within the Department of the Army and at CONARC Headquarters generally assumed that any augmentation of the Army's force structure would include at least a partial call-up of Reserve component units. Contingency plans contained the proposed call-up of Reserve components for a maximum period of 12 months. Troop lists for these contingency plans were rendered useless on July 28, 1965, when President Johnson announced plans for the major infusion of US forces into South Vietnam, an immediate increase to 125,000 men, with additional forces to be deployed as necessary. This buildup would be accomplished by increased draft calls, but no Reserve units or individuals were to be called up.<sup>47/</sup> This surprise decision by the President -- not envisioned in contingency plans -- caused a host of related problems.<sup>48/</sup> (See chapter 4 of this volume).

### 4. Planning Deployment in SVN

By this time, US officials realized that a large US troop presence would not be required in Thailand and that such a presence in Laos was prohibited by the 1962 agreement. The major planning issue in 1965 was where to deploy the bulk of US troop strength in South Vietnam -- in the Central Highlands (where USMACV and most intelligence analysts believed the major enemy threat to be) or near populated areas on the coastline to protect cities and industries there (as CINCPAC had urged).<sup>49/</sup> The issue of troop deployment would have a bearing on the type of operations each commander preferred: Gen. Westmoreland preferred mobile and heliborne "search and destroy" operations, whereas CINCPAC made a case for security/clearing operations to clear the coastal "enclaves". Once the planning for combat operations was discussed in this framework, the early contingency plans had very little meaning.

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TABLE 3-1. STEPS TOWARD "GRADUALISM" -- PLANNING DECISIONS, 1964-1965

DATE:	EVENT:
22 APR 64	(Memo, Dep. Sec. Def. to CJCS) Secretary of Defense Mr. McNamara insisted that he personally approve every MACV manpower space.
23 MAY 64	(Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 2304182) MACV opposed to "flooding" RVN with US personnel; preferred buildup on selective basis.
27 MAY 64	Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 2708052) CINCPAC agreed with COMUSMACV, outlined specific advisory buildup recommended.
28 JUL 64	(Msg, COMUSMACV to JCS, MACJ1 7044) COMUSMACV requested 4,200 personnel by 1 Dec 64.
7 AUG 64	(Memo, Sec. Def. to CJCS) McNamara directed that his proposed accelerated deployment be completed by end of Sept 64.
11 AUG 64	(Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, MACJ3 7738) Westmoreland could not absorb buildup in time requested by Sec. Def.
15 AUG 64	(Msg, JCS to CSA, CNO, CSAF et al., JCS 7953) Sec Def cancelled accelerated deployment, goes along with COMUSMACV.
26 FEB 65	Decision made in Washington to send Marines to Da Nang, recommended by COMUSMACV on 22 Feb; Marines land 6 Mar.
16 MAR 65	(JCS message 0936) GEN H. K. Johnson returned from RVN, recommended deployment of US combat forces.
6 APR 65	(NSAM 328) President approved dispatch of 2 more Marine battalions and air wing, authorized their employment for active combat missions.

SOURCE: Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Vol. II, pp. 416-423.

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### 5. Other Factors

In retrospect, it does not appear that economic or budgetary factors were constraints in the development of US contingency plans or in the actual buildup of US forces. In both cases, it was envisioned that a conflict in Indochina would be "capital-intensive," as US forces would rely on large amounts of (expensive) firepower delivered by aircraft and sophisticated ground weapons. By contrast the US had expected enemy forces to wage a similar type of "capital-intensive" conventional conflict. Instead, the enemy actually mounted a relatively low-cost guerrilla war until 1972. The major domestic constraint on the initial US conduct of the war was a political one. President Kennedy and President Johnson both sought to minimize the scope of the US commitment, even at the cost of adopting policies which ran counter to traditional military doctrine and strategy.

### 6. MACV Contingency Planning Post 1965

#### a. Unilateral Planning

After the influx of large numbers of American troop units and the transformation of Headquarters, USMACV into an operational headquarters directing combat operations, there existed an apparent need for a contingency planning capability within MACV. Previously, planning for Southeast Asian contingencies had been accomplished by component commanders of Pacific Command and their subordinate commanders. Beginning in 1965 the presence in RVN of significant US combat forces resulted in there being a de facto commander on the spot, one whose staff could produce the necessary plans for likely contingencies using forces assigned to him plus any additional forces earmarked by the JCS for his use.<sup>50/</sup>

In general, near-term operations or contingencies were planned for by the J-3 staff of MACV. For example, plans prepared in 1969 for attacking into Cambodia were prepared by the J-3 even though there was no authorization for such attacks at that time.<sup>51/</sup>

Unilateral US plans, such as the general war plan, the defense of Thailand and the protocol states, the defense of RVN in the face of a combined Chinese-North Vietnamese attack, and certain sensitive code word plans for covert operations were drawn up in the J-5 staff.



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### b. SEATO Planning

Prior to 1965, US planning in support of SEATO was accomplished in the same manner as was unilateral planning. Appropriate subordinate commands within PACOM were charged with that planning responsibility in response to policy guidance and planning requirements provided by the Military Planning Office (MPO) of SEATO in Bangkok, Thailand.<sup>52/</sup> After 1965 MAC J-52 was charged with the responsibility of preparing the field commander's plans, since COMUSMACV was designated Commander, Central Region, SEATO Field Forces. SEATO MPO provided the basic directive, and the detailed contingency plans were developed by MAC J-52 COMUSMACV.

It should be noted that the SEATO plans anticipated contingencies similar to those reflected in unilateral US plans. The latter, however, were based on actual troop lists and programmed reinforcements, whereas SEATO plans were based on requirements, since only token forces were pledged by SEATO member nations.

### c. Concept Planning

In June 1969 the Pacific Command sponsored a planning conference to provide an orientation for all contingency planners through PACOM and to discuss a proposal by the Joint Staff for a new form of planning. The JCS representatives at the conference were prepared to recommend that complete plans be developed only for major contingencies. Minor plans, those in the same geographic areas but calling for fewer troop units or other assets, would be prepared in skeleton form; that is, a detailed concept of operations would be prepared but annexes and appendices would be omitted unless absolutely essential to an understanding of the operation. The basic premise for these "Concept Plans" was that if the major plan, fully developed, was feasible, the lesser plans could also be implemented. PACOM planners welcomed the concept and recommended its adoption.<sup>53/</sup>

## D. ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING EFFECTIVENESS

In view of the sharp differences between existing contingency plans and the actual US commitment of troops in 1965, it is clear that these

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contingency plans -- or most of their component elements -- were not tested in combat. In effect, this precludes a thorough assessment of US planning effectiveness.<sup>54/</sup> The components of US contingency plans which were employed in 1964 and 1965 were dependent -- at least in part -- on a set of associated, complementary actions in order to be truly effective. An examination of the covert commando assaults (called for in OPLAN 34A) and the bombing of the DRV (called for in a portion of OPLAN 37-64) reveals that the concept of "gradualism" -- as reflected in both these contingency plans -- was ineffective. US military operations applied in this manner did not punish the DRV enough, or in a concentrated "dose", to force the North to stop its support of the insurgency in the South.

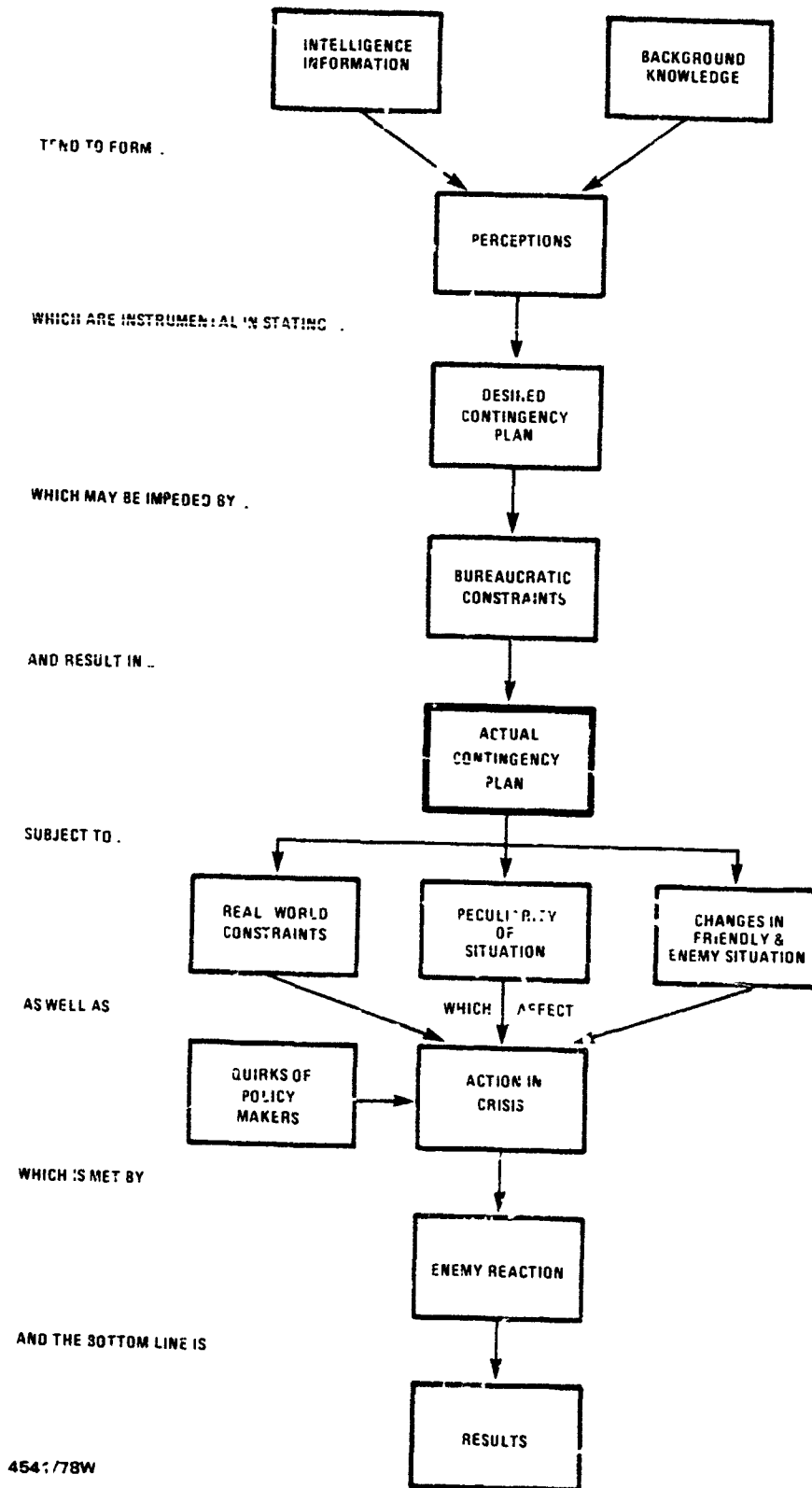
According to most accounts by Army officials, the system for contingency planning is basically sound.<sup>55/</sup> As a rule, the associated commands had (and continue to have) ample opportunity to perform the necessary coordination and to plan for implementation of the plans at the local level. Contingency planning as practiced by the Army is generally effective from the military standpoint. US planners, however, must recognize that contingency planning does not occur in a vacuum by itself, but that a host of factors can -- and often will -- work to alter the shape of actual operations in a crisis situation. See Figure 3-2.

Contingency plans serve a useful purpose. They provide an opportunity to study an area and a potential crisis situation. Planners are able to identify gaps in the information available to them and to make an effort to fill the gaps or to develop appropriate assumptions and responsive and alternate plans.

### E. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

CINCPAC OPLAN 32-year and supporting 32-year prepared by PACOM component commands and their principal subordinate commands failed to appreciate and assess the true nature of the threat existing in Vietnam before 1965. The 32 Plan was never invoked, although it did provide a handy 'rule of thumb' concerning the US logistical buildup. One major

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SOURCE: BDM Analysts' Visualization of the Planning Process  
Figure 3-2. Contingency Planning

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reason for not implementing contingency plans as written was the wide variance between the anticipated conflict (as viewed by US planners in the 1950s and early 1960s) and the insurgency-type conflict that the US actually fought. Another major reason was emphasis by the president to downplay the scale of US involvement in Indochina during the 1961-65 time period.

US planning was heavily influenced by the prospect of Chinese intervention in Southeast Asia. After being surprised in 1950 when the PRC intervened in Korea, US planners were resolved to be prepared for the possibility of Chinese intervention in Indochina.

If the enemy had fought the type of war which US planners first envisioned (large units operations, clearcut lines of advance and retreat, minimal insurgency), the US likely would have reacted differently. Evidently the North Vietnamese had studied the strengths and weaknesses of US forces which had evolved since the Korean conflict, and tailored strategy and tactics so as not to play into US strengths (airpower, large amounts of ground-based firepower, etc.).

### F. LESSONS

- Contingency planning requires review by experienced analysts who are familiar with the local political and economic realities to ensure that contingency plans are realistic and have responded to changes in the local situation. This input should not be considered a substitute for sound military strategy, but the integration of these factors may have a major bearing on military operations.
- Contingency plans should not be shaped by the "last war," but by the realities of the threat and US objectives in the area of the proposed contingency plan. By contrast, there is ample evidence that some Vietnam contingency plans were shaped by the Korean War: the "Yalu River syndrome" of possible Chinese intervention,

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the expectation that UN allies would make some meaningful contribution, and the preparation for a conventional, stand-up type of conflict, etc. Each situation requiring a contingency plan is unique and different from others which may appear at first glance to have been similar.

- The amount and level of interdisciplinary study to be focused on a contingency plan should be in proportion to the value of that area to US interests. Contingency plans for areas of critical US interest should receive the most scrutiny.
- Accurate intelligence information is fundamental to the formation of sound contingency plans. It is imperative that this intelligence be unbiased, objective, and drawn from all available sources. The intelligence information may be coupled with a scenario in order to give policymakers a realistic expectation of the outcome of their proposed actions. When an actual crisis occurs, policymakers should have faith in a contingency plan which has been tested by scenarios and war-gaming simulations.
- Those who prepare contingency plans should be aware of possible domestic planning constraints, and even the predispositions of top policy-makers. These factors -- such as the Johnson administration's refusal to mobilize reserve units for Vietnam -- may affect the outcome of a crisis situation just as much as any other factor. It is recognized that the military's duty is not to oversee domestic policy, but military planners should be aware that policymakers hesitate to put some contingency plans into motion.
- In view of the many factors which may affect the execution of a contingency plan, planners should build in a series of realistic variations and options to the central contingency plan. Specifically, each assumption upon which a plan is based must be accompanied by a realistic alternate plan to be used if that assumption fails to materialize. The key is to identify necessary and realistic assumptions in the first place.

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- Clear and definitive national security policy guidance is essential for strategic planning. If adequate policy guidance is not given to military planners, they must deduce their own -- as a necessary starting point. Some former commanders contend that policy guidance during the pre-1965 era was too general to be useful. Vague or all-encompassing statements of defense policy objectives are of little help in defense planning. Instead, goals and alternatives should be made as explicit as feasible and subjected to frequent scrutiny and debate. Some have called for at least an annual review of major unified/specified command plans by the Secretary of Defense and his key assistants to assure that political assumptions are consistent with national security policy.<sup>56/</sup> Such briefings also would broaden the understanding of essential policymakers of actual US military capabilities and options in the event of crisis or conflict.

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## CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES

1. Charles de Gaulle, The Edge of the Sword, translated by Gerard Hopkins (New York: Criterion Books, 1960). This quote is extracted from Adrian Liddell Hart, ed., The Sword and the Pen (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976), p. 255. The original book by de Gaulle was published in 1932.
2. Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 552-563. This quote is taken from Weldon A. Brown, Prelude to Disaster: The American Role in Vietnam 1940-1963 (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 177.
3. The Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH) of the Department of the Army has been consulted by the BDM research team for Data on Contingency Planning. Mr. Vince Demma of OCMH was particularly knowledgeable and helpful in this area.
4. General Maxwell Taylor noted that 1960 was the first year in which Washington appreciated the guerrilla threat, when LTG Lionel C. McGarr and then BG Edward Lansdale came to Washington to "drive home the new situation." He referred to President Kennedy's pressure for getting counterinsurgency activity moving and added that the President "... had to beat me over the head before I understood what he was talking about." Interview 501, US Air Force Oral History Program, Declassified, 31 December 1978.
5. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Administration) Department of Defense, Report of DoD Study Group on Adequacy of Mobility Planning and Operations Organization (U) July 1965. (SECRET, downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL; extract is UNCLASSIFIED). "The gradual movement and material to SEA, on a business-as-usual basis, has not provided an appropriate basis for use in evaluating OPLAN 32-64," p. 15. This source will be referred to here as DoD Study Group - A.M.P.O.O. p. 9.
6. On July 15, 1965, the Strategic Plans Division J-5, of the Joint Staff proposed to the Secretary of Defense the number of divisions and other support needed for a major effort in Vietnam. Partial mobilization was key to "insure an effective force as soon as possible". General Bennett, then Director of Strategic Plans, made a strong point of the mobilization requirement. On July 28, he heard President Johnson's television address concerning reinforcement of US forces in Vietnam "... without mobilizing", and he stated that he was probably the most shocked man in the world. Interview of General Donald V. Bennett, USA (Ret), US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officer's Debriefing Program, Military History Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA., Tape 7, Transcript pp. 20-23.

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7. Bennett interview, Tape 6, transcript pp. 4-5.
8. ENDNUTE DELETED
9. DoD Study Group - A.M.P.O.O., p. 9.
10. Colonel E. W. King, GS, letter to Chief, Military History Division, entitled "History of Development SEA Contingency Structure for PACOM," 21 November 1963.
11. DoD Study Group - A.M.P.O.O., p. 10. It should be noted that planning organizations normally had/have cognizance over several plans, each of which requires updating annually. Planning staffs are often hard pressed to complete the required annual updating efficiently. In the case of the USMACV J-5, the one-year tour deprived that command of any corporate memory and continuity.
12. The Pentagon Papers Sen. Mike Gravel Edition, Volume I of 4 Volumes (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 81. Hereafter Gravel Pentagon Papers.
13. William Manchester, American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964 (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), p. 676.
14. Ibid., p. 658. This phrase is extracted from General MacArthur's farewell address to the US Congress. Also see Volume III of this study for a discussion of the impact that the Korean War had on US foreign policy.
15. Colonel Victor J. Croizat, USMC (Ret). Interviewed on 10 February 1970 by Mr. Benis Frank, Marine Corps Oral History Program, p. 19. Colonel Croizat served in Vietnam in 1954 and later translated Volume II of the French Command's "Lessons Learned in Vietnam."
16. Brown, Prelude to Disaster, pp. 52-53.
17. Ibid., p. 53.
18. President Eisenhower, acknowledging the possibility of Red Chinese intervention, felt that in such an event the US would have to strike at the head instead of the tail of the snake, at Red China itself. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change 1953-1956 (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 354. Also see Volume III, Chapter 3, the Eisenhower Administration, pp. 3-16 to 3-21 and Appendix A to Volume III, pp. A-18 to A-23.
19. Department of the Army, Office of the Director of Plans, Limited War Plan - Indochina Revised 26 November 1956. (TOP SECRET, since downgraded to UNCLASSIFIED).



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20. Ibid., first page of text (not numbered).
21. Interview with Mr. Vince Demma, Historian, Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH), on 9 November 1979.
22. LTG Bruce C. Clarke, USA Report of Visit of Lt. General Bruce C. Clarke, Commanding General, U.S. Army Pacific to Western Pacific & Southeast Asia, 6-29 September 1955, Volume One (CONFIDENTIAL, extract is UNCLASSIFIED), p. 61.
23. Ibid., p. 61.
24. Ibid., p. 24. Of course, by this time US advisors were helping to shape the organization structure of the local forces.
25. Demma interview.
25. Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, pp. 23-30 provides a discussion of the CIP and Ambassador Durbrow's tactics in negotiating its provisions with President Diem.
27. Demma interview. In addition, DA/OCMH has a number of maps which clearly show US defense plans for Indochina
28. Daniel Ellsberg, Papers on the War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 60. Also see Secretary of Defense McNamara's Memorandum for the President dated November 8, 1961, which discussed CINCPAC Plan 32-59, Phase IV, in Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 108. The 32 plan visualized four graduated phases of the threat with Phase IV being the extreme or massive invasion of the protocol states.
29. Commander in Chief Pacific and Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam Report on the War in Vietnam (As of June 30, 1968) (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1968) p. 221. d
30. National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) No. 157 of May 29, 1962. Subject: Presidential Meeting on Laos, May 24, 1962, reprinted in Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, pp. 672-673. It must be remembered that the US was facing several challenges from local insurgencies around the world at that time -- in Laos, Vietnam, the Congo, and in some parts of Latin America.
31. USARPAC OPLAN 37-64. Copy on file in the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.
32. Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, USA (Ret.), Swords and Plowshares (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 238-239. In an interview for the Air Force Oral History Program, General Taylor reinforced this point, remarking that Diem didn't want Americans outside of Saigon. Interview of General Maxwell D. Taylor, 11 January 1972, by Major

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Richard B. Clement and Jacob Van Staaveren, Number 501, US Air Force Oral History Program (Declassified December 31, 1978), p. 4.

33. Details concerning the stay-behind cadres and their eventual augmentation are provided in Chapters 3 and 5 of Volume I of this study. One of the opportunities seized on by the DRV was to send intelligence personnel South in the guise of recovering remains of deceased Viet Minh. These "grave teams" conducted agitprop activities and gathered intelligence. This situation was reported by Anita Lauve, a foreign service officer serving with the US Embassy in Saigon during that period. Her comment was made during an 8 June 1979 BDM interview with former GVN Ambassador Bui Diem.
34. Interview on 13 November 1979 with Colonel J.A. MacDonald, USMC (Ret) who, in 1968-69 was Chief, US/SEATO Plans Division, J-52, USMACV. The J-52 Division was responsible for maintaining/updating the SEATO Plans prepared for COMUSMACV who was also designed as Commander, Central Region, SEATO field forces for defense of Thailand and the protocol states.
35. James H. Hansen, "Seven Points for Laos" research paper, 22 June 1968. Mr. Hansen, now with BDM Corporation, monitored the Laotian political scene before teaching an undergraduate course in international relations at the University of Michigan. His research concluded that this double standard on the "troops in Laos" issue put US forces at a major disadvantage throughout the war.
36. According to Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, the PRC road building in northern Laos in 1960-61 was thought to threaten Thailand, but US authorities feared that a US move into Laos (before such a move was prohibited by the 1962 Geneva Accords) would bring the Chinese in and force a US retreat to the Kra Peninsula and abandonment of Thailand. US decision makers found they held no capability to intervene militarily in Laos. Comments by Ambassador Johnson during the BDM Senior Review Panel meeting on 13 February 1979.
37. Senior Review Panel meeting at BDM/Washington on 13 February 1979. Ambassador Colby is one of the more knowledgeable exofficials about the "secret war" in Laos. General DePuy, former J-3 MACV, and later commander of the 1st Division commented that Ambassador Sullivan kept the US military out of Laos and the CIA had a great time with their little war there. BDM interview of General William DePuy, 24 September 1978.
38. MG Oudone Sananikone, RLA, The Royal Lao Army and US Army Advice and Support (McLean, VA: General Research Corporation), Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History, pp. 74-76 and 108-110, describes some of the early White Star activities in Laos prior to the 1962 accords. For a discussion of command relationships, see Chapter 11, Volume VI.

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39. General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1976), pp. 147-148.
40. Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 307.
41. Ibid., p. 307.
42. Senior Review Panel meeting at BDM/Washington on 13 February 1979. USAF General John Vogt, who commanded the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam during the early 1970's, offered this remark. General Bennett made the same point in describing a war game sponsored by the Studies, Analysis and Gaming Agency (SAGA) under the JCS. The game took place in August 1964, focused on Vietnam, and the high-level participants could not identify US objectives in Vietnam. Presidential advisor W. W. Rostow was furious and General Wheeler had to help keep order. Bennett interview, US Army Military History Research Collection Sec. 6, pp. 26-28.
43. Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. III, pp. 149-150. On 14 August 1964, the State Department directed Saigon planners to avoid operations which the DRV leaders could interpret as "provocative", such as OPLAN 34A operations and the DE SOTO patrols (US destroyers probing the North Vietnamese coastline to test the enemy's capability to react).
44. Lawrence J. Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff. The First Twenty-Five Years (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 156, 164. Many of the 94 targets were transportation facilities, such as bridges, rail centers, etc.
45. See Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 171 for 1964 summary. See Vol. III, p. 442 for 1965 reports.
46. Demma interview.
47. MG Robert R. Ploger, USA, U.S. Army Engineers 1965-1970. Vietnam Studies (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1974).
48. For example, contingency plans called for a force buildup in Vietnam of 30 combat engineer battalions by 1 July 1966. On July 1965, there were only 10 such battalions in the Army, deployed worldwide. Army planners then had to maintain the existing 10 battalions while forming 30 new ones, equipping them with gear taken from regular forces, Reserves, and the National Guard. The engineers were then assigned back-to-back tours. General Bennett interview, Tape 6, p. 24.
49. Demma interview.
50. One excellent example of additional forces being earmarked for MACV was the 41-YR plan which included an elaborate Time-Phased Force Deployment List (TPFDL) identifying all of the forces programmed to

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reinforce MACV in the event of a massive invasion from the North. The TPFDL reflected the activation of reserve component units, their training cycles, availability for movement overseas, and planned arrival in RVN. The list included battalions, separate companies, and even two-man dog-handling sections.

51. The J-5 staff reviewed the Cambodian plan and opined that the forces planned for were too few in number to be effective. Violent media outcry and public concern was forecast by the J-5 staff which recommended in favor of an incursion, but with significantly greater forces than initially planned. Based on comments by a former Chief of the US/SEATO Plans Division, MAC-J-52.
52. For example, a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), or Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) was tasked in the early 1960s to be prepared to enter RVN at Tourane (Danang) as part of a SEATO force. Tasking initiated in PACOM SEATO plans, then in Pacific Fleet SEATO plans, and finally in Task Force 79 (TF79) SEATO plans. TF79 is the Marine division/wing team in the Western Pacific which also has had the identity of III MEF (now MAF). TF79 plans were coordinated with TF76, the amphibious task force of SEVENTH FLEET, and with MACTHAI and SEATO headquarters in Bangkok.
53. Concept Plans are now an approved format. Since most J-5 sections are responsible for more contingency plans than they can effectively revise on an annual basis, the use of Concept Plans makes for greater efficiency and facilitates keeping important plans current.
54. This view is substantiated in DoD Study Group - A.M.P.O.O., p. 15.
55. Ibid., p. 9. "The current system for contingency war planning is basically sound."
56. Taylor, Swords and Plowshare, p. 308.

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## CHAPTER 4 MOBILIZATION

Why, I asked, is it necessary to call up reserve units at this time? If we decided on a call-up, how large should it be? Could we reduce the numbers by drawing on forces stationed in Europe or South Korea? Could we avoid or at least postpone individual reserve call-ups? If reserves were called, where would they be assigned? How long would they serve? What would be the budgetary implications? Would congressional action be necessary? I said that I would take no action until I received satisfactory answers to these and several other questions.<sup>1/</sup>

President Lyndon B. Johnson  
February 1968  
The Vantage Point

The Reserves, by and large, other than Air Force Reserves, did not participate in the Vietnam war. This policy left a feeling of frustration on the part of a great many reservists who felt they had training to contribute during national emergencies and they wanted to participate.<sup>2/</sup>

Congressman Robert L. F. Sikes  
(D, Fla.) DOD appropriations  
Hearings, May 1, 1973

We are feeding the horse [the Reserves] but never taking him out of the barn.<sup>3/</sup>

General Harold K. Johnson  
Army Chief of Staff, 1968  
As quoted in the War Managers

### A. INTRODUCTION

A well-equipped and fully manned National Guard and Reserve, deployable on short notice, has been a goal sought by the American defense establishment since World War II. Despite progress that had been made in the retention of troops on active duty, the US Armed Forces recognized they could not rely entirely upon voluntary recruitment to fill their normal and

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emergency manpower needs; therefore, there was a continuing effort to build a strong and responsive Reserve force throughout the Vietnam conflict.

The US forces build up in Vietnam caused increased pressure for a Reserve call-up to replace the regular troops and draftees sent overseas. In that respect, this chapter will determine the extent to which the mobilization of the Reserve and National Guard forces was considered by the President and his advisers during the early build up period. In addition, there will be an examination of the rationale behind the decision not to mobilize the Reserves until the Pueblo crisis and Tet Offensive in 1968. Further, the decision not to mobilize in 1965 and the decision for the partial mobilization in 1968 will both be contrasted as to their impact on the war, US armed forces, and US society in general. See Figure 4-1 for data on US troop strength during crises.

### B. MOBILIZATION OF THE RESERVES: A DIFFICULT PRESIDENTIAL DECISION

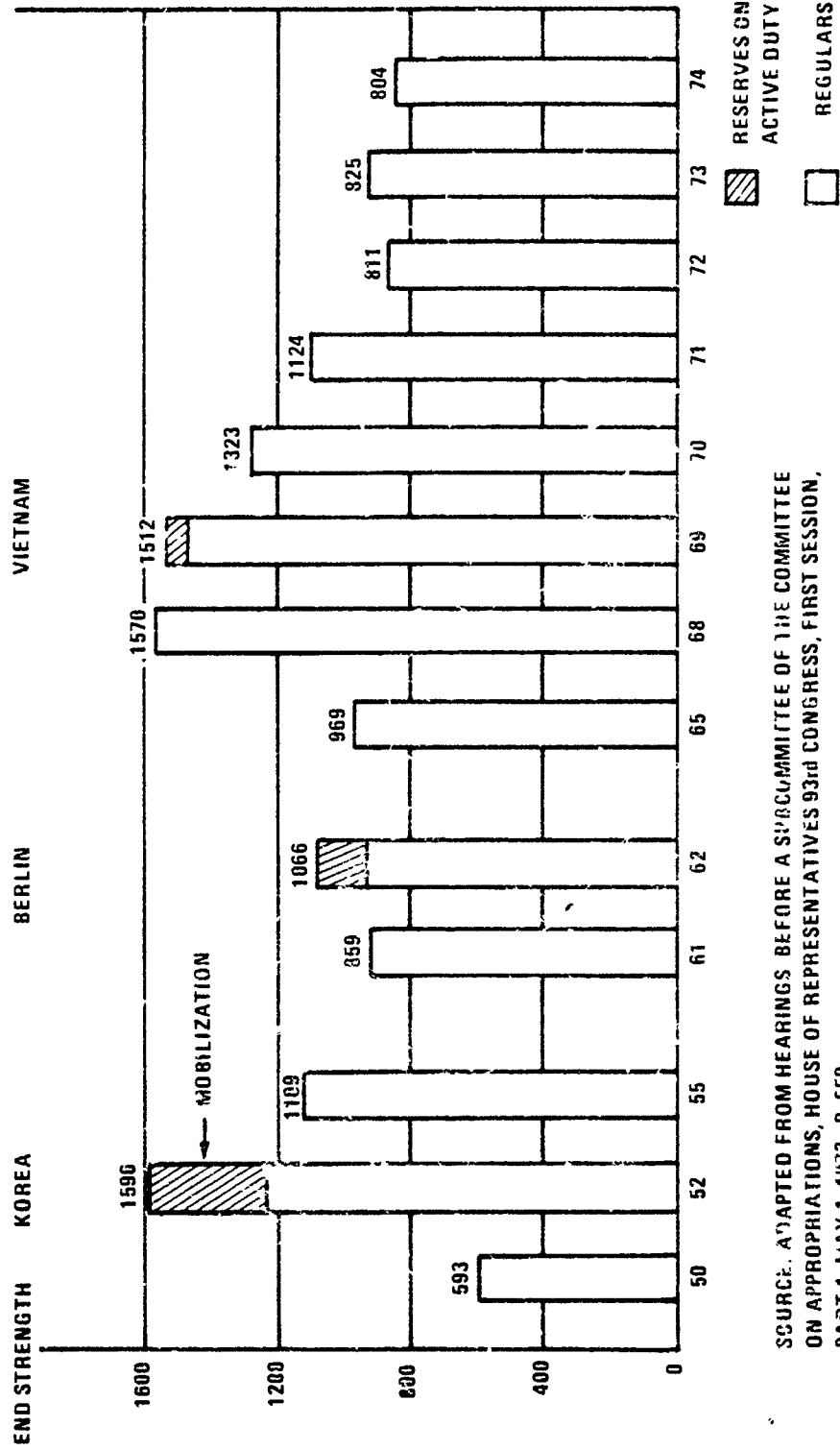
Many military leaders felt that the manner in which the Reserve components were treated during the Vietnam conflict was in error. Others thought their use was appropriate. In order to have a better understanding of the mobilization issue, the period of US involvement in Vietnam is reviewed and assessed below. Before beginning the assessment of the Vietnam involvement phase, however, appropriate background information is provided in order to set the stage for this study.

#### 1. Background

During the Korean War, the Congress passed legislation placing a theoretical military obligation on all physically and mentally qualified males between the ages of 18-1/2 and 26 for a total of eight years of combined active and Reserve military service. The Reserves were divided into two categories -- the Ready Reserve, which could be ordered to duty on declaration of an emergency by the President and in numbers authorized by Congress, and the Standby Reserve, which could be ordered to duty only in war or emergency declared by Congress.

The system had many weaknesses; therefore, in 1955, the Congress, at the urging of President Eisenhower, passed new Reserve legislation.

US ARMY TOTAL STRENGTH (1950 - 1974)  
(IN THOUSANDS)



SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM HEARINGS BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 93rd CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION, PART 1, MAY 1, 1973, P. 550.

4541/72W

Figure 4-1. The US Army's Active Duty Strength (1950-1974)

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While the act reduced the term of obligation to six years, it imposed a requirement for active participation in Reserve training on those passing out of the armed services with an unexpired obligation. The law authorized the President, without further Congressional action, to call up to a million Ready Reservists to duty in an emergency proclaimed by him. He was allowed to also recall selected members of the Standby Reserve in event of any national emergency declared by Congress. Notwithstanding the new legislation, in a period of irregular voluntary enlistments and restricted funds, most Reserve units quickly fell below their authorized strengths. The Ready Reserve Mobilization Replacement Pool soon became clogged with unscreened and untrained personnel.

In the late 1950s, President Eisenhower and his top advisers concluded that the US was spending about \$80 million a year to sustain a Reserve force which had little or no military value. He attempted to cut the paid drill strength, but the Congress would not go along with such a move. It proved to be extremely difficult to persuade the Congress of the necessity or desirability of thoroughly reorganizing and reducing the many Reserve units scattered in Congressional districts throughout the US. The political significance of the Reserve and National Guard could not be discounted and the Congress in 1959 voted a 700,000 man level to assure that no further reductions would be made in the Reserve forces without its approval.

President Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, was concerned over the expenditure of defense funds for Reserves that were long on numbers but short on readiness; therefore, he performed a thorough analysis of the status and functions of the Reserve forces during the early 1960s. He concluded for example, that the maintenance of a force of 400,000 National Guardsmen and 300,000 Army Reserves on paid drill status made little sense unless those backup forces could step in quickly in a crisis and replace the regular active strategic reserve. The performance of Reserve components called up during the Berlin Crisis in 1961 left much to be desired and brought much criticism about the improper assignment and use of individuals and units, respectively. In the year after the Berlin



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call-up, the Kennedy Administration sought to bring about a drastic reorganization in the Reserves but ran into a storm of protest from the Congress. By the fall of 1967, after concessions by both the Executive Branch and the Congress, a mutually acceptable reorganization plan finally was approved and implemented the following year.

To help obtain the men to fill the Reserve units, legislation was passed in September 1963 revising the Reserve forces act in 1955. The new law provided for direct enlistments in the Reserves, which was an optional feature of the 1955 act. Under that program, recruits were given longer periods of active duty to train them to fill the needs for more highly skilled specialists.

### 2. Mobilization: The Backbone of Early Contingency Planning (1954-1961)

From the very beginning of American involvement in Southeast Asia, US contingency plans called for the use of ground combat forces in Indochina. Several plans called for a large scale military effort backed by the mobilization of continental US (CONUS) Reserve component forces.

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1954, US planners returned to that "never-never" land of contingency planning to prepare for a possible exigency in Indochina emanating from North Vietnam and expansionist Communist China. Early limited war plans for Indochina called for major participation by US air and seapower (with possible nuclear weapons use) backed by limited US and allied ground forces to repulse forces of the Viet Minh and/or the Chinese. The scenario for the attack was a conventional invasion by the DRV or combined DRV/PRC forces moving through Laos across the Mekong River into Thailand or down the Laotian panhandle to threaten both Saigon and Bangkok. After the overt communist aggression was repulsed, the plans called for a counterattack with amphibious assault against the Red River Delta and Hanoi. <sup>4</sup> Implementation of that contingency plan would have necessitated a

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mobilization of reserve components to meet other US global military commitments. To meet such a contingency the Army Staff held that:

... it would be necessary to call up the Army Reserves and National Guard. In short we [the Army Staff] felt that the operation should not be attempted unless the country was put on virtually a war footing.<sup>5/</sup>

In October of 1961 contingency plans calling for the use of SEATO forces to secure South Vietnamese borders were developed. Planning emphasized tactical responses to localized and situational requirements. The plans called for the deployment of approximately one SEATO ground force division to South Vietnam as well as command and control communications - electronics support.<sup>6/</sup> In the event that North Vietnamese forces intervened, the plan called for an increase of SEATO forces to 12 divisions, seven Regimental Combat Teams and five battalions. The US contribution to the enlarged SEATO force was to have consisted of two Army divisions, one Marine division/wing team and five USAF tactical squadrons. Activation of this plan would have necessitated the use of a CONUS Army division. Implementation would have necessitated the mobilization of one reserve division plus other appropriate forces to maintain the active strategic reserve.<sup>7/</sup>

Contingency planning is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this volume.

### 3. The Bay of Pigs Fiasco and the Berlin Crisis: Reason to Mobilize

In the closing days of the Eisenhower administration the US severed diplomatic relations with Cuba, but the presence of a communist satellite ninety miles from the Florida coast was a source of constant irritation. In April 1961, a band of CIA-assisted exiles launched a poorly conceived invasion at the Bay of Pigs with limited air but no naval gunfire support. When the Cuban people failed to rise up and join the invaders, the operation collapsed and a large number of the invading force was taken prisoner. The failure of this ill-fated US-sponsored operation did much to damage US prestige, and, conversely enhanced Fidel Castro's stature. The

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invasion prompted offers of assistance from the Soviet Union and dark hints that its Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, was ready to employ Russian missile power to aid Cuba.

The timing of the Cuban fiasco was unfortunate, because President Kennedy was scheduled to have a summit meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna in early June on the then delicate subject of Berlin. The growing prosperity of West Berlin contrasted sharply with the poverty and drabness of the Soviet sector. West Berlin had become as great an irritation to the communists as Cuba was to the US. In 1958 Khrushchev had demanded that Berlin be made a free city and threatened that unless western troops were withdrawn in six months he would conclude a separate treaty with East Germany. Although Khrushchev later backed off from this threat and even showed some signs of a conciliatory attitude on Berlin, at the Vienna meeting he made a complete about face. 8/

### a. Rationale For the Mobilization

Khrushchev informed President Kennedy at Vienna that unless the US (and the West) accepted the Soviet position, he would take unilateral action to solve the Berlin impasse. The Soviet premier had hoped to intimidate the new president in the wake of his Bay of Pigs setback, but his efforts proved unsuccessful. Instead, Mr. Kennedy in July 1961, requested and received additional defense funds from Congress as well as authority to call up to 250,000 members of the Reserve and National Guard to active duty.

The President refrained from declaring a national emergency, which would have permitted him to bring up to a million Reserve members into federal service; he did not wish to panic either the American public or the Soviet Union by a huge mobilization. On the other hand, he determined to strengthen the conventional armed forces in the event that Soviet pressure on Berlin demanded a gradual commitment of US military might.

During the month of August, tensions heightened as thousands of refugees crossed from East to West Berlin, and the communists took the drastic measure of building a high wall around their sector to block

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access to the West. As the situation grew worse, President Kennedy decided in September 1961, to increase US forces in Europe and to call up some Reserve personnel and units to strengthen CONUS strategic forces. By October 1961, almost 120,000 Reserve troops, including two National Guard divisions, had been added to the active Army, and the Regular troop strength had been increased by more than 80,000 men.9/

As the Soviet Union became aware that the Berlin challenge would be met swiftly and firmly, it began to ease the pressure there again. The Kennedy administration had passed through its first crisis situation with the Soviet Union. By mid-1962, the Reserve and National Guard forces that had been called up were returned to civilian life, but the increases in the Regular forces were retained.10/

### b. Impact of the Berlin Crisis Call-Ups

The partial American mobilization and rapid reinforcement of Europe by US ground, air and naval forces were accompanied by strong efforts to bring the military personnel and equipment remaining in the CONUS to a high state of readiness. In many instances, however, designated posts and camps did not have adequate facilities or cadre necessary to house, train and equip the rapid and large influx of Reserve personnel. In addition, there was a strong undercurrent of discontent which surfaced among the personnel called up because they were used to beef up the active strategic reserve in CONUS and few, if any, were sent to Europe.

Many Reservists questioned the mobilization because they did not regard the Berlin problem to be a serious threat to the security of the United States.11/ Resentment among Reservists was high because they did not feel they were making a contribution to the Berlin crisis by being mobilized and remaining in the United States and because of the disruption of their families and careers.12/ Many reservists and members of their families complained to their representatives in Congress, which resulted in congressional criticism of the mobilization action.13/

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Secretary of Defense McNamara's reflections on the Reserve components' call-up during the Berlin crisis also provides an insight into official views about that action. He was quoted as saying:

The Berlin crisis . . . required a substantial number of reserves of all forces. We learned then that we literally lacked the equipment to train the men called to active duty. And when I say literally lacked the equipment, I mean exactly that. We not only did not have the equipment for those men to fight with, we did not even have the equipment for them to train with.<sup>14/</sup>

The complaints had a definite impact on then-Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, because, when faced with a decision with respect to calling up the Reserves during the Tet Offensive in 1968, he recalled:

I told McNamara and Wheeler there were many questions I wanted them to answer. I remembered the complaints about the call-up of reserves during President Kennedy's administration and, more recently, the failure to use effectively those who had been called up during the Pueblo crisis.<sup>15/</sup>

In spite of the complaints, the call-up did what it was supposed to do--the Soviets got the message of US determination and eased their pressure on Berlin.

#### 4. Other Crisis Situations (1962-1965)

The following situations gave rise to subsequent consideration of Reserve Mobilization by the National Command Authority:

- the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962
- a military revolt in the Dominican Republic
- various civic rights and civil disturbances in the US from 1962 to 1965.

In the first two situations listed above, the President elected to use existing active forces as augmented by the active strategic reserve, and no call-ups were made. In the civil disturbances and civil rights situations, a few select call-ups of Reserve and State National Guard units were executed; however, they were of brief duration and had no great impact (except with regard to restoring and maintaining law and order).

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### 5. The US Military Commitment To Vietnam: 1965 to 1968

The decision to expand the US commitment in Vietnam and to consider mobilizing the Reserves was the result of increasing political instability and military weakness in South Vietnam as well as advancements by the VC during 1964 and 1965. Though the GVN political and military situation was deteriorating in 1964, the US did not modify its objectives in Vietnam or develop new plans for the commitment of US ground forces. It was not until August of 1964 when two US destroyers reported being under attack in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese patrol boats that the US began to alter its strategy. The US responded with air attacks against North Vietnam and by adopting the Southeast Asia Resolution which permitted the US to carry out military action against North Vietnam.

After the elections in November of 1964, with the support of a popular mandate and the Southeast Asia Resolution, President Johnson's approach to the persistent political and military instability in Vietnam began to change with regard to ground force commitments. In February of 1965 the Khanh regime fell and the VC attacked US facilities in Pleiku. Retaliatory measures consisted of air strikes on the North and the landing of two US Marine battalions at Da Nang to assume responsibility for security of the air base there. This was the first time US ground combat troops had been committed in Asia since the Korean war. The ARVN experienced several disastrous defeats in the spring of 1965. It seemed that air strikes were not effective in stopping North Vietnamese determination. Two additional marine battalions were sent to RVN in April of 1965. The year of GVN political-military collapse had broken the psychological barrier against the presence of US combat units.

In July of 1965 Secretary McNamara reported to the President that the VC were gaining in strength. The pace of the war had increased and the ARVN had suffered serious setbacks. Political and economic stability was deteriorating rapidly. The GVN Chief of State, General Thieu, and Prime Minister Marshal Ky had requested large-scale ground troop assistance from the US. Secretary McNamara was convinced that the GVN would fall without additional American assistance and recommended an increase in American

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troop strength in Vietnam from 75,000 to about 200,000. He proposed a total Armed Force increase by mid 1966 to 600,000 consisting of 235,000 men from the Reserve forces.16/ Another 375,000 was to have come from increased recruitment and draft calls. Authorizing a call-up of reserves and a supplemental appropriation would have to be requested from Congress.

Secretary of Defense McNamara reported that Ambassador Taylor, Deputy Ambassador Alex Johnson, Ambassador-designate Henry Cabot Lodge, General Wheeler and General Westmoreland agreed with his recommendation.17/ The JCS urged the mobilization of the Reserves to demonstrate US commitment to an independent and non-communist South Vietnam. Chief of Staff of the Army, General Johnson, pointed out that a call-up of the Reserves was traditionally a unifying factor.18/ It was understood that it was important to have full American support for US commitments in South Vietnam.

A few presidential advisers expressed doubts about increasing ground forces in Vietnam. First, there was the fear of possible Chinese and Russian involvement. Undersecretary of State George Ball felt that as a result of increased commitments to South Vietnam, the US would lose friends in Europe and elsewhere as well. He believed that it was not possible to win a protracted war against local guerrillas in Asian jungles and that the US should cut its losses by pulling out.19/ Presidential confidant, Clark Clifford, had similar feelings:

I don't believe we can win in South Vietnam . . . If we send in 100,000 more men, the North Vietnamese will meet us. If North Vietnam runs out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war.20/

Mr. Clifford's suggestion was to find an honorable way to end US involvement in Vietnam. On the other hand, Dean Rusk pointed out that "If the Communist world finds out that we will not pursue our commitments to the end . . . I don't know where they will stay their hand."21/ President Johnson felt sure that a US withdrawal from Southeast Asia would be the beginning of problems in stemming communist influence and involvement all over the world and would inevitably lead to the start of World War III.22/

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As the President and his advisers reviewed the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, five options became clear. They were outlined in the National Security Council meeting of July 27, 1965 as follows:

- 1) the US could bring the enemy to his knees by using the bombers of the Strategic Air Command;
- 2) the US should pack up and go home;
- 3) the US could stay with the status quo - and suffer the consequences, continue to lose territory and take casualties;
- 4) the administration could go to Congress and ask for great sums of money; call up the Reserves and increase the draft; go on a war-time footing and declare a state of emergency;
- 5) the USG could give the commanders in the field the men and supplies they need (the military commanders had refined their estimates from 100,000-125,000 to 50,000 men needed to meet their immediate problems).<sup>23/</sup>

a. Rationale for the Deferral of Mobilization

The objective of increased US assistance was to reverse the GVN's downward military trend and help them to move to an offensive military posture without directly involving the Chinese and the Soviets, while moving toward negotiations with Hanoi.

The last two NSC options listed above appeared to be the only effective ways of getting the job done. It was felt by the President, however, that the fourth option could give the impression of intentions to invade North Vietnam and that this might cause direct Chinese involvement. Furthermore, the use of Reserves might have been viewed as a significant acceleration of the war which was not compatible with the "low-key" limited aims of the Johnson administration. If the President declared a national emergency, it would have meant that as many as one million Reservists would have been called up for one year. As it was not likely that the war would be over in a year or that Congress would approve more than a 12-month call-up, this did not seem to be a practical move.<sup>24/</sup> If the President requested a joint resolution from Congress authorizing a call-up of the Reserves, it probably would have resulted in congressional opposition



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because of the domestic distress experienced during the call-up of the Reserves during the Berlin Crisis. A major debate in Congress would have created public awareness of the seriousness of the problem in Vietnam and Mr. Johnson did not want to frighten the American public. A major debate over US commitments to Vietnam might also have encouraged Hanoi to be more adventurous. Finally, the president wished to maintain his "guns and butter" policy -- to protect his "Great Society" programs -- which could have been jeopardized seriously by a full-scale Reserve Forces call-up.

President Johnson announced on July 28, 1965, his decision to commit 50,000 additional ground troops to Vietnam. The Reserves were not mobilized because he did not think it was essential.<sup>25/</sup> It was explained that it would have taken several months to equip the Reserves once they were called up. Instead the 1st Cavalry Division from CONUS followed the Okinawa-based 173rd brigade (Airmobile) to Vietnam, and monthly draft calls were increased from 17,000 to 35,000.<sup>26/</sup> Since the duration and level of the war could not be estimated, expansion of forces by an increase in draft quotas afforded a flexibility to change the level of the US troop commitments depending on the requirements of the war.

The decision not to mobilize the Reserves seems to have been the President's alone. It appears to have been based more on political considerations than military.<sup>27/</sup> He feared that a call-up of the Reserve components would have brought the Soviets and Chinese into the war; that congressional opposition would have threatened his Great Society Programs; and, that it would have alarmed the public.

Subsequent decisions not to mobilize the Reserves were made in late 1965, and throughout 1966 and 1967. The Joint Chiefs continued to advocate a call-up of the Reserves. They contended that commitments to NATO and other areas, as well as General Westmoreland's troop requirements for Vietnam could not be met without mobilization of the Reserves. The JCS also believed that only a massive introduction of troops and firepower would bring an end to the war "in the shortest time with the least cost."<sup>29/</sup> General Westmoreland's troop requirements had begun to exceed the limits of the services unless a call-up of the Reserves was instituted.

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Mobilization was rejected by the administration throughout the balance of this period mainly out of a desire to avoid a major congressional debate. Moreover, it was felt that it would be difficult to obtain public support for a call-up. Domestic constraints continued to override strategic and tactical military requirements.

### b. The Impact of the Decision Not To Mobilize

The decision not to mobilize the Reserve Forces for deployment to Vietnam resulted in deficiencies in several areas:

- it caused a drawdown of the US Strategic Reserve, and troops programmed for deployment to Europe, Korea, Alaska and Caribbean;
- it severely drained forces available for any emergency or contingency outside of Vietnam and Southeast Asia;
- since the Reserves contained the majority of combat support units, it caused a shortage of trained technicians for Vietnam, particularly engineering construction units and personnel skilled in ammunition management.<sup>29/</sup>
- it contributed to a continual state of personnel turbulence;
  - discharges at end of periods of obligated service, and resignations and retirements were continued as in peacetime - resulting in shortages of officers in all grades except lieutenant,<sup>30/</sup>
  - tour length policies and worldwide distribution of forces caused an enlisted skill imbalance between Vietnam and the rotation bases,<sup>31/</sup>
  - unqualified personnel received fast promotions in order to fill shortages,<sup>32/</sup>
  - not mobilizing created resentment among those serving in Vietnam;
- it also contributed to making the Reserves a haven for draft dodgers;

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- it made Selective Service (the Draft) the vehicle for acquiring manpower to handle the Vietnam buildup. This move proved unpopular with both the Congress and the public; it contributed to:
  - deferments based on physical, marital or education status, unfairly drafting poor, lesser educated individuals,
  - increased dissent, antiwar demonstrations, draft card burnings, efforts to avoid military service,
  - a poorer quality soldier (under-educated and in need of more military training) when compared to a Reserve soldier.

### 6. Mini-Mobilization: The Pueblo Incident and Tet 1968

The communist offensive during Tet in early 1968 came as a shock to the USG. The desperate communist attack proved to be flawed and ended up a decisive battlefield victory for US/RVNAF forces. In contrast, however it was a psychological defeat on the home front in the US.<sup>33/</sup> President Johnson, recalling the impact of Tet, wrote the following:

I was prepared for the events of Tet, though the scale of the attacks and the size of the Communist force was greater than I had anticipated. I did not expect the enemy effort to have the impact on American thinking that it achieved. I was not surprised that elements of the press, the academic community, and the Congress reacted as they did. I was surprised and disappointed that the enemy's efforts produced such a dismal effect on various people inside government and others outside whom I had always regarded as staunch and unflappable. Hanoi must have been delighted; it was exactly the reaction they sought.<sup>34/</sup>

#### a. Rationale for the Pueblo Mini-Mobilization

The first three months of 1968 brought with them incense international pressure on the United States. As a prelude to the Tet attacks, the following crisis situations developed:

- the North Koreans seized a US intelligence ship, the USS Pueblo, and imprisoned its crew.
- an assassination squad of North Koreans made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of South Korea's President Park.

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- the South Korean government, fearing another invasion from the North was imminent, indicated that they wanted to withdraw their forces from the RVN to help protect their homeland.
- there were increased communist violations of South Korea's northern border.
- the US intelligence community forecasted a communist-instigated crisis for West Berlin.35/

President Johnson, in his reflections on those crisis-packed days, concluded that the communist-inspired acts, especially the capture of the Pueblo, were premeditated. Moreover, he considered that the seizure of the US intelligence vessel eight days before Tet was orchestrated by the DRV's North Korean supporters to divert US military resources, and it was a tactic calculated to pressure the South Koreans into recalling their combat troops from Vietnam. Those overt acts did cause South Korea seriously to consider an immediate withdrawal of their military units from Vietnam in order to build up defensive strength at home. The US was forced to respond quickly and decisively.36/

Two days after the Pueblo incident, President Johnson dispatched more than 350 aircraft to air bases in South Korea and called up more than 14,000 Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Navy personnel to replace the depleted strategic reserve in the US. The rationale behind the decision to dispatch massive airpower to South Korea and the accompanying partial mobilization was based on the following:

- the South Korean Army, with in-country US combat forces, was considered capable of holding its own against the North Korean Army, therefore additional US ground combat deployments were not deemed necessary.
- the North Koreans had a larger air force at the time, therefore the US reinforcement of more than 350 aircraft put the balance of airpower in favor of the South and served to signal US determination to the North.
- the rapid deployment of US airpower cut deeply into America's strategic reserve forces, therefore the President decided to call

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up to active duty selected Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Navy units as replacements.

The seizure of a US ship on the high seas, the imprisonment of the eighty-two man crew and the trial of those captives as criminals triggered a flurry of National Security Council meetings to review other alternative courses of action for the US. Among those alternatives considered and rejected were:

- the mining of Wonsan and other North Korean harbors
- the interdiction of North Korea's coastal shipping lanes
- the seizure of a North Korean ship
- the striking of selected North Korean targets by air and naval gunfire.

In each case, LBJ considered the potential risks too great and possible gains too small; therefore he opted to back the airpower move and partial mobilization with intense diplomatic efforts to free the captives. It was a course of action which proved laden with political pitfalls and painfully time consuming.

### b. Rationale for the Tet Mobilization

On January 31, 1968, eight short days after the Pueblo incident, the DRV directed their countrywide Tet offensive against South Vietnam. Although the action had been predicted, Tet took the US command and the US public by surprise, and its strength, length and intensity prolonged the shock. As the attacks continued the Secretary of Defense requested that the JCS furnish plans for the emergency reinforcement of MACV.<sup>37/</sup>

General Westmoreland's assessment of the situation on February 12 was as follows:

Since last October, the enemy has launched a major campaign signaling a change of strategy from one of protracted war to one of quick military/political victory during the American election year. His first phase, designed to secure the border areas, has failed. The second phase, launched on the occasion of Tet and designed to initiate public uprising, to disrupt the machinery of government and command and control of the Vietnamese forces, and to isolate the cities, has also

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failed. Nevertheless, the enemy's third phase, which is designed to seize Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces has just begun.38/

General Westmoreland thought the DRV's offensive to that point was only a prelude to the enemy's main effort (or third phase) which he calculated would be directed against the two northern provinces of RVN. He thought that the focus of the DRV attack would be the embattled Marine bastion at Khe Sanh. By attacking the northern-most provinces, he reasoned that the DRV would have had the advantage of shortened lines of communication and the ability to concentrate heavy artillery fires from the DMZ. The General reinforced his I Corps elements from in-country assets, and wired the JCS to ask for "emergency" reinforcements (about six maneuver battalions) which would have allowed him to capitalize on the enemy's losses and seize the initiative in other areas of RVN.39/

Three plans for emergency reinforcement were examined by the JCS. After brief deliberation the JCS recommended against the deployment of the numbers of troops requested by the COMUSMACV. They had come to the realization that US military resources had been drawn too thin, assets had become unavailable and the US support base had become too small. Overriding the JCS recommendation, President Johnson directed Secretary McNamara to deploy one brigade of the 82d Airborne Division and one Marine regimental landing team to South Vietnam immediately.40/ This emergency reinforcement amounted to an increase of about 10,500 men.

The JCS reacted almost immediately on the presidential decision to deploy those forces from the nation's strategic active reserve without a concomitant reserve call-up. On February 13, 1968, they forwarded to Secretary McNamara their recommendations for actions which had to be taken relative to a minimum call-up of reserves.

The rationale used by the JCS for their recommendation for a minimum call-up was as follows:

- Since the 82d Airborne represented the only deployable Army division in the CONUS-based active strategic reserve, it had to be reconstituted promptly by a reserve call-up (between 30,000 and 40,000 men).

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- A Marine reserve call-up was deemed necessary because the deployment of the regimental landing team to RVN had also cut into the Corp's active reserve force (about 12,000 men)
- The Navy required a small call-up of two mobile construction battalions to beef up their depleted active strategic reserve (about 1,700 men).41/

Based on the foregoing, the JCS recommended the following with respect to the reserve components:

- the immediate call-up of two Army infantry brigades
- the call-up of one Marine regiment plus some support forces
- the call-up of two Navy mobile construction battalions
- the attainment of a high state of readiness of other select reserve units.

In addition, the JCS sought legislation to allow:

- the immediate call-up of selected individual reservists if required
- an extension beyond June 30, 1968 of the then existing authority to call-up selected reserve units
- the authorization to extend the terms of service for active duty personnel.42/

This JCS recommendation was overtaken by subsequent requests from COMUSMACV and an "A to Z" reassessment conducted at the direction of the new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford.

### c. The "A to Z" Reassessment

In the month following Tet, General Westmoreland had received a moderate reinforcement of about 10,500 men. All of President Johnson's advisers had concurred in that action, except for the JCS, who considered it irresponsible in the absence of a reserve mobilization. The real debate, however, was yet to come. As the President cast about for solutions, he asked former Army Chief of Staff General Mathew Ridgway about the feasibility of invading the North Vietnamese homeland. General Ridgway recommended against such a move, as he noted that US forces were not available to conduct an invasion of the north. The same problem -- the

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depletion of the active US strategic reserve -- also dominated the concerns of the JCS. Even more vehemently than on the emergency augmentation issue, they opposed sending additional troops to Vietnam unless standby reserve units were mobilized.43/

The JCS, CINCPAC and General Westmoreland all saw Tet as an opportunity to convince President Johnson to move finally in the direction of decisive escalation, a decision they had sought for several years. JCS Chairman General Wheeler seized upon this opportunity and went to Saigon to coax General Westmoreland, in private, into an ambitious additional force request. Though General Westmoreland was not worried by the military threat caused by the communist offensive itself, he set about planning to seize the battlefield initiative and to move into DRV sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. He came up with a requirement for 206,000 additional men. Actually, however, General Wheeler planned to use only half that number immediately in support of RVN operations and to use the balance to reconstitute the active strategic reserve in the CONUS so that more forces would be available to respond to contingencies that were cropping up elsewhere -- in Korea and Europe.44/ When he returned to Washington though, General Wheeler lobbied for those forces as being required to meet pressing combat needs in Vietnam. President Johnson, shaken by the Tet setback on the home front, decided to move General Westmoreland up the Army's organization into the job of Army Chief of Staff and replace him as commander with General Creighton Abrams. General Westmoreland was shocked and somewhat bitter when he later discovered that General Wheeler had portrayed his troop reinforcement request to policymakers in terms of such baleful urgency.45/

Faced with what amounted to a total US military commitment to the war in Vietnam, President Johnson ordered an "A to Z" reassessment by Secretary Clifford and a high level task force. Johnson directed Clifford to "give me the lesser of evils. Give me your recommendations."46/ Clifford had the impression that his task force was only supposed to develop alternative ways to implement General Westmoreland's troop request, and that the more far-reaching options his group eventually developed were really a venture beyond their mandate.47/



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The reassessment brought with it extensive in-fighting in the DOD. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze said that meeting the request for 206,000 men would be "reinforcing weakness."48/ The DOD Office of Systems Analysis noted that the US objective since 1965 had been to maximize the costs and difficulties of the DRV. The analysts concluded that, "Our strategy of attrition has not worked. Adding 206,000 more US men to a force of 525,000, gaining only 27 additional maneuver battalions and 270 tactical fighters at an added cost to the US of \$10 billion per year raises the question of who is making it costly [for] whom."49/ A group working for Paul Warnke in DOD International Security Affairs (ISA) developed a plan to redefine the MACV mission as "a demographic strategy of population security" -- a return to the enclave strategy abandoned three years before -- on the grounds that no additional US forces could achieve a satisfactory end to the war. The new security strategy was calculated to buy time for the strengthening of the RVNAF's forces behind an American screen. The JCS attacked the Warnke group's position on the search and destroy strategy, which was in vogue at the time; as a result, the final memorandum that was presented to LBJ on March 4 was something of a compromise.50/

The President deferred a decision on the troops, reserve call-ups and changes in strategy until Secretary Clifford could complete all aspects of his reassessment. To bring home to the President "what was happening in the country," Clifford proposed that LBJ consult with a Senior Informal Advisory Group (the "Wise Men") before making any final decisions on further Vietnam deployments.51/

The President was hit by the defections of several advisers who earlier had been hawkish and strong advocates of the US involvement in the war. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson shocked Mr. Johnson by stating that the JCS did not know what they were talking about with respect to the 206,000 man request.52/ Secretary Clifford became disenchanted when, after asking the Chiefs whether the 206,000 additional men would do the job, the answer he received was that they could give no assurance that the extra troops would, and that they were uncertain as to how many more

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men would be needed, or when. Clifford was told by the JCS that there was no plan for victory because the tactical restrictions imposed by the President precluded victory. The JCS also said that bombing alone would not win the war; moreover, there was no consensus among the Chiefs as to how long the war would last.<sup>53/</sup> Clifford told an interviewer years later, "I couldn't get hold of a plan to end the war; there was no plan for winning the war. It was like quicksilver to me."<sup>54/</sup>

The Wise Men jolted the President when it became clear that a majority favored deescalation of the war. This rejection of the old course of meeting the DRV's escalations whenever they were perceived or detected, was running into resistance from the US Senate's hawks, like Richard Russell, John Stennis and Henry Jackson.<sup>55/</sup> The opposition in the Senate establishment deeply affected Secretary Clifford as well as the President.

President Johnson was crushed by what he viewed as defections within his administration and the awesome costs that meeting General Westmoreland's request would pose. He had decided in 1965 not to put the US on a real wartime footing by mobilizing the reserves or instituting heavy taxes and economic controls. It was readily apparent to him that it was no longer possible to avoid those measures and still follow the course of escalation. LBJ's "guns and butter" approach to the war and economy was on the verge of becoming a shambles, and the Great Society's programs were facing sharp congressional cuts. His Secretary of the Treasury warned that the costs associated with the 206,000 man request would cause deep cuts in domestic programs, other defense expenditures, and possibly foreign aid. The JCS remained adamant on the necessity of calling up the reserves to support any troop commitment. Throughout the war, as one author pointed out, "when the President began to search for the elusive point at which the costs of Vietnam would become unacceptable to the American people, he always settled upon mobilization."<sup>56/</sup>

President Johnson decided at a meeting with his key advisers on March 13 to deploy 30,000 more troops to RVN, but that deployment was not carried out because an additional 13,500 men were needed as support

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personnel for the earlier emergency augmentation (of 10,500 men). In order to accomplish the deployment of the support personnel, the President did call to active duty a little over 10,000 Reservists. One week later, after reviewing General Westmoreland's assessment of the combat situation, which indicated glowing operational successes, LBJ decided to restrict the additional deployments to Vietnam to the 13,500 support troops.<sup>57/</sup> On April 4 the Southeast Asia Deployment Program Number 6 was approved, formalizing the emergency augmentation and support forces committed after Tet and establishing a final ceiling of 549,500 for US troops in RVN.<sup>58/</sup>

The net result of the Pueblo incident and "A to Z" assessment after Tet produced a mini-mobilization of approximately 25,000 Reservists.

#### d. Impact of the Mini-Mobilization

The mini-mobilizations, per se, did not bring with them any major problems. The Pueblo call up demonstrated US resolve and the North Koreans refrained from attacking the South. Following extensive diplomatic efforts, the Pueblo crew was finally released eleven months after their capture.

Tet was a military defeat but a psychological victory for the DRV; PLAF (VC) forces in the South were soundly defeated, as were some PAVN (NVA) forces. The "third phase" attack on the two northern provinces of RVN and on the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh never materialized. Over 40,000 VC/NVA soldiers were killed, the RVNAF units held their own against the enemy, and the GVN responded by lowering the draft age to eighteen and declaring a national mobilization of its manpower to build up their armed forces. The emergency reinforcement of General Westmoreland's forces proved to be more than adequate in meeting his immediate needs.

The call-ups were not without their complaints. President Johnson, who remembered the complaints about the call-up of Reserves during President Kennedy's administration, was the recipient of several complaints stemming from the improper utilization of Reservists activated during the Pueblo incident.<sup>59/</sup>

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The real impact was not from the mini-mobilization, but rather from Secretary Clifford's "A to Z" reassessment, the deescalation of the war recommendation by the "Wise Men", the numerous defections within the government of former war "hardliners", the international financial crisis which faced the US dollar abroad, the resistance to new troop commitments among former congressional supporters of the war, the US active strategic reserve being at its lower limit, and the unsettling effect that the Tet offensive had on the American public.

As a result of the foregoing impacts in the aftermath of the Pueblo Incident and the Tet Offensive, President Johnson:

- established a final ceiling for US troops in Vietnam (opting for only a mini-mobilization in the process)
- ordered a limitation of bombing
- withdrew from the election race for a second term of office
- invited North Vietnam to negotiate.

President Johnson did not regard those decisions as irreversible at the time, but they rapidly came to be seen that way, and no serious consideration was given during the remainder of his administration to raising troop levels or renewing full-scale bombing. The US military effort in Vietnam finally leveled off and began to decline.<sup>60/</sup>

### 7. Vietnamization and Withdrawal: 1969-1972

When the Nixon Administration took office on January 20, 1969, over half a million American troops were in Vietnam. The number was rising toward the 549,000-man ceiling set by LBJ in April 1968. The cost of the US effort in Vietnam had been \$30 billion in fiscal year 1969 alone. American casualties had been averaging 200 men killed in action per week during the second half of 1968; a total of 14,592 Americans died in combat in 1968. On January 20, the cumulative total of Americans killed in action in Vietnam since 1961 stood at over 31,000; South Vietnamese casualties were close to 90,000.<sup>61/</sup>

#### a. The Extent to Which Mobilization was Considered

The Nixon Administration entered office determined to end the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict. President Nixon and his

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Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, after four difficult years, concluded their search for a negotiated agreement which permitted the US to withdraw its combat troops, to get back its POWs, and have a "decent interval."

President Nixon began his search for "peace with honor" by initiating secret talks with the DRV, and pursuing programs of Vietnamization and Pacification while unilaterally withdrawing US combat forces on a gradual basis from the combat arena. Throughout, mobilization of the Reserves to support the Vietnam conflict never became an issue.

Other crisis situations, such as the unprovoked shootdown by North Korea on April 14, 1969, of a US Navy EC-121 reconnaissance aircraft over international waters, caused decision makers to consider mobilization as a possible response option.<sup>52/</sup> Subsequently, President Nixon faced each international crisis situation without opting for a mobilization or partial reserve call-up.

President Nixon did activate selected Army National Guard and Reserve units for a brief period during a domestic crisis in 1970. On March 18, 1970 New York City mail carriers began an unauthorized work stoppage that threatened to halt essential mail services. The President declared a national emergency on March 23, thus paving the way for a partial mobilization of more than 18,000 Reservists on the next day. National Guard and Army Reserve members participated with Regular forces in assisting US postal authorities in getting the mail through. The postal workers soon returned to work, and by April 3, the last of the mobilized Reservists were returned to civilian status.

### b. Rationale for Deferral

The following influenced President Nixon's decision making with respect to the possible use of Reserve forces during this period:

- public opinion would not have supported him
- congressional support was lacking
- most Reserve units were underequipped, understaffed and not ready for mobilization

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- costs associated with mobilization would have been exceedingly high.

### c. Impact of the Action

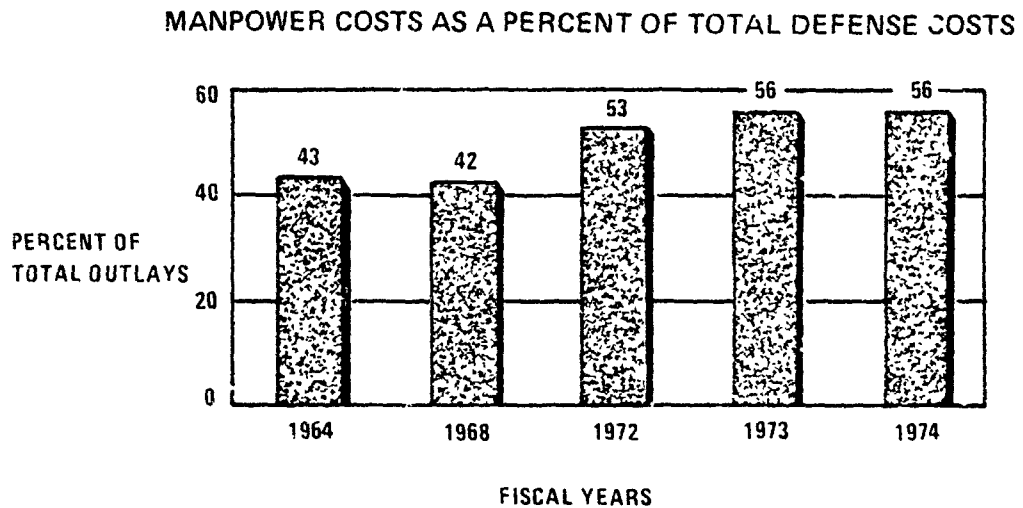
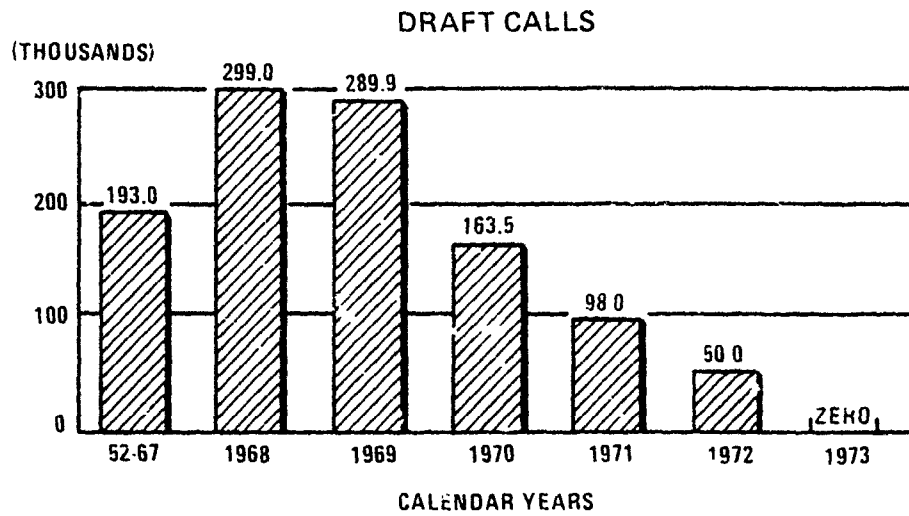
The phasedown of US military operations in Vietnam and the accompanying reductions in active force levels caused renewed emphasis to be placed on building up the Reserve forces. As early as November 1968, the Congress, concerned that the Reserve components were not being adequately provided for, passed and the President approved the Reserve forces "Bill of Rights." The law made the service secretaries responsible for providing the support needed to develop Reserve forces capable of attaining peacetime training goals, and they were also responsible for meeting approved mobilization readiness objectives. The act established the position of Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs within each of the military departments and gave statutory status to the respective chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force Reserves. In August 1970, Secretary of Defense Laird emphatically affirmed that the Reserve components would be prepared to provide the units and individuals required to augment the active forces during the initial phase of any future military expansion to meet an emergency situation.63/

By mid-1971, the Reserve components had substantially recovered from the turbulence associated with a reorganization and the mini-mobilization of 1968. The Department of Defense completed yet another reorganization which brought the Reserve components troop programs into consonance with new organizational concepts that evolved from the Vietnam experience.64/

### 8. Post-War Impacts: Down to a Zero Draft

Since President Johnson had elected not to call up the Reserves in the early stages of the US build up in RVN, the main burden of meeting the Armed Forces need for additional manpower had fallen upon the Selective Service System. For example, increased draft calls and voluntary enlistments caused the Army's total strength to increase from over 969,000 in 1965 to over 1,570,000 men in 1968 (see Figure 4-2).65/

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SOURCE: STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON, FISCAL YEAR 1974, DEFENSE BUDGET REVIEW, HEARINGS BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 93rd CONGRESS, APRIL 3, 1973, pp. 120-121.

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Figure 4-2. Draft Calls and DOD Manpower Cuts

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Reliance upon the Selective Service to meet the growing requirements of the Armed Forces when large Reserve forces were available drew critical comments from both Congress and the public. The complaints would have been the same whether the choice had been made by draft board or lottery, or whether it had been based on physical, marital or educational status. The crunch was that some were selected and sent to war while others were allowed to stay home. As the conflict wore on, the unpopularity of the war grew among the members of the draft age group, manifesting itself in increased antiwar demonstrations, draft card burnings, and efforts to avoid military service.

Critical comments on the decision to depend on the draft and not to mobilize also came from high ranking military. General Harold K. Johnson, Army Chief of Staff, was concerned about the overall impact on the Army's worldwide posture. The size of the troop commitments to Vietnam and the tours of only one-year duration were viewed as the biggest problems. Of all the Chiefs, he was probably the most insistent on the need for the Reserves.<sup>66</sup> General Johnson argued that:

- the main problem preventing the call-up of Reserves was the legacy of the Berlin mobilization in 1961 and the ensuing outcry of misuse, and,
- the Reserves represented a wasted asset that was only good when not called up, and kept primarily for their deterrent value.

As General Johnson once remarked about the Reserves, we are "feeding the horse but never taking him out of the barn."<sup>67</sup>

General Westmoreland, on the other hand, was satisfied with draftees. He expressed his feeling that there never was a point when the President could have called up the Reserves before Tet in 1968. Prior to that watershed battle, the COMUSMACV had been ambivalent about a call-up of Reserves. His thoughts were that:

- a call-up might set loose pressure to disengage from RVN prematurely in order to get the reservists home, and,
- after their one year tours in RVN, the reservists would apply pressure for release from active duty, which would be disruptive army-wide.<sup>68</sup>



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By early 1968 the strain placed on active forces in meeting the continuing Vietnam buildup, keeping up other worldwide deployments, and maintaining an active strategic Reserve had become so great that those tasks could no longer be met through reliance upon increased draft calls. The urgency of the situation was underscored by communist provocations in Korea and the Tet offensive in RVN. To the US military, Tet provided the hope that the President finally would have to loosen their leash and do what they had been pushing for:

- call up reserve units
- replenish the empty stateside strategic Reserve
- ticket more troops to Southeast Asia
- escalate the war to include attacks on sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia.<sup>69/</sup>

General Wheeler encouraged General Westmoreland to make his request for 206,000 troops and then presented it in Washington as urgent without emphasizing the JCS's primary motive, to rebuild the active strategic reserve in the states. The gambit backfired, causing a major reassessment and eventual deescalation of the war, and withdrawals of US combat forces from RVN.

By 1969 draft quotas had been drastically reduced. In April 1970, President Nixon proposed that the nation start to move in the direction of an all-volunteer armed force and end the Selective Service. To carry out Mr. Nixon's proposal, the Army, the service which had relied most heavily upon the draft, instituted a Modern Volunteer Army Program. The law that created Selective Service, the powerful polarizer of public opinion, was not extended in 1973. From a zero-draft the US had moved to a no draft situation depending entirely on the All Volunteer Armed Forces.

In another historic move, the Congress took on a greater role in American foreign policy making when it passed the War Powers Resolution of 1973 over President Nixon's veto. The law precludes the President from continuing any military action beyond sixty days unless Congress votes to sustain his action. The President's flexibility to deploy troops and commit Reserves was severely curbed by that legislation.

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### 9. A Lesson Learned

Faced with budget cuts and lowered military manpower ceilings, defense and armed forces leaders sought to preclude a repeat of the Vietnam experience and the subsequent failure of the chief executive to mobilize the Reserves. The following actions were taken:

- In August 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird emphatically affirmed that the Reserve components would be prepared to provide the units and individuals required to augment the active forces during the initial phases of any future expansion.
- In 1971, Mr. Laird announced that increased reliance would be placed on the National Guard and Reserve, and thus the "Total Force Policy" was born.
- Through increased reliance on the Reserve component, the DOD was able to reduce significantly the size and structure of the active forces.
- Readiness requirements of the Reserve components were increased to the point that many of those units would be expected to deploy along with active units.
- The Army, under the direction of Chief of Staff General Creighton W. Abrams, adroitly implemented the DOD Total Force Policy by bolstering the responsiveness and strength of the Army's Reserve components and by integrating them more effectively into the overall effort.70/

General Abrams had in fact learned from the decision not to mobilize during Vietnam, and he set about to build a leaner, responsive and more capable Army. In 1974, he took the DOD-directed force of 13 active divisions and eight Reserve component divisions and restructured the force to meet the Army's commitments. He increased the Army's active force to 16 divisions. In addition to increasing the active combat strength, he retained eight divisions in the Reserve component forces, and structured three of the Army's sixteen divisions so that they would be "rounded out" by an affiliated Reserve component brigade if and when committed. In a similar fashion, other CONUS divisions were organized to have affiliated

Reserve components battalions and brigades trained and equipped to deploy as part of those divisions in an emergency requiring mobilization. Moreover, as more of the Army's strength went into the combat structure (the combat teeth) the entire Army became more dependent upon the capabilities of Reserve components supporting units (the support tail). That greater dependence necessitated closer integration and increased concern for the readiness and mobilization requirement of the Army's Reserve Components. 71/

C. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Failure to mobilize during the Vietnam War caused repercussions that impacted on the US economy, the Congress and executive branch, the draft-age public, and -- to an extent that cannot yet be measured -- on the military services.

- Historically, mobilization connotes a sense of national determination and therefore it provides a strong signal to an enemy; lack of mobilization conveys a sense of irresolution in circumstances such as the Vietnam War.
- The actual US commitment of combat troops to Indochina differed from that foreseen in contingency plans. All early US plans anticipated a mobilization of Reserve Components. The failure to call up critically short technical skills, especially logistics and engineer units, contributed significantly to delays in the deployment of combat troops to Vietnam.
- The decision not to mobilize but to depend on increased recruitment and draft calls proved to be the "lesser" of two political "evils" for President Johnson. Militarily, the decision proved less than effective, and it exacerbated selective service inequities, morale problems, personnel turbulence and shortages of qualified leaders and technicians. That decision, among others, contributed to his political demise.
- The call-up of the Reserves would not significantly have altered the final outcome of the war, assuming that the war would have

been prosecuted in essentially the same way that it actually unfolded. Without doubt there would have been less personnel turbulence and a more rapid deployment to Vietnam had the Reserves been mobilized; however, short of a threat to its national survival, the DRV was prepared to meet the US commitments, no matter how quickly they were carried out. (Conversely, had the Reserve Component been mobilized at the outset, with concomitant public support, the war might have been prosecuted in more vigorous fashion and with different results.)

- The mobilization during the Korean War and the Berlin Crisis made call ups appear to US political leaders to be politically unacceptable. The end of the Vietnam war brought with it an end to the draft and initiation of the War Powers Act. Future American presidents will be faced with a serious dilemma if confronted with a crisis situation requiring rapid buildups in military manpower.

D. LESSONS

- "Banana" wars or other small-scale, protracted, but undeclared wars are politically difficult to justify and sustain. Only a radical change in US attitudes and perceptions might enable a US president to engage in such wars in the future.
- Small-size, intense, short-term combat operations are possible, using regular forces, assuming that forces in the proper combinations are available and ready to fight, but any commitment of appreciable size or duration will require mobilization and the full support and understanding of a majority of the American people.
- Historically, the US Army has been a people's army, comprised of citizen soldiers who have taken up arms in the past in defense of their nation. No president should commit them lightly, even if it is only the standing Army and not the Reserve components. The

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Army should be committed only when there is a consensus among the American people that the vital interests of the country are involved.

- Those who prepare contingency plans should be aware of possible domestic planning constraints, and even the predispositions of top policy-makers. These factors -- such as President Johnson's refusal to mobilize Reserve components for Vietnam -- may affect the outcome of a crisis situation just as much as any other factor.
- Declining enlistments in the regular and Reserve forces makes it more imperative than ever that the following be accomplished:
  - Quality recruitment for regular and reserve forces
  - Maintenance of required manning levels in combatant forces
  - Timely provision of modern equipment
  - Continuous, high-caliber training
  - Tough, frequent, realistic field exercises and inspections
  - Concentration on developing intelligent, dedicated, professional leadership at all levels of command, leaders who are imbued with a deep sense of purpose and a mind set of instant readiness.

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## CHAPTER 5 PACIFICATION AND VIETNAMIZATION

The building of a serious pacification program in Vietnam was in one aspect a progressive disillusionment with one scheme after another.

Douglas S. Blaufarb  
The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S.  
Doctrine and Performance, 1977 1/

The objective of the whole people of my country is a unified democratic and strong Vietnam ... to reach this objective, our National Leadership Committee has promoted three main policies: first, military offenses; second, rural pacification; and third, democracy.

General Nguyen Duc Thang  
Chief, National Pacification Campaign,  
Address to the Honolulu Conference  
February 7, 1966 2/

### A. INTRODUCTION

Between 1954 and 1975 the GVN, with US aid and support, struggled to devise a successful pacification and development strategy for South Vietnam. The complex goal of achieving a politically and economically viable society under an effective government supported by the people proved to be elusive. Various programs were attempted, often at US insistence. Many of those programs were well intentioned but ill-devised blends of stop-and-start military and police operations, social-control techniques, emergency welfare efforts and attempts to extend political-administrative linkage from Saigon to the countryside. Almost without exception, the early programs failed to yield the desired results. By the time that Pacification, and for that matter Vietnamization, began showing signs of finally working, the nature of the struggle had changed and South Vietnam began to crumble under the DRV's conventional military pressures.

The evolution of pacification in RVN, as well as that of the US-inspired Vietnamization Program, will be described and analyzed in this

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chapter. The impact of those programs on the war effort and their degree of success also will be assessed herein.

### B. PACIFICATION: A KEY VARIABLE IN THE COUNTERINSURGENCY FORMULA

In a broad sense, pacification is one means toward an end -- defeat of an insurgency. The extension of a government's presence and reduction of an insurgent's influence throughout a country, however difficult and ambitious, is still a limited objective. Pacification is a key variable in the complex formula that must be employed to ensure a stable, popularly supported government. Political reform, measures to maintain a healthy economy, education and training to improve the quality of civilian and military leadership, and the development of popularly supported local and national security forces are but some of the undertakings a threatened central government must mount to defeat an internal insurgent threat.

#### 1. Early Pacification Efforts

Before beginning an analysis of pacification in Vietnam, it would be helpful to examine several operational counterinsurgency models with a view towards determining how pacification, as a working concept, evolved.

##### a. The Greek Civil War 3/

The US experienced its first involvement in countering a communist insurgency after WWII when it came to the aid of the Greek government in 1947. US military and economic aid proved indispensable to a bankrupt nation struggling to rebuild its institutions after six years of war, of which five years were under enemy occupation. The US experience was attended by the following fortuitous developments:

- The Yugoslav Communists broke ties with the Soviet Union and ceased to provide aid and sanctuary to the Greek Communist insurgents.
- Field Marshall Alexander Papagos, hero of the Greek battles against Italy in WWII, elected to emerge from retirement and assumed command of the operations against the insurgents.

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US involvement was brief as the Greek insurgents proved to be less than skillful. There was little impact on the US's awareness of communist rural insurgency as a special problem.

### b. The Philippines and Huks 4/

The Philippine insurgency following WWII can be looked upon as the beginning of active counterinsurgency on the part of the US. Under the strong and effective leadership of President Magsaysay, and aided by US economic and military assistance, the Huk rebellion was defeated. Magsaysay had a program that was well balanced: between military pursuit of the Huk insurgents and aid and assistance directed toward meeting the needs of the peasant population, the base of the insurgency. The military and the rural police constabulary merged to form a single service and were assigned the responsibility for pacifying the countryside and suppressing the Huks. Once local security had been established, the government set about the political process of reorganizing and reestablishing local government to be responsive to and involve the people.

The success of the Philippine experience did not evolve from military actions, but was generated from the political solution devised and implemented by an astute national leader who exercised the democratic process delineated in his nation's constitution.

### c. The British and the Malayan Communists 5/

From 1948 to 1960, the British colonial government successfully overcame the Malayan Communist Party's (MCP) insurgency, restored order, pacified the countryside, and launched the process whereby Malaya became a self-governing, independent and democratic state. That achievement was notable in that political and economic stability were achieved in the midst of the internal crisis created by the insurgency. Following their counterinsurgency success in Malaya, the British gave the Malayan independence and withdrew their military personnel from the scene.

### d. The French Experience 6/

Among others after WWII, France found herself countering serious insurgent movements in Vietnam and Algeria. The French model of "La guerre revolutionnaire" proved to be less than successful against the

communist insurgents. Basic to the French counterinsurgency "modus operandi" was ruthless control of the details of village life by an occupying army to separate the guerrilla from the population. This, however, was as far as the approach was able to go; true pacification was never attained. There was no answer to the problem of institutionalizing the gains achieved at a high cost or of how the occupying army would be able to let go its hold in the villages. There was little from the French experience that was accepted by US counterinsurgents when the Americans replaced the French in Vietnam.

A graphic comparison of the above mentioned counterinsurgency models is shown as Figure 5-1.

2. The Process Defined

Over time, pacification began to take on a broader meaning within the context of counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam. Security for the rural population became synonymous with pacification.

In 1966, then White House consultant Robert Komer reported on the status of pacification and he defined it as follows:

If we divide the US/GVN problem into four main components, three of them show encouraging progress. The campaign against the major VC/NVA (North Vietnamese Army) units is in high gear, the constitutional process seems to be evolving favorably, and we expect to contain inflation while meeting most needs of the civil economy. But there is a fourth problem area, that of securing the countryside and getting the peasant involved in the struggle against the Viet Cong, where we are lagging way behind. It is this problem area which I would term pacification . . .

At the risk of over-simplification, I see management of the pacification problem as involving three main subtasks: (1) providing local security in the countryside--essentially a military/police/ cadre task; (2) breaking the hold of the VC over the people; and (3) positive programs to win the active support of the rural population. 7/

Host Country	Principal Supporter	Insurgent Group	Available Sanctuaries	Strong Proxy/ Native Leadership	Strong or Dominant Sponsor	Strong Proxy/ Native Political/ Administration	CI Successful
Greece	US	KKE	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Philippines	US	HUK	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malaya	British	MCP	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vietnam (1946-54)	French	Viet Minh	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Vietnam (1954-75)	US	VC/PLAF	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

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Figure 5-1. Comparative Data on Counterinsurgency Operations: 1946-1975

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When Komer arrived in Vietnam a year later to become the first Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), the following official definition for pacification had evolved:

The military process of establishing sustained local security in the countryside, the political process of establishing and re-establishing local government responsive to and involving the people and the economic and social process of meeting rural people's needs. 8/

In the eyes of official Washington, pacification had become the "umbrella" under which all programs for winning the "other war" could be placed. It encompassed the full spectrum of military, political and civil efforts in Vietnam. 9/

### C. EARLY PACIFICATION EFFORTS: THE NGO EXPERIMENTS (1954-1963)

The communists began to build up their clandestine political and military organizational base in South Vietnam in 1956 after it became clear that the governments in Washington and Saigon would not proceed with a plebiscite or reunification. Initially, their activities were primarily covert and directed toward the political struggle. It is clear in retrospect that as their infrastructure grew the communists were preparing for a military struggle. Beginning in 1957 that military struggle was intensified and featured increased terrorism against officials, government installations and private individuals. 10/

The US contribution during those early years had little relevance to the problem of countering a low-level insurgency.

The MAAG Chief and most other American authorities considered the major threat to be an overt, mass attack by North Vietnamese troops across the 17th parallel. A conventionally trained and deployed South Vietnamese army was the result -- at the expense of a buildup of the more relevant militia and police-type forces -- until early 1960, when the true nature of the then-existing threat to the RVN -- internal subversion -- was recognized. 11/



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Professor Herring, a highly respected diplomatic historian, described the problem succinctly:

The basic problem . . . was that the army was trained for the wrong mission. The MAAG would be sharply criticized for failing to prepare the South Vietnamese Army for dealing with guerrilla operations, but from the perspective of the mid-1950s its emphasis appears quite logical. Confronting the near-impossible task of building from scratch an army capable of performing two quite diverse missions, MAAG naturally leaned toward the conventional warfare with which it was most familiar. At least until 1958, moreover, the countryside was quiescent and Diem appeared firmly entrenched. [L. Gen. Samuel T.] Williams and most of his staff had served in Korea, and the remarkable resemblance between the Korean and Vietnamese situations inclined them to focus on the threat of an invasion from the north. The army was therefore trained, organized and equipped primarily to fight a conventional war and its inadequacies were obvious only after South Vietnam was enveloped by a rural insurgency. 12/

During that period, President Diem's efforts to improve rural security in the face of the increasing communist threat centered around the regroupment of the populace under the various resettlement schemes discussed below:

1. Civic Action (see Figure 5-2)

While dealing with his political and security problems, President Diem simultaneously undertook a program of Civic Action in the rural areas. Initially emerging from a military effort to stimulate and assist local peasants in rebuilding war-damaged public facilities, the Civic Action Program quickly developed into a program of community development.

Although Civic Action showed signs of success in its first full year of operation, the program was curtailed at the end of 1956 because of inter-agency rivalries between the Civic Action Directorate and the Ministries of Health, Information, and Agriculture. The latter organization apparently felt threatened by the intrusion of the Civic Action Program into areas traditionally under the Ministry of Agriculture jurisdiction.

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Program Title: Civic Action

Objective:

- Stimulate and assist rural peasants in rebuilding war-damaged public facilities

Timeframe: 1955-1956

Initiator: President Diem

US Proponent: US AID mission gave modest support in late 1955

GVN Proponent: Civic Action Directorate

Results:

- Showed signs of success 1955-1956, however, the program was curtailed at the end of 1956 because of inter-agency rivalries and jurisdictional problems between the Civic Action Directorate and the Ministries of Health, Information and Agriculture

Remarks:

- Program became propagandistic and political, with less emphasis on economic and social services. Diem and his brother Nhu gave the rural Civic Action little but lip service and were more preoccupied with urban problems.

Figure 5-2. The Civic Action Program

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In spite of objections from the US AID Mission, which modestly supported Civic Action after the summer of 1955, one expert observed that the program became more propagandistic and political, with less emphasis on economic and social services to the people.<sup>13/</sup> Lawrence Grinter concludes that President Diem and his brother Nhu gave the rural efforts of Civic Action little but lip service and were more preoccupied with urban problems: battling a rebellious army and the Binh Xuyen gangs for control of Saigon, taming other separatist elements, and trying to master the administration of the government.<sup>14/</sup>

### 2. The Land Development Program (see Figure 5-3)

The next phase in the RVN pacification efforts was the inauguration of land development centers (Dinh Dien, LDC's or centres d'implantation) by President Diem in late 1956. His motivations for devising the new program were:

- To improve internal security (rather than economic considerations). Of the two prime areas (the Central Highlands and the Delta), he assigned the highest priority to the Central Highlands for resettlement to place a "human wall" of loyal SVN people to guard against communist infiltration.<sup>15/</sup>
- To alleviate the overcrowding and poverty conditions prevalent along the central coast where four million people were living on only 26<sup>0</sup> 500 hectares of arable land.<sup>16/</sup>
- To resettle the undeveloped lands of the central highlands, where agricultural production might be increased.
- To integrate the Montagnard tribal people of the Central Highlands into permanent villages and thus subject them to greater governmental and administrative control.<sup>17/</sup>

It has been suggested by some that Diem planned to resettle families that were considered to be unreliable into Viet Minh-dominated areas. The land development centers for those people were to be little more than armed detention camps.<sup>18/</sup>

When the land development was first conceived in late 1956, the US agreed to commit over \$10 million in economic aid to the program. Although the USOM was active in the initial stages of the program in both

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Program Title: Land Development

Objectives:

- Improve internal security with priority on the Central Highlands
- Resettle the undeveloped lands of the Central Highlands, where agricultural production might be increased
- Integrate the montagnard tribal people of the Central Highlands into permanent villages to achieve greater governmental and administrative control
- Alleviate the overcrowding and poverty conditions prevalent along the central coast

Timeframe: late 1956-1959

US Proponent: US agreed in late 1956 to commit over \$10 million in economic aid to the program. USOM active in initial stages in both planning and implementation.

GVN Proponent: President Diem

Remarks:

- Wide divergencies of view developed between the US and the GVN concerning the program's scope, direction and tempo.
- By late 1957 the US had withdrawn its financial support for land development, except for providing the equipment, spare parts and tools. From that point on, the GVN had to pay for the cost of the program on its own.
- The land development program began to falter by mid-1957 for the following reasons:
  - The program was not fully accepted by the natives of the Central Highlands region.
  - Diem was in a hurry to show results--little time was allowed for orderly planning and preparation. Since the program was promoted by the President and his brother Nhu, most GVN officials were reluctant to criticize their decisions or point out shortcomings. By 1959 Diem appeared to have lost interest in pursuing the effort any further.

Figure 5-3. The Land Development Program

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planning and implementation, wide divergencies of view began to develop concerning the program's scope, direction and tempo. While the GVN had declared agricultural development to be one of the program's long-term goals, USOM believed it should have been given primary attention.<sup>19/</sup> As the GVN placed increasing emphasis on the political and security objectives in the program, other incompatibilities soon came into focus. The US wanted to concentrate the effort in the Delta region and Diem insisted on the Central Highlands. The US held that each family in the highlands would require from three to five hectares of land to subsist; Diem claimed that one hectare would suffice. Tensions also arose over the management and use of USOM-supplied agricultural equipment. By late 1957 the US had withdrawn its financial support for land development, except for providing the equipment, spare parts and tools. From that point on, the GVN had to pay for the cost of the program on its own.<sup>20/</sup>

The land development program began to falter by mid-1957 for the following reasons:

- Focus had shifted from the Delta to the Central Highlands, where it was not fully accepted by the natives of that region.
- Diem was in a hurry to show results--little time was allowed for orderly planning and preparation.
- Since the program was being pushed by the President and his brother Nhu, most GVN officials were reluctant to criticize their decisions or point out apparent shortcomings.<sup>21/</sup>

Though the land development program achieved a modicum of success in the Central Highlands by 1959, Diem appeared to lose interest in pursuing the effort any further and he began to concentrate his interest on the Delta. Rather than building on the land development concept and perhaps modifying it in light of experience gained, Diem actually created a new program -- "agrovilles" (Khu Tru Mats) formally announced in early 1959.<sup>22/</sup>

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### 3. Agglomeration Camps and Agrovilles (see Figure 5-4)

In the eyes of most Americans, President Diem had accomplished a miracle in the first five years of his regime. Notably, his accomplishments were:

- Political stability - a constitution had been written and elections for a National Assembly were conducted.
- Economic growth - the economy, with US aid, was showing signs of stability.
- Social reform - many of the social needs of the people were being met (especially those of the urban population).
- Security of the countryside - This area remained a problem which started to become more serious in 1959 (particularly in the Delta region).23/

Communist harassment of the countryside was beginning to reach emergency proportions by mid-1959. Following a clandestine visit to RVN territory in late 1958, DRV politburo member Le Duan had proposed a program of terror and violence which became the blueprint for the future course of the VC/NLF insurgency in the south.24/ On 13 May 1959, the Lao Dong Party's Central Committee approved Le Duan's proposal and the North Vietnamese campaign to conquer the South began under the direction of Hanoi.25/

This stepped-up attack took its toll. Landowners, officials, school teachers and health workers were being assassinated at a rate of about 100 a month.26/ Working to counter this insurgent tide, in 1959 the GVN began its new national security program of which first agglomeration camps and then agrovilles were to be the centerpiece.

Diem and Nhu envisaged two types of agglomeration or resettlement camps:

- Qui Khu - a regroupment (regulated zones) of pro-communist or VC families into special zones where they could be watched by government authorities.
- Qui An - Types of agglomeration centers for loyal, patriotic and reliable families who were seen as potential targets for VC terrorism and who would be protected by government personnel.27/

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Program Title: Agglomeration Camps

Objectives:

- Increased national security
- Regroupment of pro-communist or VC families into special zones where they could be watched by government authorities
- Development of agglomeration centers for protection of loyal, patriotic and reliable families who were seen as potential targets for VC terrorism.

Timeframe: May-July 1959

Initiators: President Diem and Counselor Nhu

Results:

- Peasants were forced to leave their traditional homesteads - their reaction was one of unanimous protest
- It was difficult to distinguish between genuine Viet Minh or VC families and nationalist families
- Program was suspended after two months of operation

Remarks:

- The GVN was unable to provide adequate security to the people, to explain satisfactorily the rationale for such camps, or to dedicate sufficient attention to the economic and social implications of the resettlements.

Figure 5-4. Agglomeration or Resettlement Camps

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Security was the sole justification for this program. The following problems quickly developed:

- Peasants, who were forced to leave their traditional homesteads, found themselves in strange and unfamiliar places.
- The reaction of the regrouped peasants took the form of unanimous protest.
- It was difficult to distinguish between genuine Viet Minn or VC families and nationalist families.28/

After only two months of operation, Diem suspended the experimentation of the agglomeration centers. The GVN was unable to provide adequate security to the people, to explain satisfactorily the rationale for such camps, or to dedicate sufficient attention to the economic and social implications of the resettlements.29/ The ill-conceived program had a quiet passing as Nhu launched a new variation on the pacification theme-- Agrovilles.

In July 1959, Diem announced that the GVN was undertaking to improve the rural standards of living through the establishment of some 80 "prosperity and density centers" (Khu Tru Mat).30/ These "Agrovilles"31/ were to be located along a strategic route system of key roads, protected by new towns. (see Figure 5-5). The agrovilles were to be the leading edge of a new national security plan. The plan envisioned:

- The regrouping of major population elements into key rural agrovilles along the routes connecting strategically important Saigon, Hue, Da Nang and Dalat.
- The recruitment of more competent and dedicated local leaders for village administrative posts.
- The improvement of village self-finance.
- The formation of a vigorous youth movement (under Nhu's control) for combating increased Viet Cong recruitment activity in the villages.32/

The plan called for the resettlement of about 500,000 people. Eighty agrovilles were to be built by the end of 1963, each designed for about 400 families (2,000 to 3,000 people), and each with a surrounding



Program Title: Agrovilles

Objectives:

- Improved national security and rural standards of living through the regrouping of major population elements into prosperity and density centers--"Agrovilles"--along the routes connecting strategically important Saigon, Hue, DaNang and Dalat
- The resettlement of about 500,000 people. Eighty agrovilles to be built by the end of 1963, each designed for about 400 families (2,000 to 3,000 people), and each with a surrounding cluster of smaller agrovilles for 120 families. New communities to offer farmers many advantages including community defense, schools, dispensaries, market centers, public gardens and electricity.

Timeframe: July 1953-1960

Initiator: President Diem and Counselor Nhu

Results:

- The peasants objected to the agrovilles even more sharply than they had to previous resettlement experiments.
- In order to meet GVN Interior Ministry Construction quotas, provincial and local officials had to bring in thousands of Republican youth to help because the peasants who were supposed to construct the settlements responded less than enthusiastically.

Remarks:

- The Viet Cong put special emphasis into their anti-agroville campaign, issuing threats against village cadres and assassinating some of them. By the end of 1969, peasant resistance and insurgent attacks caused abandonment of the program with only 22 out of 80 communities completed.

Figure 5-5. The Agroville Program

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cluster of smaller agrovilles for 120 families. The new communities offered the farmers many advantages including community defense, schools, dispensaries, market centers, public gardens, and electricity. The GVN expected warm support from the rural populace, but the peasants objected to the agrovilles even more sharply than they had to previous resettlement experiments.33/

Under pressure from the Interior Ministry to meet ambitious government construction quotas, provincial and local officials scrambled to get agrovilles underway. The peasants, who were supposed to construct the settlements, responded less than enthusiastically, therefore, 'courvee' labor was resorted to, and thousands of Republican Youth were imported to help. For example, at one site -- Vi Thanh near Can Tho -- 20,000 peasants were assembled from four districts, many more than the number who could expect to profit directly from the undertaking.34/ Moreover, most of those who were selected to move into the agrovilles which they had helped build, did so unwillingly, for it often meant abandoning a cherished ancestral home, tombs and developed gardens and fields for a strange and desolate place often without shade, toilet facilities or provisions for livestock.35/ The Viet Cong put special emphasis into their anti-agroville campaign, issuing threats against village cadres and assassinating some of them. By the end of 1960, peasant resistance and insurgent attacks caused abandonment of the program with only 22 out of 80 communities completed.36/

The telltale indicators of why the GVN's Land Development, agglomeration and Agroville schemes had failed were not being read by Diem. His government (with US aid) was unable to provide the rural population with:

- an effective counterinsurgency capability and,
- a viable politico-administrative framework.37/

Even as the Agroville program was winding down, Diem and Nhu were formulating their next attempt at pacifying the countryside--Strategic Hamlets.

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### 4. Strategic Hamlets (see Figure 5-6)

The concept of Strategic Hamlets (Ap Chien Lioc) took shape in piecemeal fashion in a few localities early in 1961. Some local authorities had duplicated the village defense system as it had been employed with success against the Viet Minh in Bui Chu and Phat Diem, the two oldest Roman Catholic diocesan areas in North Vietnam.<sup>38/</sup> For example, in Ninh Thuan province, the province chief, Lt. Colonel Khanh, initiated a village defense program by encouraging the villagers to plant a special kind of cactus around their village. The rapid growing, thorny cactus hedge formed a formidable barrier which discouraged penetration by enemy infiltrators. Armed with primitive weapons -- pointed sticks, lances and spears -- village youths, both male and female, performed security and guard functions.

In the Trung Hoa village of Darlac Province, Father Hoa, a Catholic priest of Chinese origin who fled North Vietnam in 1954, fashioned his village into a North Vietnam-type of community. Father Hoa came south with a large number of Nung people (a Chinese catholic group from North Vietnam) whom he helped resettle in his village as well as in the district of Nam Con, located in Xuyen Province. The Nung (often called the "Sea Swallows") resettlements became tightly stockaded defensive areas within enclosures of wooden stakes reinforced by a system of camouflaged trap holes lined with poison-tipped spikes. The villagers were armed with crossbows and arrows, lances and spears in addition to a few old rifles. Notwithstanding the crude weapons, the defense of the Nung villages was effective, and served as a model for other village and hamlet self-defense systems in the Mekong Delta.<sup>39/</sup>

Ngo Dinh Nhu launched the Strategic Hamlet Program late in 1961 with a view towards establishing a village defense system for the entire country. This new scheme was an attempt at avoiding the mistake of erecting whole new communities from the ground up. The plan was aimed at fortifying existing villages, although it did include some provisions for destroying indefensible hamlets and the relocation of the inhabitants into more secure communities. Strategic hamlets were to concentrate on civil

Program Title: Strategic Hamlets (Ap Chien Luoc)

Objectives:

- Establishment of a village defense system for the entire country
- Concentration on civil defense through crude fortifications and organization of the populace in order to improve their military capability and political cohesiveness
- Fortification of existing hamlets to establish a continuous front line of interdependent combat villages
- Fortify 11,000 of the country's 16,000 to 17,000 hamlets by 1963

Timeframe: 1961-1963

Initiator: Diem, Nhu, and the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets (IMCSH)

US Proponents: USOM (USAID, CIA and USIS)

Supporters: Technical assistance and program evaluation - British Advisory Commission headed by Sir Robert Thompson

Results:

- In practice, the Strategic Hamlets became instruments of control rather than of pacification.
- The peasants resented having to leave their homes and being herded into fortified stockades which the GVN forced them to build without compensation.
- In keeping with Diem's view towards self-sufficiency and "personalism", peasants were pushed to concentrate on self-improvement and self-help, and were denied social services and economic aid to improve village life.
- In 1963 Diem was overthrown in a military coup and the Strategic Hamlet Program came to a complete stop.

Remarks:

- The program had little strategic direction; Strategic Hamlets were created haphazardly and not linked together to reduce vulnerability to VC attack:
  - Military operations, particularly in the Delta, were not designed to support the advance of the program.
  - No real effort was made to separate the people in the Strategic Hamlets from the Viet Cong living in the hamlets.
  - Very little effort was made to impose controls on the movement of the Viet Cong and their supplies in and around the Strategic Hamlets.
  - Critical lack of a well-integrated plan utilizing the principle of building outward gradually from areas of strength. Instead hamlets were grouped together whenever province chiefs or local military commanders saw fit regardless of local security considerations. As a result, large gaps were left around areas of Strategic Hamlet development and the VC were allowed room to maneuver.

Figure 5-6. The Strategic Hamlet Program

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defense through crude fortifications and to organize the populace in order to improve their military capability and political cohesiveness. The social and economic needs of the rural people played second fiddle to the GVN's drive to transform the villages and hamlets into antiguerrilla bastions.

Nhu set up an Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets (IMCSH) to oversee the program. High goals were established: he announced that by 1963 some 11,000 of the country's 16,000 to 17,000 hamlets would be fortified.<sup>40/</sup> By fortifying existing hamlets, a continuous front line of interdependent combat villages was to be established. With each village and hamlet fortified, armed and trained to fight by employing "people's guerrilla tactics", the VC would find it difficult to select a point of weakness, meeting strong resistance everywhere.

General Tran Dinh Tho in his recent monograph on pacification had the following to say about the genesis of the Strategic Hamlet Program:

This concept [Strategic Hamlets] was an amalgamation of ideas derived from Vietnamese self-defense villages, British anti-Communist tactics successfully used in Malaya, and the Israeli Kibbutz defense system.<sup>41/</sup>

The Ngo brothers looked to Sir Robert Thompson and his British advisory mission (a small group of experts with previous experience in the Malayan counterinsurgency) for technical assistance and program evaluation.<sup>42/</sup> Meanwhile, large-scale US support for the Strategic Hamlet Program was not immediately forthcoming. Tran Dinh Tho claims the program was funded partly by the GVN's national budget and partly by the US Military Assistance Program <sup>43/</sup> Other sources have observed that American support came primarily from the CIA.<sup>44/</sup> As Blaufarb noted, we can be safe in assuming that, "...the CIA undertook to support these [Strategic Hamlet] efforts."<sup>45/</sup>

### a. US Participation

Looking back to the early sixties, it can be seen that although the pattern of VC insurgency against the Diem government seemed familiar, following the Viet Minh, Malayan and Philippine insurgencies, the

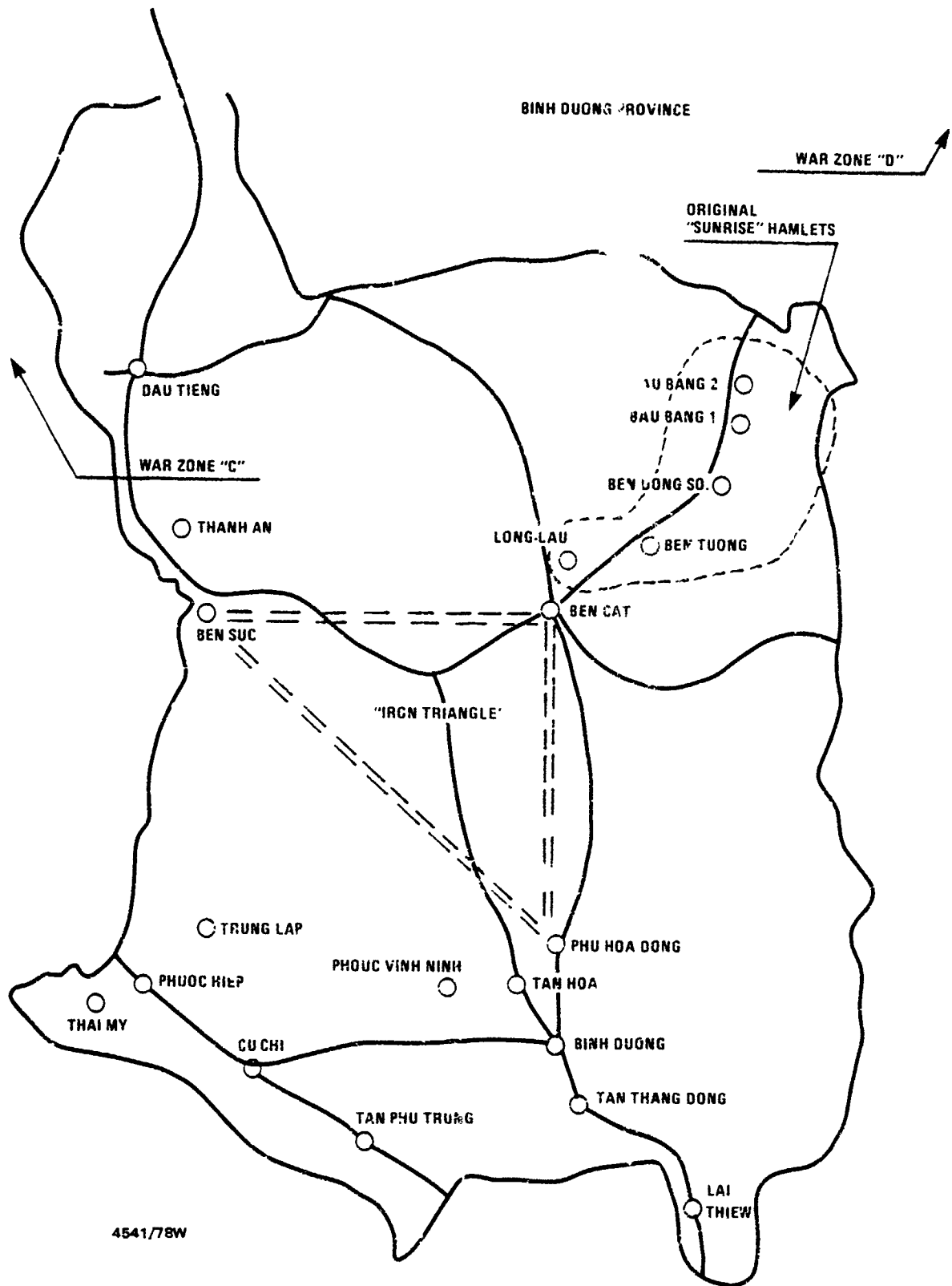
US did not at first have a ready response to the conflict or to rural pacification. Until President Kennedy approved the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) for Vietnam in 1961, the gap had been filled largely by a military response such as military civic action and improved propaganda and concentrated upon measures to transform the RVNAF into an effective military apparatus, mobile and professionally managed, able to concentrate its forces effectively when required to strike a massive blow. It was believed that such a conventional force, properly supported by a competent intelligence effort, could easily meet and defeat the poorly armed insurgents as "a lesser included capability" of its newfound proficiency.<sup>46/</sup> The CIP was one of the early expedient measures taken; another was the Geographically Phased National Plan, a plan designed to clear priority target areas in phases, with the end result being a secure region to turn over to loyal inhabitants.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Volume II of this study, the CIP encompassed a good deal more than military matters. For example, it called for President Diem to reorganize his government for greater efficiency, broaden its base, and eliminate corruption. The US failed to apply leverage on the Ngo regime and ultimately abandoned the conditions in order "to get on with the war."<sup>47/</sup>

As it turns out, neither the CIP nor the Geographically Phased Plan was ever fully implemented. Diem made some conciliatory gestures, then he went about doing things as he wished -- US counterinsurgency strategy was not accepted; nevertheless, additional US aid continued unabated. Experts conclude that Diem's solution to the insurgency problem at that time was to focus not upon the military aspect but upon the village and hamlet population, with the purpose being to "dry up the sea of friendly peasantry in which swam the VC 'fish'" <sup>48/</sup>

In 1962, the GVN launched "Operation Sunrise," which was the first large scale resettlement combining GVN and US inputs under the Strategic Hamlet Program. Operation Sunrise (see Figure 5-7 for a portrayal of the region) focused on a cluster of villages in Binh Duong province, a heavily infested area northeast of Saigon that had strategic significance

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SOURCE: Adapted from DoD US/VN Relations, Book 3 of 12, IV.B.2., p. 23.

Figure 5-7. Operation "Sunrise"

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and was a major hub in the VC's lines of communications. It was targeted on a cluster of hamlets located along the road which connected the VC strongholds known as the "Iron Triangle" and "War Zone D", and adjacent to "War Zone C." The area, selected by Nhu, was accepted reluctantly by the US as a means to provide a test of the new concept and because the US wanted to encourage Vietnamese initiative in pacification.<sup>49/</sup> One observer provided the following sage assessment of the operation:

The five hamlets moved and rebuilt in Operation Sunrise turned out to have few able-bodied male inhabitants; they were all with the VC. The people were sullen and uncooperative, and most had to be moved forcibly while their homes and belongings were deliberately burned. It was highly inauspicious and not, in fact, typical of the program. But first impressions are lasting ones. The U.S. press found the spectacle repellant and said so; it questioned whether a movement to "win the people" could succeed on such a foundation.<sup>50/</sup>

Counselor Nhu traveled extensively, seeking to publicize and to energize the Strategic Hamlet Program. Over and over he stressed a theme of "self-sufficiency", the necessity for Vietnam and the Vietnamese to rely largely on their own efforts and resources.<sup>51/</sup> The US on the other hand, saw the host government's role in the process to be key to the program's success and responded by increasing the size and magnitude of US aid. In order to meet perceived needs, a US-GVN committee structure was created. Rehabilitation Committees were formed in each province with the province chief as chairman and the US military sector adviser as a key member. A USOM-appointed AID provincial representative took his place on the province committee, and an assistant director for rural affairs provided a US embassy overview of the program. Soon thereafter, CIA and USIS had representatives assigned to the provinces working with the local committee members. The US ambassador, Frederick Nolting, appointed his deputy chief of mission to Nhu's committee for Strategic Hamlets to enhance cooperation and coordination at the national level.



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### b. Program Results--Another Failure

Nhu drove the hamlet program along at a frantic pace. Province chiefs were ordered to establish a certain number of hamlets by a given date. The GVN used "statistical illusion" to make the program appear to be a surging success.<sup>52/</sup> (See Figure 5-8 for a graphic picture of that growth.) Subsequent events gave lie to early GVN claims of success.

Notwithstanding the skepticism on the part of some US officials, several observers <sup>53/</sup> expressed belief that sufficient data had been developed by early 1963 to confirm some progress. Furthermore, both GVN and US officials began expressing confidence in those efforts and hopes that the right pacification program had been undertaken.

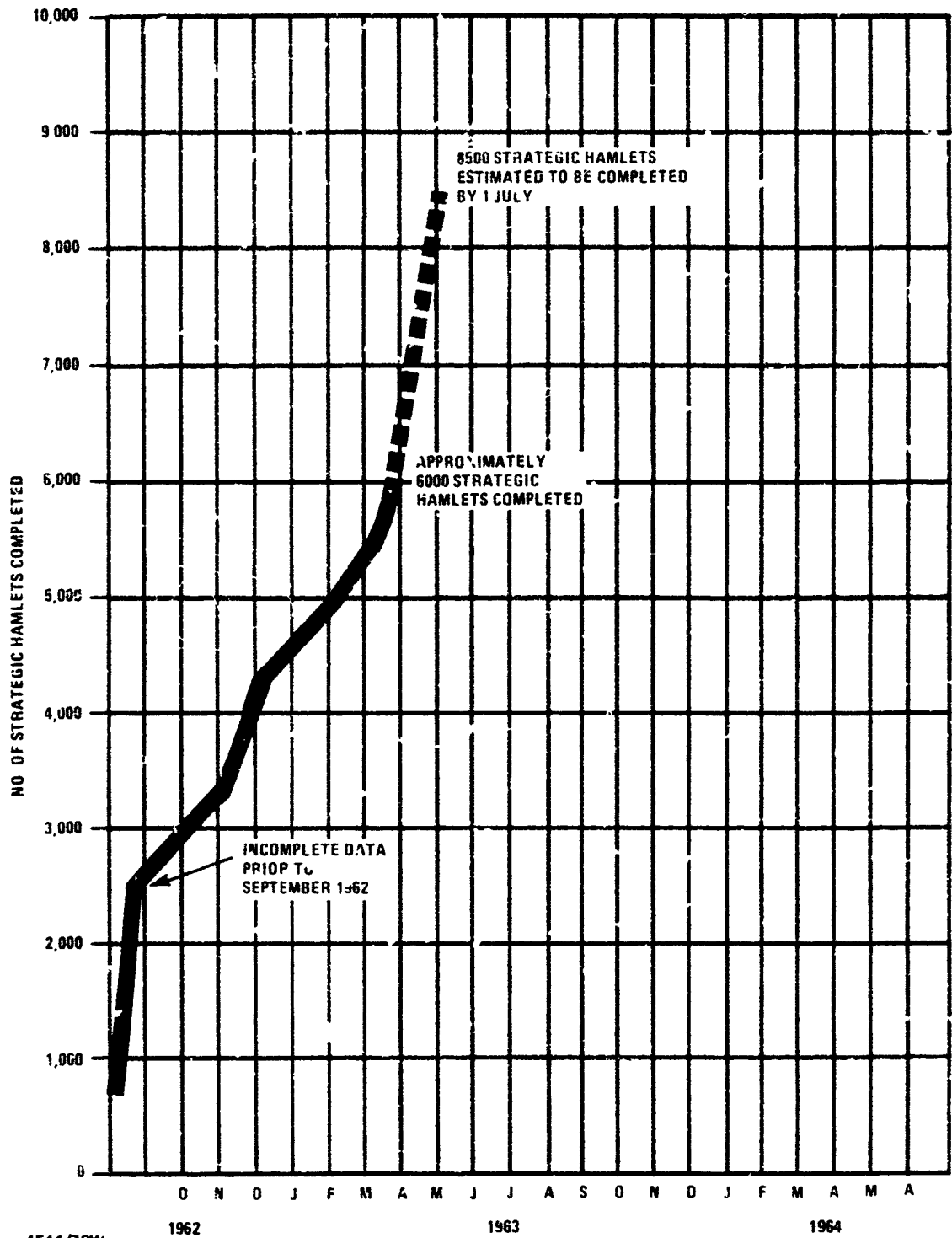
Sir Robert Thompson pointed to the following weaknesses in the GVN's implementation of the Strategic Hamlet Program:

- It had no strategic direction; Strategic Hamlets had been created haphazardly and not linked together to reduce vulnerability to VC attack.
- Military operations, particularly in the Delta, were not designed to support the advance of the program.
- No real effort was made to separate the people in the Strategic Hamlets from the Viet Cong living in the hamlets.
- Very little effort was made to impose controls on the movement of the Viet Cong and their supplies within the vicinity of and in the Strategic Hamlets.<sup>54/</sup>

In Thompson's view, the GVN had failed to achieve the three objectives they had set for the Strategic Hamlet Program, i.e., of protecting, uniting and involving the people, with the ultimate aim of isolating the guerrilla units from the population.<sup>55/</sup>

Others <sup>56/</sup> opined that the GVN's Strategic Hamlet Program had encountered opposition from the peasants it was designed to help and protect because the Vietnamese and US administrative and support structure could not keep up with their needs. Compounding these failures of program administration was the even more critical lack of a well-integrated plan utilizing the principle of building outward gradually from areas of

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SOURCE: DoD, US/VN Relations, Book 3 of 12.  
IV. B.2., p.31.

Figure 5-8. Strategic Hamlet Growth South Vietnam (1962-1963)

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strength. Instead, hamlets were grouped together wherever province chiefs or local military commanders saw fit, regardless of local security considerations.<sup>57/</sup> As a result, large gaps were left around areas of Strategic Hamlet development and the VC were allowed room to maneuver.

In practice, the Strategic Hamlets became instruments of control rather than of pacification. The peasants resented having to leave their homes (e.g., peasants in the delta where villages had been strung out along canals found themselves moved into a central, defensible point, removed from their fields and faced with the problem of trying to build and plant above the flood plain) and being herded into fortified stockades which the GVN forced them to build without compensation.<sup>58/</sup> In keeping with Diem's view towards self-sufficiency and "personalism,"<sup>59/</sup> peasants were pushed to concentrate on self-improvement and self-help, and were denied social services and economic aid to improve village life. Support of the government was seen as a duty.<sup>60/</sup>

Several authors <sup>61/</sup> point to coercive methods employed by the GVN to make peasants move into Strategic Hamlets. For example, areas which could not be penetrated by government forces were declared to be "open zones" and communities within them were randomly bombarded by friendly artillery and aircraft in order to force the inhabitants to the safety of nearby Strategic Hamlets. The thousands of refugees created by such actions were welcomed by Diem as a show of political support for his government--the people were said to be voting for him with their feet. The net effect of this type of coercion was to alienate further the rural population and drive a wedge between them and their government.

In 1963, political upheavals slowed progress of the program. Diem, who had held off numerous abortive military coups during his nine-year reign, finally succumbed to his plotting generals. The successful coup was followed by a period of political and military turmoil and instability. As a consequence, the Strategic Hamlet Program came to a complete

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stop. Tran Dinh Tho recalls the impact of the coup on the program and on the people involved:

Those cadre who had managed and directed the program were either arrested or removed for having been part of the old regime. The few cadre who remained free disassociated themselves from the program. Soon after the military junta took over, its president officially announced the abolition of the Strategic Hamlet Program in a proclamation that was widely acclaimed by the public and secretly enjoyed by the enemy. In some localities, the gains achieved through two years of hard toil disintegrated almost overnight. The Military Revolutionary Council had acted out of political necessity but had not foreseen the detrimental consequences.62/

### 5. The Civilians' Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) Experiment

In the early sixties, William Colby and his CIA colleagues came up with the idea of arming the Rhade tribe of Montagnards in the Central Highlands to counter the growing VC strength in the area.63/ Up to that time, the GVN had made few attempts to gain the support of the Montagnard people; indeed they had actually antagonized them.64/ In 1958, there had been a movement among them advocating autonomy. The GVN, seeking their assimilation, responded to the somewhat passive movement by confiscating the tribesmen's crossbows and spears, further alienating the hillpeople. The VC, on the other hand, were actively promising tribal autonomy.

Counselor Nhu saw the CIDG program as a means of building a political base for his brother's government, which is what its originators set as their goal. Coincidentally, the project was designed to get the tribespeople to participate in their own self-defense as well as social and economic improvement.65/

The experiment began in the small Montagnard community of Buon Eno outside Ban Me Thuot in December 1961. It was undertaken in collaboration with the RVNAF's Special Forces and in coordination with local civil authorities. Though US participation was principally under CIA direction, the US Army Special Forces provided a military presence as well as tactical and small unit training. The GVN, with considerable US AID

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support, provided medical, educational and developmental supplies and training.

The project was given the name, Citizens' Irregular Defense Groups (later Citizens' was changed to Civilians'), to mark it clearly as a civilian operation and not a military one and irregular because it was to meet the need of various different communities.

During the first year, the CIA's experiment proved to be successful and its spread throughout the highlands was rapid. By December 1962, about 38,000 tribesmen were armed and over 200 villages, involving a population of 300,000, were incorporated into the overall scheme.<sup>66/</sup> Armed Montagnards found their defenses to be effective when backed up by a responsive strike force consisting of a few hundred men available from surrounding villages whose assignment was to come to the aid of a community that was attacked by insurgents.

The presence of Americans was an important factor in the early success of the CIDG program, mainly because the tribesmen had an abiding suspicion of all Vietnamese, both North and South. The feeling was mutual, and after more than a year of successes, Nhu decided that the program threatened GVN control of the tribal areas. He therefore directed the systematic disarming of many of the purely village defense units, <sup>67/</sup> and sought their integration into the Strategic Hamlet Program. At about the same time, a change also occurred on the US side of the CIDG program. The CIA transferred its responsibility for program oversight to the Army's Special Forces.<sup>68/</sup> Thereafter, the CIDG were no longer considered to be hamlet militia. They were formed into military units, usually company-sized, under command of Vietnamese Special Forces officers, and were given improved training, weapons and uniforms. Throughout this period there was a reluctance on the part of the CIDG strike force troops to be integrated into conventional Vietnamese units and the GVN, for its part, was not prepared to take over the ongoing village development projects.<sup>69/</sup>

In July 1963, there was a shift in the priority of the CIDG effort as their villages were assimilated into the Strategic Hamlet Program. The mission of the tribal strike forces was changed from local

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security and village defense to border surveillance and border site security.

### 6. The Territorial Forces -- Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps

As discussed in Volume II, Chapter 5, the early force structure of the RVNAF was organized into two principal components: the regular forces and the territorial forces. Regular forces consisted of infantry, airborne, marines, rangers, etc., which for the most part were conventionally organized into divisions with organic support elements similar to US counterparts, and whose primary mission was to destroy the enemy through combat operations and to defend the national borders. The territorial forces, on the other hand, were made up of Civil Guard (CG) and Self-Defense Corps (SDC) elements, which eventually were designated to be the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF), respectively. Their organization was local, being kept mostly at small unit size (platoon and company), lightly equipped and tasked for pacification and territorial security.70/

The territorial forces, whose employment figured into the CIP of 1961, were placed under the direct control of sector and subsector commanders to assure local security. The Civil Guard (became Regional Forces in 1964) was basically organized into rifle companies augmented as required by a number of river boat companies, mechanized platoons, heavy-weapons platoons, reconnaissance units, administration and logistics support companies and elements of command and control. Although normally involved in company-size operations, they were capable of conducting multi-company operations. The Self-Defense Corps (became the Popular Forces in 1964), were basically platoon-size units and were conceived for combat in defense of villages and hamlets. These forces were essentially infantry; their equipment and mode of subsistence were more austere than those of the Civil Guard.

Operational rules were established: the Civil Guard (or Regional Forces) served the province and the Self-Defense Corps (or Popular Forces), the district, but their goals remained about the same -- to conduct operation against local enemy forces.71/

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A former Vietnamese Corps and Military Region Commander had the following to say about the territorial forces of this period:

From their inception to 1960, both the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps were neither adequately equipped nor organized and controlled to accomplish their missions in a satisfactory manner. This derived in good part from the lack of U.S. support. South Vietnamese and U.S. viewpoints differed greatly as to the role and significance assigned to these forces. It was South Vietnam's desire to turn the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps into strong territorial forces capable of assisting the regular ARVN in defense missions. Therefore, the Civil Guard in particular should be organized into battalions and regimental-size units, sufficiently equipped and armed to defeat enemy local forces. The U.S. saw it differently, however. As expressed through the Civil Guard training program developed by the Michigan State University (MSU) group, the U.S. considered the CG nothing more than a rural police force and neither the CG nor the SDC was supported by the Military Assistance Program (MAP).72/

As VC activity increased in 1960, the USOM expended significant efforts to develop and increase the combat effectiveness of the territorial forces. To facilitate support, Diem placed the Civil Guard and the Self-Defense Corps under the Ministry of Defense. That act allowed the MAAG to provide advisers to work directly with the Civil Guard Directorate in matters involving training and equipment.73/ In a further refinement, the GVN merged the Self-Defense Corps Directorate with the Civil Guard's command structure and disbanded the SDC's provincial and district officers, placing their control under a combined direction. This integration of territorial forces significantly improved their unity of command.

Notwithstanding the new arrangement under the Ministry of Defense and improved access to US military assistance, the CG and SDC remained the "step children" of the growing RVNAF family until their total integration with the armed forces in 1964.74/ Before integration, the CG and SDC forces received no support from the RVNAF although they performed increasingly difficult missions combating the VC and suffered the same hardship

and dangers as regular ARVN troops. As a result, they fared very poorly by comparison, especially in the areas of training and logistic support, and in command and leadership.<sup>75/</sup>

7. Early Program Results and Impact on The War Effort

The US tended to view the early military and political successes of Ngo Dinh Diem's government with satisfaction, and to regard thereafter South Vietnam's internal security with growing complacency. Diem and his brother Nhu were not so complacent. On the contrary, they were very conscious of the threat posed by the former Viet Minh guerrillas (more dangerous than the Cao Dai and Binh Xuyen sects), not only because they were politically more persuasive, and had taught a generation of Vietnamese peasants the techniques of armed conspiracy, but also because their tenets offered competing solutions to the most pressing problems of the Vietnamese people -- land and livelihood.<sup>76/</sup> The Ngo brother's approach as a broad concept is hard to fault: The RVNAF were to reclaim regions of the countryside formerly held by the Viet Minh; political indoctrination teams moving with the troops would carry the message of Diem's revolution to the people; and then a broad follow-up program of Civic Action -- political and social development, land reform and agricultural improvements--would be inaugurated to meet the aspirations of the people.<sup>77/</sup> That these plans miscarried, as well as the subsequent agglomeration camps, Agrovilles and Strategic Hamlet Programs, was due in part to the following:

- Resistance on the part of the rural population and farmers, reacting sometimes under VC pressure and sometimes simply out of peasant conservatism (people in the Mekong Delta Region--40% of the total population -- have traditionally resisted central authority).
- Inept, overbearing or corrupt GVN officials.
- Diem's (and his brother's) unremitting anticommunist zeal, and the failure of both Diem and his US advisers to appreciate the magnitude of the tasks they set for themselves or the time required to create meaningful reform.



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- Programs moved much too quickly under the personal control of counselor Nhu, resulting in gross failures of implementation.
- Ambiguities in assessment of the programs were created by the gross inadequacies in their implementation.
- Vietnamese administrative support structure could not keep up with the needs of the programs.
- Well-integrated plans following the principle of building outward gradually from areas of strength were never developed.
- A failure on the part of the GVN to provide the people with a viable political alternative to communism.

One notable expert also correctly faults the US civilian and military organizations in Vietnam for failing to have a common approach toward defeating the insurgents and pacifying the countryside.

More serious at this time -- and for future years as well -- was the lack of common approach and direction between American civilian and military organizations in Vietnam. The civilian side was committed to a concept of counterinsurgency which focused on the population as the heart of the matter. Necessarily, this meant that priority would go to the shaping of favorable attitudes to be accomplished first by providing security, followed up by improved and responsive government services, until finally the people were committed and fully engaged in their own defense. The military, despite concessions - no doubt sincere - to the importance of winning the population, was quite unshakably wedded to the idea that priority must go to destroying the enemy's armed force, and doing it by the familiar means of concentrating manpower and firepower at the right time and place. 78/

Hence, from the USOM/MAAG point of view, there were two programs instead of one for defeating the insurgency -- the pacification program (i.e., civic action, Agrovilles and Strategic Hamlets) on the one hand, and the military effort to seek out and destroy the VC forces on the other. The net effect of the military effort was a gradual expansion of military firepower and available air power in ways hardly suited to the nature of the war being fought. Bombing and artillery barrages became standard

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preliminaries to large-scale operations by the ARVN supported by US helicopters; inevitably they alerted the enemy, who usually slipped away in ample time. Furthermore, the bombing and the increased artillery barrages resulted in the destruction of property and the death and injury of the very civilian population whose loyalty was being sought as a key to victory.79/

Among the results from this lack of unified US direction was the loss of capability to correct the disarray on the GVN's side where the burdens were heavier and the negative effects more serious. Although Counselor Nhu demonstrated substantial control over the governmental apparatus in the countryside, he was not able to exert extensive influence over the military commanders in the field. In fact, Palace influence on the military command structure was all in the direction of caution to avoid the political costs of taking heavy casualties or of establishing essentially meaningless military outposts. But Nhu apparently believed that the Strategic Hamlet Program was adequate to defeat the VC insurgency with little effective support from the RVNAF.80/

Several observers 81/ agreed that the Strategic Hamlet Program was beginning to show favorable results in 1962, and the improved outlook on the military side resulted in the JCS developing a plan to reduce the American military presence starting in 1963.82/ Official optimism was rewarded with public controversy over the performance of the ARVN, notably after the battle of Ap Bac in early 1963, when heavily armed ARVN units cornered a large VC force only to have them escape after failing to move in aggressively and suffering heavy casualties in the process. American reporters covering the war from Vietnam began to direct strong criticism at Diem's regime, his "ruthless" brother and his beguiling sister-in-law, Madame Nhu. Despite official claims of confidence in the continued progress of the GVN and its Strategic Hamlet Program, divisions in opinion began to spring up within the US mission in Vietnam. The head of the USOM's Rural Affairs Division made a personal report to President Kennedy in September 1963, stating that "the Delta was falling under Viet Cong control in areas where pacification was supposedly complete."83/

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Pacification difficulties were soon dwarfed by the political chaos and coup plotting in Saigon, the overthrow and execution of the Ngo brothers by the generals, and the collapse of the war effort.

### D. FOLLOW-ON PACIFICATION: THE US SEARCH FOR A NEW STRATEGY (1964-1967)

Starting with the crippling Buddhist revolt, the GVN's political decline veered sharply downward with the murder of President Diem and his brother Nhu in November 1963. For the next two-plus years there was a crescendo of political instability, illegitimacy, uncertainty and chaos from the top levels on down to the villages and hamlets. Pacification programs which had been moribund since mid-1963 all but disappeared.

If Diem had a narrow and shaky political base, those who followed him in rapid succession had to govern while trying to achieve balance on a knife's edge; they couldn't trust even their fellow generals/ plotters! Coups, attempted coups, counter coups and the like followed each other in alarming succession. Institutions of government began to deteriorate. Police and intelligence forces scattered. No government leader could claim legitimacy or rule the country other than by military decree. The GVN leadership had little time for running the government or fighting the war. Political witch-hunts racked the ministries. The countryside was almost devoid of governmental control, and the VC at once moved to fill this void with its own apparatus.

In the face of the deteriorating situation, the ineffective GVN found itself faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, there was no way to reinstate the Strategic Hamlet Program since it had been linked with the Ngo regime and officially abolished. On the other hand, the GVN could not give the VC free reign over the countryside. As a solution and after much US prodding a new pacification effort was launched, the "New Life Hamlet" program.<sup>84/</sup>

#### 1. New Life Hamlets and the Hop Tac Effort -- The US Takes Charge

The first post-Diem pacification effort began in the Mekong Delta in January 1964. Old Strategic Hamlets were renamed New Life Hamlets (Ap

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Tin Sinn) (see Figure 5-9.) Forced resettlement was prohibited.<sup>85/</sup> There were not enough resources to commit to the program, and the new cadre were reluctant to implement it forcefully for fear of being identified with the old regime. Furthermore, the leadership gave it no clear-cut direction and the organizations that were to operate the program were plagued by ineffective and incompetent administrators. Province chiefs were changed with such frequency that few knew exactly what to do or how to do it.<sup>86/</sup> A senior US province adviser was quoted as saying:

USOM experts stood helplessly by as urgently needed programs awaited approval and implementation by the stymied Vietnamese officials. Thousands of tons of barbed wire and pickets, commodities and building materials were sent to the province, but awaited approvals for distribution.<sup>87/</sup>

Although pacification received low emphasis by the GVN following the Diem overthrow, it was taking on greater significance with the key members of the US Country Team in Vietnam. Proponents were often in disagreement on what pacification meant and how to go about achieving it. They often quarrelled amongst themselves (often publicly) and sometimes overlooked their common interests.<sup>88/</sup>

There was one notable exception to the pacification lull during the troubled 1964-1965 timeframe: the Hop Tac (Cooperation) Program (see Figure 5-10). An outgrowth of alarming progress being made by the VC around the capital, it was designed to put "whatever resources are required" into the area surrounding Saigon to pacify it. The concept had been suggested by Ambassador Lodge at a high level strategy session in Honolulu in July of 1964, as he was on his way home after his first assignment as ambassador.<sup>89/</sup> General Westmoreland and the new Ambassador, Maxwell Taylor, proceeded with its planning and implementation on a priority basis.

The US-inspired program was based on "clear and hold" military operations <sup>90/</sup> followed by civilian pacification efforts; a giant security "oil spot" was to spread out from Saigon toward the Cambodian border and the South China Sea.<sup>91/</sup>

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<u>Program Title:</u> New Life Hamlets	
<u>Objectives:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Establishment of a village defense system for the entire country similar to the Strategic Hamlet program</li><li>● No forced resettlement</li></ul>	
<u>Timeframe:</u>	Early 1964
<u>Initiator:</u>	GVN
<u>U.S. Proponent:</u>	USOM assistance and experts available but not utilized because of GVN inability to approve and implement necessary programs.
<u>Result and Remarks:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pacification received low emphasis by the GVN following the Diem overthrow.</li><li>● There were not enough resources to commit to the program.</li><li>● New cadre were reluctant to implement the program forcefully for fear of being identified with the old regime.</li><li>● Leadership gave no clear-cut direction and the organizations that were to operate the program were plagued by ineffective and incompetent administrators.</li><li>● Province chiefs were changed with such frequency that few knew exactly what to do or how to do it.</li></ul>	

Figure 5-9. The New Life Hamlet Program

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Program Title: Hop Tac (Cooperation)

Objectives:

- Pacify area surrounding Saigon using whatever resources are necessary
- Develop a giant security "oil spot" spreading out from Saigon toward the Cambodian border and the South China Sea
- Tie together the pacification plans of a seven-province area into an overall plan wherein each province subordinated its own priorities to the concept of building a giant oil spot around Saigon.

Timeframe: August 1964 - 1966

Initiators: Ambassador Maxwell Taylor and General Westmoreland

US Proponent: US Team Chief

GVN Proponent: ARVN Hop Tac Staff

Results:

- In the first operation, a sweep in the VC-controlled pineapple groves immediately to the west and southwest of Saigon, the lead ARVN unit broke off contact and turned back towards Saigon.
- After the initial operation, Hop Tac was a constant source of dispute within USOM. Deadlines slipped continually; phase lines were readjusted; the official count of hamlets considered to be pacified climbed steadily.

Remarks: Hop Tac never achieved its goals. Its failure was derived from the following:

- Hop Tac received only token endorsement from the Vietnamese, to whom it seemed pointless and purely an American exercise.
- The ARVN Hop Tac Staff was a powerless office created merely to satisfy the US.
- The RVNAF units in Saigon had the priority mission of guarding against a coup attempt and nothing was accomplished to make Hop Tac a viable program.

Figure 5-10. The Hop Tac Program

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General Westmoreland, at the direction of Ambassador Taylor, began Hop Tac. He set up a new and additional headquarters in Saigon which was supposed to tie together the overlapping and quarrelsome commands in the Saigon area.<sup>92/</sup> The Vietnamese set up a parallel counterpart organization, although critics of Hop Tac were quick to point out that the Vietnamese Hop Tac headquarters had virtually no authority or influence, and seemed primarily designed to satisfy the Americans. As one source put it, "Hop Tac is the Vietnamese word for 'cooperation', which turned out to be just what Hop Tac lacked."<sup>93/</sup>

The US initiative had a feature previously missing from GVN pacification efforts: it sought to tie together the pacification plans of a seven-province area (which ringed the city of Saigon like a doughnut), into a overall plan wherein each province subordinated its own priorities to the concept of building a giant oil spot around Saigon.

In a phrase which eventually became a joke in the USOM, the US Army Colonel who headed the Hop Tac secretariat, during a high level briefing, spoke of creating "rings of steel" <sup>94/</sup> which would grow outward (in four separate rings) from Saigon until the area from the Cambodian border to the South China Sea was secure. Each ring (or circle) was to be pacified in four months, according to the original plan, which never really had a chance of success.

Authorized in mid-August 1964, the program was launched one month later. The US Team Chief, under great pressure to get on with the pacification, ordered a plan to be produced, got his Vietnamese counterparts to translate it and then issued it. The first operation was to be a sweep into the VC-controlled pineapple groves immediately to the west and southwest of Saigon -- the VC base nearest the city, which had not been entered by RVNAF since the last outpost had been abandoned in 1960. On the second day of the operation, the lead unit (the 51st ARVN Regiment) ran into an enemy minefield and suffered numerous casualties. Instead of continuing the action, the 51st broke off contact and turned back towards Saigon. When located by their US advisers they were found to be participating in an abortive coup attempt.<sup>95/</sup>

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After that initial operation, Hop Tac was a constant source of dispute within the USOM. Deadlines slipped continually; phase lines were readjusted; the official count of hamlets considered to be pacified climbed steadily. However, a special study of the whole area made in October 1964, by members of the Country Team concluded: "Generally speaking, Hop Tac, as a program, does not appear to exist as a unified and meaningful operation."96/

Hop Tac never achieved its goals and was eventually submerged into a new nationwide plan developed in 1966. Its failure was derived from the following:

- Hop Tac received only token endorsement from the Vietnamese, to whom it seemed pointless and purely an American exercise to which they needed pay only lip service. Put simply, in the eyes of the Vietnamese, hop Tac was "the plan of the Americans."
- The ARVN Hop Tac staff was a powerless office created merely to satisfy the US.
- The RVNAF units in Saigon had the priority mission of guarding against a coup attempt and nothing was permitted to interfere with that overriding task.97/

General Westmoreland argued that Hop Tac had achieved limited success, in that VC incidents in and around Saigon had decreased. He did, however, recognize that the program was in trouble and summed up Hop Tac problems in two words: "political instability."98/

Coincident with preparations for Hop Tac, the GVN, under the leadership of General Khanh, proposed a countrywide pacification plan called the Chien Thang (Victory) Plan. (see figure 5-11.) The core of the plan was supposed to be the New Life Hamlets. As it developed, the scheme was a cross between the "measles" and the "oil spot" approaches, with new emphasis on economic development.99/ Chien Thang started slowly in 1964, however, and as instability in the central government began to mount its execution quickly broke down.

After New Life Hamlets, Hop Tac and Chien Thang Programs had failed, Pacification was renamed Rural Construction.



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Program Title: Chien Thang (Victory)

Objectives:

- Countrywide pacification emphasizing economic development
- New Life Hamlets to be the core of the plan

Timeframe: 1964-1966

Initiator: GVN under General Khanh

Results:

- The scheme was a cross between the "measles" and the "oil spot" approaches.

Remarks:

- Chien Thang started slowly in 1964, and as instability in the central government began to mount its execution quickly broke down.

Figure 5-11. The Chien Thang Program

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### 2. Rural Construction: A Push for a Social Revolution (See Figure 5-12)

The 1965-1966 timeframe saw more political instability in Saigon and a sharp increase in US involvement in the war. In February 1965, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air attacks against North Vietnam; sustained bombing operations began one month later. US Marines landed at Da Nang in March and by June 1965, both the marines and troops of the 173rd Airborne Brigade had begun offensive combat operations in the vicinity of Da Nang and Bien Hoa respectively. The US troop buildup was underway.

It was not until the "Young Turk" generals (led by Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu) had taken over Saigon, that the US was able to get the GVN to focus again on pacification planning. President Johnson reappointed Ambassador Lodge to the Saigon post with orders to press the new GVN leaders for a "social revolution" of the countryside. In addition, a handpicked group of about ten experienced countersubversion/counterterrorism personnel, under the direction of counterinsurgency expert General Edward Lansdale, were sent to RVN to provide Lodge with a special operating staff in the field of political action both at the central government level and in connection with rural programs.

Lodge appointed Lansdale to be the Chairman of the US Mission Liaison Group to the newly-created Vietnamese governmental body having responsibility for "rural construction". Lodge saw pacification as the GVN's most important single responsibility.<sup>100/</sup> He sought to use the growing US military presence as a means for pacifying the countryside and in the process making the ARVN into a vital and active force in the Vietnamese society. Lodge's formula for a successful outcome of Rural Construction was based on the absolute necessity of controlling the villages -- first seek destruction of enemy mainforce elements and then pacify.

While Lodge and Lansdale pressed the "Young Turks" to make reforms, the allied military build-up continued. The III MAF and ARVN units took control of the combat effort from the Da Nang area up to the Demilitarized Zone. US Army units moved into the II and III Corps Tactical Zones. Free world allies -- South Korean, Philippine, Australian and Thai forces -- began to share their burden in the conflict. Each member nation

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Program Title: Rural Construction

Objectives:

- Control of the villages by:
  - destruction of enemy main force elements by US forces
  - pacification efforts locally by the RVNAF
- Provision of continuous local security
- Restoration of effective, responsible local government
- Improvement of local living conditions

Timeframe: 1965 - 1966

Initiator: GVN

US Proponent:

Ambassador Lodge, General Edward Lansdale, and MACV.

GVN Proponent:

"Young Turk" Generals: Nguyen Cao Ky, and Nguyen Van Thieu.

Other Supporters:

Free World Allies (FWMAF)--South Korea, Philippines, Australia, and Thailand.

Results:

- The III MAF and ARVN units took control of the combat effort from the Da Nang area to the Demilitarized Zone and discovered that the toughest war was in the villages. The Marines virtually reversed their efforts against the VC/PAVN enemy, and concentrated on pacifying the villages within their Tactical Area of Responsibility.
- US Army units moved aggressively into II and III Corps Tactical Zones.
- Political turbulence and military deterioration continued throughout 1965 and into 1966, and most of the modest resources that were allocated by the GVN for its Rural Construction effort were diverted back to meet conventional combat requirements.

Remarks:

- Each member nation of the FWMAF had a different approach to pacification within its Tactical Areas of Responsibility, which highlighted why the US and GVN were having difficulties with their pacification efforts.
- Rural construction ran into difficulties because of a confused and fragmented chain of command, a lack of skilled cadre, the inability to recruit local RF and PF, and local political party opposition.

Figure 5-12. The Rural Construction Program

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of the Free World Forces had a different approach to pacification within its Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAOR), which highlighted why the US and GVN were having difficulties with their pacification efforts. 101/

Meanwhile, much to their amazement, the III MAF Marines discovered that the toughest war was in the villages near and in the vicinity of the Da Nang Air Base, rather than the war against PAVN Main Force elements, which had retreated to the hills to regroup, rearm and build up. Within the first year of operations, the Marines virtually reversed their emphasis, turning away from the VC/PAVN enemy to the grueling and painfully slow effort of pacifying the villages within their TAOR. Unfortunately, it was a task that the Marine combat units were not manned nor equipped for, and their efforts raised some basic questions about the role of US troops in Vietnam. Nonetheless, the Marines tried valiantly to make their efforts pay off, convince others in the US government of its efficacy, and demonstrate the correctness of their still-unproved strategy. The result was a major commitment to the pacification program by a service of the US Armed Forces and it produced a significant impact on the pacification approach by the other services, particularly the Army.

An embassy report, submitted in April 1965, summed up how involved with local politics the Marines were becoming, though unintentionally, and said:

The plan [pacification of Quang Nam], despite the valiant efforts of the Marines, is in trouble, caused by a confused and fragmented chain of command, a lack of skilled cadre, inability to recruit locally RF and PF--and the open opposition of the VNQDD [Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang, the political party controlling the provinces of Quang Ngai, Quang Nam and Quang [in]. 102/

The requirements for a successful pacification strategy were clear: the provision of continuous local security; the restoration of effective, responsible local government; and, the improvement of local living conditions.

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Political turbulence and military deterioration continued throughout 1965 and into 1966, and most of the modest resources that were allocated by the GVN for its Rural Construction effort were diverted back to meet conventional combat requirements.

The years of chaos following the fall of Diem came to an end in 1966, when General Nguyen Van Thieu emerged as the single most powerful leader in South Vietnam. US and FWMA intervention with combat forces was crucial to saving South Vietnam from collapsing under the communist offensive during the period. In the villages the GVN ordered yet another pacification effort -- this one was called "Revolutionary Development".<sup>103/</sup>

### 3. Revolutionary Development: Emphasis on the Other War (See Figure 5-13)

By the beginning of 1966, the bombing of North Vietnam was in its eleventh month, and US ground combat forces were growing steadily; the Johnson Administration sought to emphasize those American activities which did not directly involve guns and fighting. This emphasis was on what came to be called the "other war" and reached a high point during the Honolulu conference in February 1966. LBJ put it quite simply during the meeting: he wanted "a better military program, a better pacification program that includes everything, and a peace program".<sup>104/</sup> Johnson received the signatures of Generals Thieu and Ky on a pledge to deliver on their share of the reforms. But as one author wrote:

While the American public might have assumed that the Honolulu conference, beyond its exalted language, served as pressure for reform in the GVN, the Vietnamese understood it only as a renewed American commitment to the military regime. If a program exceeds their interest or ability to carry out, they will merely agree to it enthusiastically and then do nothing about it.<sup>105/</sup>

Thieu appointed Brigadier General Nguyen Duc Thang to head the national pacification campaign. With the support of the US Embassy, especially the AID and CIA, Thang began to energize the GVN pacification effort which was based on mutually established National Priority Areas (NPA's).

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<p><u>Program Title:</u> Revolutionary Development</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasis on pacification - the "other war"</li><li>• Raise the percentage of pacified RVN population from 52% to about 66%</li></ul> <p><u>Timeframe:</u> 1966</p> <p><u>Initiators:</u> President Johnson, Generals Thieu and Ky</p> <p><u>US Proponents:</u> US Embassy (AID, CIA, USOM).</p> <p><u>GVN Proponent:</u> Brigadier General Nguyen Duc Thang</p> <p><u>Results:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The GVN pacification effort was based on four mutually established National Priority Areas--Quang Nam Province, Binh Dinh Province, most of the old Hop Tac area and An Giang province.</li></ul> <p><u>Remarks.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased and large-scale US military operations created more and more refugees, and refugee relocation and resettlement caused a drain on GVN assets and resources</li><li>• The Thieu-Ky regime ran into a series of political, military and religious crises in 1966.</li></ul>
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Figure 5-13. The Revolutionary Development Program

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The four NPA's (Quang Nam province in I Corps, Binh Dinh province in II Corps, most of the old Hop Tac area in III Corps and An Giang province in IV Corps) were initially limited to a modest 238,000 people in 192 hamlets who were programmed to be secured and pacified by the end of 1966. An effort was underway to raise the percentage of the RVN's population which was classified as pacified from 52% to about 66%.

Several problems caused the new program to stall, really before it got underway. Increased and large-scale US military operations created more and more refugees, and refugee relocation and resettlement caused a drain on GVN assets and resources. Those problems were compounded when the Thieu-Ky regime ran into a series of political, military and religious crises in 1966, which emanated from Hue and threatened to consume the whole of I Corps. The fledgling government, though weakened, showed remarkable resilience in putting down a Buddhist/student dissident revolt. 106/

#### 4. US Participation: Looking for the Right Organization

The resurgence of pacification during this period was dramatically punctuated by three presidential conferences on the Pacific Islands with leaders of the GVN. After each conference the relative importance of pacification took another leap upward -- both within the US and Vietnamese governments. The USOM was reorganized three times over 15 months and each reorganization was designed primarily to improve the management of the pacification effort and raise its priority within the overall US effort in RVN.

After the Honolulu Conference in February 1966, Deputy Ambassador Porter was given broad new authority to run the civilian agencies of the USOM. After the Manila conference in October 1966, Ambassador Porter was directed to reorganize the components of USIA, CIA and AID internally to create a single Office of Civil Operations (OCO). And after the Guam meeting in March 1967, OCO -- redesignated as CORDS -- was put under the control of General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, who was given a civilian deputy (Ambassador Robert Komer) with the personal rank of Ambassador to assist him.

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### 5. The American Solutions: A Proliferation of Approaches

Throughout the period, several agencies and individuals put forth their own concepts and ideas on how to resolve the pacification problem. For example, General Westmoreland, shortly after assuming command of MACV, proposed to Ambassador Lodge that he be designated as the sole executive in charge of all pacification efforts in Vietnam.<sup>107/</sup> Lodge agreed in concept but delayed giving approval on implementation. When Ambassador Taylor took the reins in Saigon, Westmoreland's concept was again deferred. Taylor, armed with instructions from LBJ giving him full authority over all US activities in RVN, military and civil, ran the Country Team/Mission Council like a mini-NSC.<sup>108/</sup> Ambassador Taylor retained final approval authority for all Mission actions, to include all pacification projects and programs.

In the aftermath of the 1956 Conference at Honolulu, task forces and study groups were suddenly assembling, producing papers on priorities, on organization of the Mission, and on the roles and missions of the various agencies in pacification. They were all the manifestations of the new mood that had come over the Country Team and the Washington bureaucracy on pacification. The advocates of pacification, with their widely differing views, all saw a chance again to put forth their own concepts to a newly interested bureaucracy.<sup>109/</sup>

The most important of the numerous studies were:

- The Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (Short Title: PROVN) -- commissioned by Army Chief of Staff, General Johnson in July 1965, completed and submitted in March 1966.<sup>110/</sup>
- The Priorities Task Force -- formed in Saigon in April 1966 by Deputy Ambassador Porter and completed in July 1966.
- The Inter-Agency "Roles and Missions" Study Group -- also formed by Deputy Ambassador Porter in July 1966 and completed in August of that year.<sup>111/</sup>

Although the recommendations of these studies were not accepted fully by US leadership, they played a key role in the development of



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strategic thinking in Washington and Saigon; and, they laid bare the flaws in the structure of the US Mission to those same senior officials of the government.

One month after the meetings in Honolulu, LBJ appointed Robert Komer as his Special Assistant for Vietnam Pacification Coordination in Washington. Agencies supporting pacification now came under the direct scrutiny of the White House and the long drive to integrate US field programs became a reality.<sup>112/</sup> The basis for a pacification breakthrough was being forged and the "New Model Program" was being launched.

### 6. Program Results and Impact on the War Effort

By autumn of 1966, US forces had taken over most of the main combat effort in the war. Pacification had bogged down as large military actions generated more than half a million new refugees. And, although the GVN had declared earlier that it would give top priority to land reform, the matter received little more than lip service from Ky and Thieu. The GVN had sought to revitalize its "Chieu Hoi" (open arms) defector amnesty program; however, that too met with little success since RVNAF commanders gave it low priority.<sup>113/</sup>

Furthermore, the GVN was encountering difficulty in dealing with the VC's political infrastructure -- those hardcore cadre members who formed the control apparatus in the villages through which the DRV articulated their revolution in the South. As a countermeasure the CIA sought to close the cadre gap between GVN and the communists through training programs patterned after their earlier cadre efforts in Quang Ngai province, where former disciples of Diem were formed into cadre elements, integrated under CIA supervision and renamed "People's Action Teams" (PAT). Early in 1965 there were over 14,000 men in these PAT teams. Soon thereafter, they were turned over to the GVN and renamed "Revolutionary Development" (RD) cadre.<sup>114/</sup> RD training fell under the administration of Nguyen Be, a former Viet Minh officer, who had developed a successful cadre program earlier in Binh Dinh province. The RD cadre ranks increased to over 20,000 men (or about 400 RD teams) in 1966.<sup>115/</sup> This collateral effort showed a modest degree of success as it began to resurrect the status of the village and involve more of the local people in the pacification process.<sup>116/</sup>

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With respect to measuring pacification progress, the GVN and US jointly adopted a reporting system in May 1964, and continued with it until June 1967, when the US Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) became the single, official system.<sup>117/</sup> The joint system attempted to portray military security, with little emphasis on administration control and economic development. Reports on each hamlet in the GVN pacification program were developed by the US District Adviser and the Vietnamese District Chief and sent separately to their respective headquarters at province-level and Saigon. The US adviser was supposed to give an independent assessment, but this was rarely possible because he seldom had a good grasp of his district's history, and he depended almost totally upon Vietnamese interpreters to gather and translate information from the hamlets. The system developed an optimistic bias because reporting tended to concentrate on changes resulting from on-going work and "backsliding" in areas previously pacified probably did not show readily as progress in active areas.<sup>118/</sup>

To summarize, pacification during the period continued to receive a lot of lip service and little else. It amounted to small scale efforts when compared to what was going into the conventional war. In general, the GVN and US military regarded the program as essentially civilian business, which meant that all suffered from a lack of adequate local-security support. For these and other reasons mentioned earlier, pacification remained the small tail on the very large military dog in RVN.

### E. THE NEW MODEL PACIFICATION PROGRAM: CIVIL OPERATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT (1967-1973)

The so-called "new model" pacification program (see Figure 5-14) was launched in May 1967. It sprang forth largely from the efforts of LBJ's Special Assistant for Pacification, Robert Komer. Following an April 1967 visit to Vietnam, Komer concluded that, while the US military pacification effort was self-contained and effective, civilian pacification efforts were still splintered and lacking in overall planning (e.g., AID, which found

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<p><u>Program Title:</u> New Model Pacification</p> <p><u>Objective:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuous security for the hamlets</li><li>• Deprive the VC of their rural base</li><li>• Support, advise and train RVNAF's paramilitary auxiliaries, the RF/PF</li><li>• Positive inclusion of RVNAF into civilian pacification efforts</li><li>• Exploitation of the growing volume of intelligence on the VC and concentration on the VC village cadre infrastructure</li><li>• Convert the nominal priority of pacification in RVN into an actual priority</li><li>• Generate rural support for the GVN and its programs</li><li>• Position American pacification advisers so as to exert effective leverage on GVN officials</li></ul> <p><u>Timeframe:</u> 1967-Before Tet</p> <p><u>Initiator:</u> Special Assistant for Pacification, Robert Komer,CORDS</p> <p><u>US Proponent:</u> CORDS</p> <p><u>GVN Proponent:</u> Cadre Teams, ARVN</p> <p><u>Results:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustained territorial security.</li><li>• Revitalized Chieu Hoi program aimed at inducing VC to rally to the GVN and then integrating them into and employing them productively in the South Vietnamese society.</li><li>• Systemization of previous feeble GVN efforts to identify and round up clandestine VC cadre composing the politico-military administrative, terror, propaganda, recruiting and logistic apparatus. Resurrection of Phung Hoang program.</li><li>• Revival of political support for the GVN and its leaders.</li><li>• Revival of a modestly functioning rural administration through training programs and technical assistance.</li><li>• Revival of the rural economic system by providing pragmatic incentives to the farmers.</li><li>• Establishment of essential rural services, such as medical, educational, refugee care and civil police protection and support.</li></ul> <p><u>Remarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There was no GVN/RVNAF counterpart agency to CORDS.</li><li>• No counterpart organization to CORDS functioned in Washington, D.C.</li><li>• The ad hoc nature of CORDS usurped the authority and resources allocated by the Congress to the separate agencies involved.</li></ul>
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Figure 5-14. The New Model Pacification Program

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itself footing the bill for most of the program costs, was very skeptical of the OCO working; meanwhile, USIA and CIA both indicated that they would continue to deal directly with their field personnel rather than work through OCO).<sup>119/</sup>

The decision to turn pacification over to COMUSMACV, with a integrated military-civilian chain of command, was announced by newly-assigned Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker on May 11, 1967. The rationale for such a move was given as:

- the single-manager concept is the most efficient and effective means of accomplishing the US role in RVN pacification,
- security is necessary for pacification, and
- the majority of the security forces available belong to COMUSMACV.

Bunker stated that the decision to reorganize was entirely his own; however, clearly the decision had come from the White House and was based on the unmistakable fact that LBJ "felt the time had come to turn pacification over to MACV."<sup>120/</sup>

Komer was given ambassadorial rank, assigned as Westmoreland's deputy in MACV, and directed to supervise the reorganization of OCO into what became known as the Office of Civil Operation and Revolutionary Development (CORDS). To many Americans in Saigon this newly intensified pressure from Washington was considered excessive and several strong voices within the civilian agencies began predicting problems for the new directorate and its new deputy director. Komer, a hard-charging, energetic, and self-assured man, was not popular in the US mission.<sup>121/</sup> However, by mid-summer critics of the CORDS operation were beginning to concede that it was making headway.<sup>122/</sup>

One expert wrote:

To his credit Komer did not allow the pettiness of the Saigon-based bureaucracy to stand in his way. By skillful negotiations he reorganized the old OCO organization, made peace--after a fashion--with the US military commands, and placed good people in the provinces [and] applied modern management techniques...<sup>123/</sup>

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Komer enjoyed Westmoreland's full support and confidence; however, in a private session, he was instructed by his new chief not to take actions or report information out of the proper, official channels (an order he quickly sidestepped. General Westmoreland, for his part, overlooked Komer's "channel jumping" with a view towards getting on with the task at hand). Armed with the needed support, Komer did not delay in putting his new powers and resources to use. First, Komer concentrated on providing continuous security for the hamlets and depriving the VC of their rural base. He sought CORDS involvement and responsibility for the following:

- support, advice and training of the RVNAF's paramilitary auxiliaries, the RF/PF
- positive inclusion of the RVNAF into civilian pacification efforts
- exploitation of the growing volume of intelligence on the VC and concentration on the VC village cadre infrastructure
- converting the nominal priority of pacification in RVN into an actual priority
- generating rural support for the GVN and its programs
- positioning American pacification advisers so as to exert effective leverage on GVN officials (when required).

Several problems faced CORDS at its beginning; some of them were:

- There was no GVN/RVNAF counterpart agency to the US-inspired solution to a Vietnamese problem.124/
- no counterpart organization to CORDS functioned in Washington, D.C.
- the ad hoc nature of the CORDS solution, which by presidential fiat usurped the authority and resources allocated by the Congress to the separate agencies involved.125/

Perhaps it is best to describe the CORDS effort in terms of its components or stages, which were:

- sustained territorial security (local clear and hold) whose cutting edge was the 59-man RD, Cadre Team (an armed paramilitary force to provide protection as well as developmental help to the

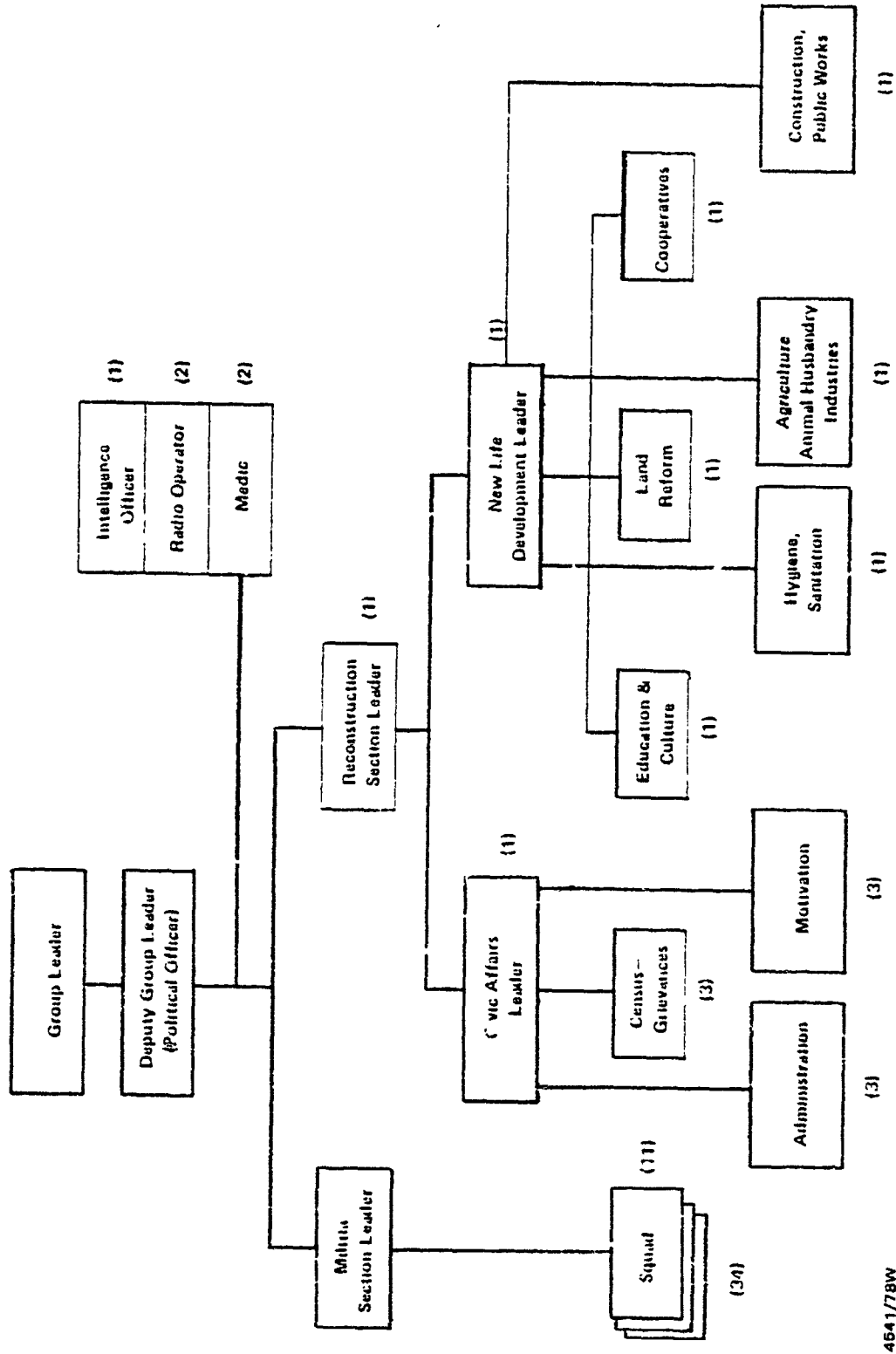
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hamlets). See Figure 5-15 for a RD team organization chart. Also relevant was the allocation of 40 to 50 ARVN battalions to provide temporary security in selected RD campaign areas until the (long neglected) RF and PF forces could be re-equipped and upgraded.

- revitalized Chieu Hoi program aimed at inducing VC to rally to the GVN and then integrating them into and employing them productively in the South Vietnamese society.
  - systemization of previously feeble GVN efforts to identify and round up clandestine VC cadre composing the politico-military administrative, terror, propaganda, recruiting, and logistic apparatus. The little understood Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program of going after the VC infrastructure was resurrected.
  - revival of political support for the GVN and its leaders.
  - revival of a modestly functioning rural administration through training programs and technical assistance.
  - revival of the rural economic system by providing pragmatic incentives to the farmer.
  - establishing essential rural services, such as medical, educational, refugee care and handling, and civil police protection and support.<sup>126/</sup>
1. The Tet Offensive: Getting Back on the Track and Accelerating the Pacification Process (see Figure 5-16)

Probably the greatest test of the "New Model" Revolutionary Development (or the Accelerated Pacification Campaign) period was during the VC/PAVN Tet offensive onslaught against the South Vietnamese and their FVMAF allies in 1968. One expert accurately observed that:

Tet changed the entire war. It sent a great shock throughout the Government of South Vietnam. And it precipitated the American disengagement. But Tet also decimated Hanoi's and the Viet Cong's combat forces in the South. Under the pressure from Tet, the Thieu Government paid real attention to protecting the population.<sup>127/</sup>



SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, Pacification, p. 52

Figure 5-15. Organization, 59-Man Revolutionary Development Cadre Group

Program Title: Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC)

Objectives:

- Sustain local security
- Invigorate attack on the VC infrastructure
- Re-energize village initiatives, land reform and self-help projects
- Re-organize GVN and RVNAF pacification councils and support elements to match US CORDS structure

Timeframe: Tet 1968 - 1970

Initiator: GVN, President Thieu

U.S. Proponent: CORDS

GVN Proponent: RD cadre teams, RF/PF Outposts

Results:

- The Tet offensive helped strengthen the New Model program. Over 90 per cent of the GVN's pacification forces were left intact after Tet.
- In 1969, village and hamlet elections were held and President Thieu promulgated decrees designed to enhance the powers of hamlet and village governments.
- In 1970, the GVN passed the Land-To-The-Tiller and Montagnard Land Reform Programs. Over 1 million hectares were successfully redistributed to about 650,000 tenant farmers.

Remarks:

- By the end of 1970, a considerable measure of security had been restored and the ability of the VC to affect events, to mobilize the people, to fight, to tax and to recruit had been eroded to the point where it was a manageable threat.

Figure 5-16. The Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) Program



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Instead of killing the new model program, the Tet offensive actually helped strengthen it. What happened was that the VC used the hamlet cadre and apparatus which were still under their control to launch their assault on the cities, thereby by-passing the bulk of RD-cadre teams, police and RF/PF outposts. Over 90 per cent of the GVN's pacification forces were left intact after Tet.<sup>128/</sup> Moreover, the communists lost over 45,000 VC cadres and troops killed in the first month of Tet (almost as many as the US had lost in 10 years of the war -- a point not articulated fully by the US press or television).<sup>129/</sup>

The major GVN priorities after Tet 1968, were:

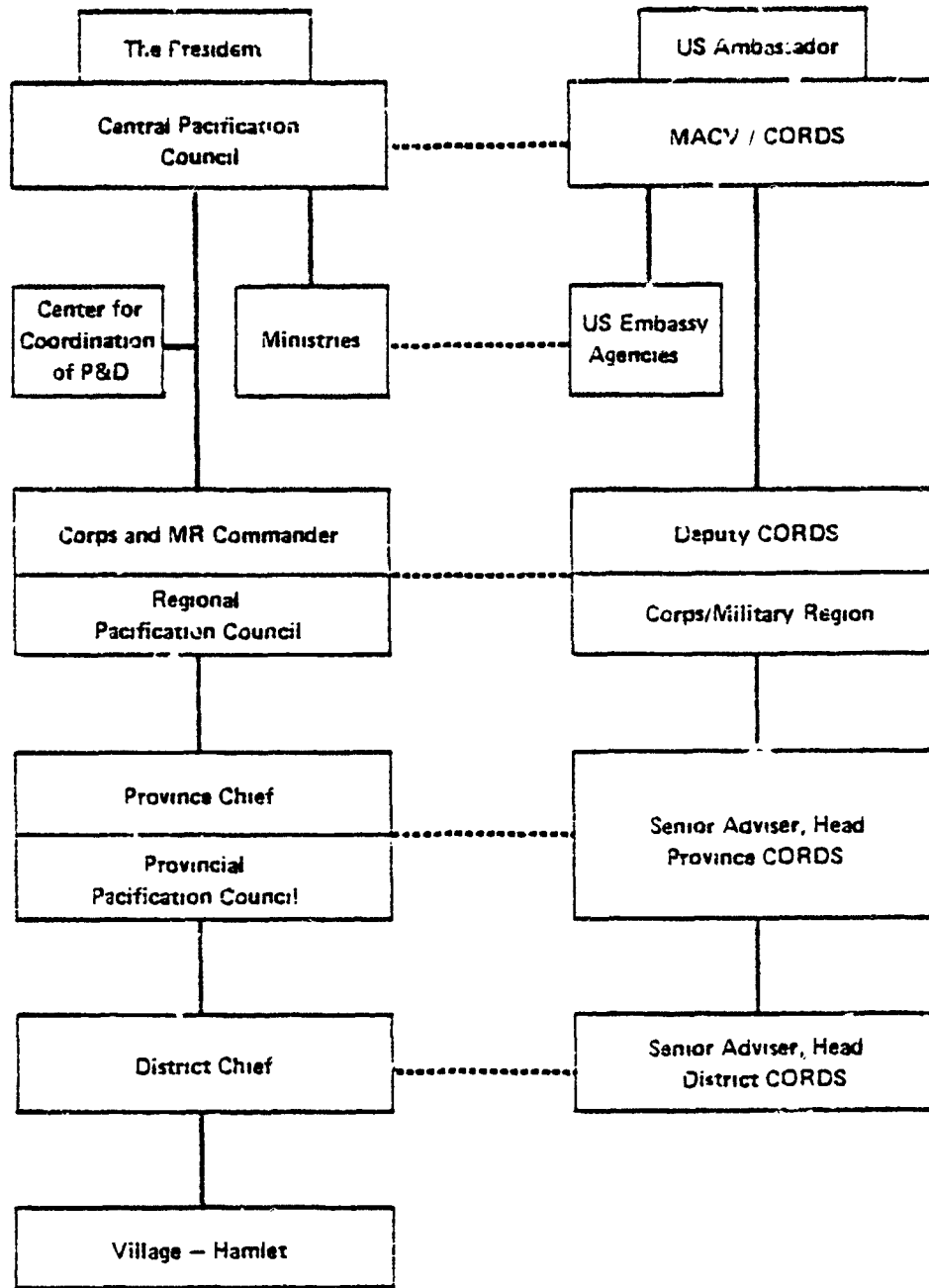
- to repair the damaged cities
- to relocate the over one million refugees created by the enemy offensive
- to begin the pacification campaign anew as the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (AFC)
- to reconcentrate resources for village protection (the People's Self-Defense Force - PSDF - was formed.)<sup>130/</sup>

By mid-1969, the Thieu government's rural strategy for the 1970's became apparent. It consisted of:

- sustained local security
- an invigorated attack on the VC infrastructure
- re-energized village initiatives, land reform and self-help projects.
- reorganized GVN and RVNAF pacification councils and support elements to match US CORDS structure (see Figures 5-17 and 5-18).<sup>131/</sup>

Though none of the above strategies was particularly well implemented, by the end of 1970 they had produced a breakthrough in the countryside for the GVN and security in the rural areas was showing signs of improving. Vann observed that the GVN goal of providing "relatively

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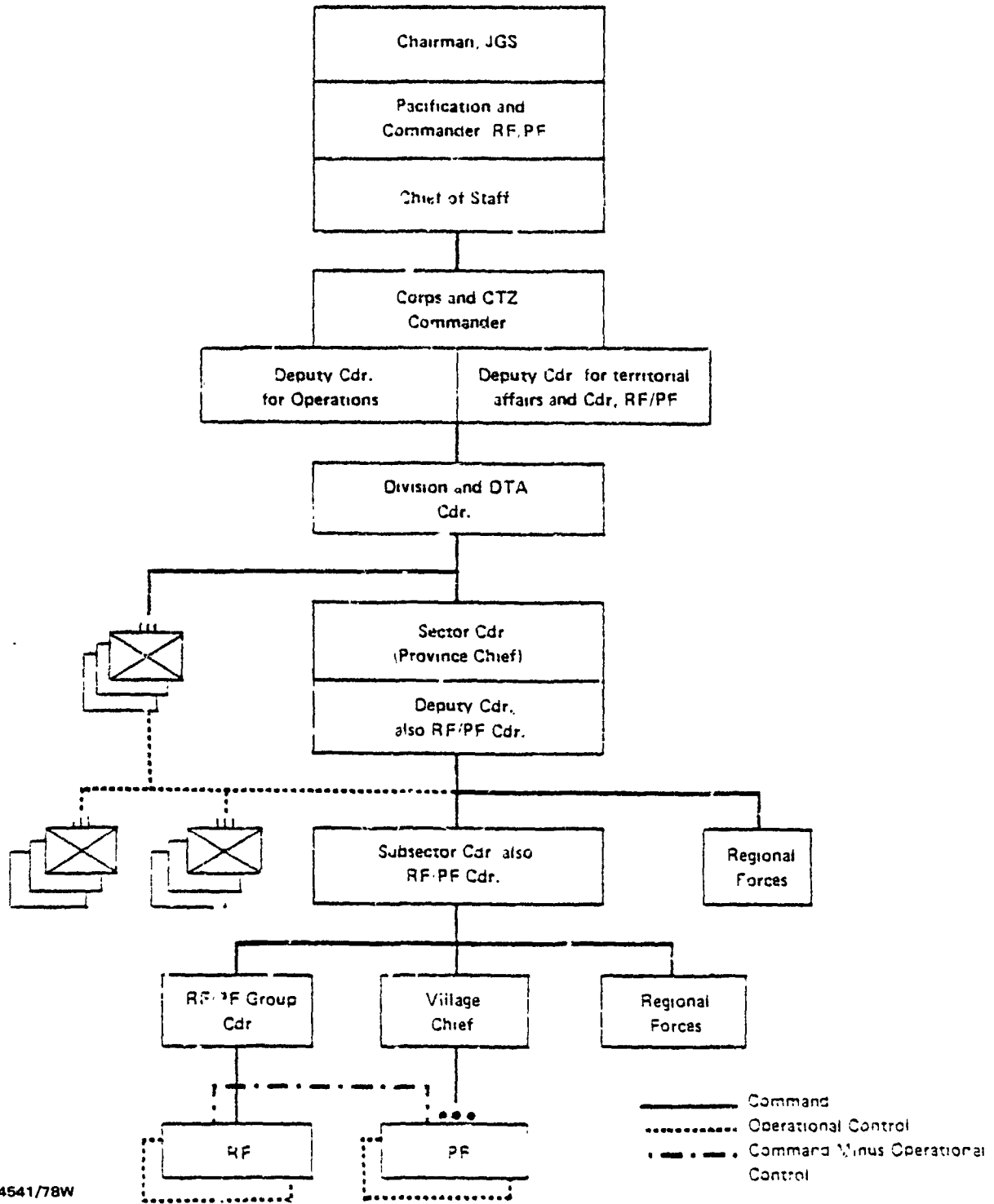
4541/78W

————— Command  
 - - - - - Coordination - Advisory

SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, Pacification, p. 36

Figure 5-17. Pacification Councils and US Support Organization (as of 1970)

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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, Pacification, p. 41.

Figure 5-18. RVNAF Organization for Pacification Support

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secure" living conditions for the clear majority of the population had been achieved. He said:

For the first time since 1961 all provincial capitals can be reached by road with unescorted single vehicle traffic during daylight hours. 132/

A considerable measure of security had been restored and the ability of the VC to affect events, to mobilize the people, to fight, to tax and to recruit had been eroded to the point where it was a manageable threat. On the other hand, neither in 1970 nor afterward was the Phoenix Program able to dismantle fully or destroy the VC infrastructure. 133/ Blaufarb observed:

Both Phoenix and Revolutionary Development suffered from a similar defect: a simplified view of the complexities of village life in Vietnam and of the ability of the central authority to intervene directly in the internal arrangements of thousands of villages simultaneously. Yet they were also overly complex programs for the American and Vietnamese personnel who were required to carry them out, demanding too much trained and dedicated manpower and a subtle approach which was only possible if attempted on a small scale. On the other hand, the programs which succeeded were more direct and straightforward in concept. Unfortunately, they evolved only after the Vietnamese leadership, particularly President Thieu, came to see pacification as an urgent and major priority, far too late for rapid achievement of the goals envisioned. 134/

With respect to the GVN strategy of re-energizing the villages, as part of the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan, village and hamlet elections were held in March, June and September of 1969. 135/ President Thieu promulgated decrees designed to enhance the powers of hamlet and village governments and authorized their reorganization. Although these actions did not nullify all of the previously restrictive laws, they represented the first attempt in the history of the country to decentralize the GVN's power. 136/

In 1970, after many years of pronouncements and explorations, the GVN passed the Land-to-The-Tiller and Montagnard Land Reform Programs. Over one million hectares were successfully redistributed to about 650,000 tenant farmers under the programs.<sup>137/</sup> Well over two-thirds of the farm families in RVN were significantly affected by the land reform programs. By 1972, with peasant political participation in government growing despite local elite resistance, the land reform program was succeeding.<sup>138/</sup>

2. The Easter Offensive: A Setback For Both North and South

By early 1971, DRV officials had concluded <sup>139/</sup> that:

- they were losing the war
- the VC infrastructure was taking a beating
- low-level guerrilla warfare could not withstand GVN/US pressures over the long term.
- the GVN had achieved a breakthrough on pacification
- their own internal socio-economic situation was becoming critical
- the time had come for a return to the offensive based on big-unit battles, employing the latest in Soviet-supplied military hardware.

The next year an Easter Offensive was launched in an effort to turn the war around by wrecking the Vietnamization program, halting pacification in the South, rebuilding VC cadre infrastructure and punishing the South Vietnamese for not responding to their call for a massive uprising against Thieu and his US allies. Early PAVN battle successes were routed by the RVNAF when President Nixon ordered US air and naval forces into the fray. Vigorous US reaction -- mining of the DRV's ports and maximum interdiction against logistic arteries throughout the country with laser-guided "smart" bombs -- helped decisively to turn the invasion around and send the DRV back to their sanctuaries, losers once again.<sup>140/</sup>

3. Measures of Success: Reaching For The Brass Ring

To reach a balanced judgment on pacification progress in RVN, CORDS upgraded the hamlet evaluation system in 1967. The US Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) was designed to yield comprehensive, quantifiable data on security and development of every hamlet in the RVN under some degree of

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GVN control and to identify hamlets under VC/NVA control. The system was completely automated by computer processing. (For a sample summary of HES computer tapes see Figure 5-19.)

Under HES, every hamlet in RVN was rated by US advisers on a series of tested criteria (e.g., "Does the village chief sleep in the hamlet at night with his family?"). Ratings were as follows:

- A and B: Security fully established, effective local government.
- C: Government has military and administrative control, VC harass citizens outside the hamlet.
- D and E: Hamlet insecure, VC political cadre are active, government maintains some presence
- V: Hamlet under VC control. 141/

Amid the wreckage of Tet in 1968, only 19% of RVN hamlets could be rated as A or B. By 1972, 80.1% were rated A and B, while 15.7% were placed in the C category and the remaining 4.3% rated D, E or V. 142/ The data presented below depicts the same data in terms of total population under GVN influence or control.

	1964	1967	1972
"Secure" population* (in millions)	6.8	11.5	18.0
Percent of total	42%	67%	93%
Total population (in millions)	16.1	17.2	19.3

\*"Secure" category from GVN/US system for 1964. A-B-C HES population (total scores) for 1967 and 1972. 143/

How good was HES? Douglas Kinnard's survey of US general officers revealed that 2% thought it was a good way to measure pacification progress, 75% thought it had weaknesses but was about as good as could be devised, and the balance, 23% did not think it was a valid measure. 144/

Formal studies 145/ were conducted to check the validity of the HES, particularly during its first stages and it was found that:

- changes in HES scores were sensitive enough to identify progress or regression in areas over time.

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SOME 8.2 MILLION PEOPLE BECAME "SECURE" BETWEEN 1967 AND 1972.

COUNTRYWIDE POPULATION (IN MILLIONS END OF YEAR)	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	1967-72 CHANGE
SECURE (A&B)	7.2	8.2	12.5	13.4	15.8	15.4	8.2
RELATIVELY SECURE(C)	4.3	5.2	3.8	3.5	2.3	2.6	-1.7
CONTESTED (D&E)	2.7	1.9	.8	.9	.6	1.0	-1.7
VC/NVA CONTROL SVN TOTAL	<u>2.9</u> 17.2	<u>2.2</u> 17.5	<u>.4</u> 17.6	<u>-</u> 17.9	<u>-</u> 18.7	<u>.2</u> 19.3	<u>-2.7</u> 2.1

THIS RAISED THE PERCENTAGE OF "SECURE" FROM 42 TO 80 PERCENT

<u>% OF RVN POPULATION</u>							
SECURE (A&B)	42	47	71	75	84	80	38
RELATIVELY SECURE(C)	25	30	21	20	13	14	-11
CONTESTED (D&E)	16	11	5	5	3	5	-11
VC/NVA CONTROL	17	12	2	0	0	1	-16

SOURCE: Thayer, Hamlet Evaluation System Computer Tapes 1967-1972.

All figures are based on total HES scores, which include the security, political, and socio-economic dimensions. Total includes population in unevaluated hamlets which is not shown in the Table, so some of the columns do not add precisely to the totals. The Table includes the urban population, which means that the C-D-E-VC population is mostly concentrated in the rural areas.

Figure 5-19. Summary of HES Computer Tapes (1967-1972)

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- they were not precise enough to make point estimates.
- comparisons between different geographical areas in the RVN at a single point in time were questionable.

By all standards, the New Model Pacification, by far, had proven more successful than any other previous effort.

### F. VIETNAMIZATION: AN END TO AMERICANIZATION (1968-1975)

#### 1. Definition and Purpose

After the introduction of US combat forces into the Vietnam conflict, the fight essentially became an American war with the South Vietnamese increasingly watching from the sidelines. The effort to turn the war back over to the Vietnamese became known as Vietnamization. In the spring of 1969, President Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Mr. Kissinger, devised a strategy which would allow the phase-out of American forces from Vietnam at a pace slow enough not to jeopardize the battlefield situation, but fast enough to assuage American public opinion; the approach was called "Vietnamization." The basic idea was that if North Vietnam would not agree to a negotiated settlement which would allow the South Vietnamese to settle their own affairs, then they would be facing a well-armed and ready South Vietnam, prepared to defend itself without compromise.<sup>146/</sup>

Another interpretation of Vietnamization is that Nixon and Kissinger intended only to ensure that RVN's defeat was delayed long enough to place the responsibility solely on the GVN's shoulders. This interpretation, however, cannot be made consistent with the total record. President Nixon, in the four years preceding the 1973 Paris Accords, reduced US forces in RVN from over 550,000 men to about 24,000 men. US casualties were reduced dramatically and spending on the war fell from about \$25 billion a year to less than \$3 billion per year. Although the policy entailed some risk of losing the war, it was a policy of reduction and not one of complete withdrawal. Nixon never pledged total withdrawal unless Hanoi would agree to US settlement terms.

One astute observer<sup>147/</sup> opined that Vietnamization, in practice, was a strategy designed to do the following things:



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- to decrease US forces in RVN to a level that would be tolerated by American politics.
- to use the prospects of endless US presence or assistance to persuade Hanoi to accept the proffered negotiating terms.

The process of upgrading the RVNAF, it is generally agreed, began before Nixon took office in the summer of 1967. CORDS had been established, new emphasis was placed on pacification and territorial security and Westmoreland's new Deputy, General Abrams, was given specific responsibility for improving the performance of the RVNAF. 148/

The report to LBJ from the Clark Clifford Task Force in early 1968 proposed an urgent effort to improve and modernize the equipment of the RVNAF. LBJ acted upon the recommendations immediately and directed that ARVN be provided more helicopters, M-16 rifles and other needed equipment.

After Nixon assumed office in January 1969, the program initiated by former Secretary of Defense Clifford was accelerated. On 8 June 1969, Nixon and Thieu met on Midway Island and agreed to "Vietnamize" 149/ the war and reduce US combat involvement.

Also, there is general agreement that during the years of US disengagement the effectiveness of the RVNAF increased significantly. 1 It began with the Tet offensive and culminated with the eventual success in overcoming the PAVN's 1972 Easter Offensive.

Initially, it was planned that the Vietnamization program would be implemented in the following three phases: 151/

- turning over the ground combat responsibility to the RVNAF -- US was to continue to provide air, naval and logistics support.
- helping the RVNAF develop its own combat support capabilities in order to achieve self-reliance on the battlefield.
- reducing US presence to a military advisory role.

Secretary of Defense Laird, in a speech 152/ in 1971, emphasized that the Vietnamization program was conceived on the basis of certain critical assumptions. First, it was assumed that the conflict would continue if the Paris peace negotiations were not successful. Second, the

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process of winding down and ending US combat involvement was to begin in 1969 and go forward steadily. Third, as long as the conflict continued, US and free world assistance would be required. Fourth, with the appropriate assistance, the GVN and its citizens could cope with the threats to their security from both the VC and the North Vietnamese.

### 2. Vietnamization as Viewed by the Vietnamese

When asked for his opinion on Vietnamization, General Tran Van Don, I Corps Commander in the 1960's, a Deputy in the Assembly and Minister of Defense, had this to say:

I was an opponent of Vietnamization. I will tell just one story. I visited (some units in the field) and tried to understand the program of Vietnamization of the war...it was in the headquarters of the 5th Division. I discussed the question with the commander of the division, General Minh Van Hieu, a most honest general, and capable, too. I was surprised by his answer; it opened my eyes. I asked him, "What do you think of Vietnamization?" He said to me, "It is impossible to be implemented." Why? He said, "The 5th Division covers an area where there were two other divisions, Americans, and now with the departure of the two American Divisions I have only my division to cover the whole area. I have three regiments for this area and must use one regiment to replace one division. How can I face the enemy like this? I have become weaker." He looked very disappointed. I was surprised; he was a quiet man, a polite man, and he tried to do his best. But he said to me that this was impossible. "How can I cover a bigger area with less units?" So the Vietnamization of the war means that we are becoming weaker. 153/

Colonel Nuyen Huy Loi, a veteran staff officer with the JGS military adviser to the South Vietnamese delegation to the Paris Talks, thought that Vietnamization had not been approached properly:

...when I was in Paris, people came to ask me, How do you feel about the Vietnamization? I think a Vietnamization program was possible, really, because we did it before, in 1954 with the French. but the important thing is to Vietnamize the whole structure, right from the top, from those who conduct the whole war, not just the small units...We had good officers who would stand and fight but we needed to put them in a right structure of forces. 154/

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When another senior RVNAF officer was asked recently on how he would have "Vietnamized", he responded:

Oh, we talked for a long time in 1966/67 on how the Vietnamese Army had to reorganize in order to become a really effective armed force and to get by alone, with just some support from the US... [But] the American Forces wanted to train the Vietnamese Army in the image of the American forces. And, as you know, even with American forces we [had not been able to] fight this kind of war. So you have to design some other kind. For a long time I tried to convince our leaders, and I talked with Americans as well, we have to reorganize... into two forces. One is a territorial force and one is the main force, ready to move anywhere we want. And all these mobile forces have to have adequate support, some ground support... I think we needed a large [mobile] force, from ten to fifteen divisions... When I was in Vietnam I made a study of all this... [and] tried to submit it to the US and talked to our leaders. And it would have been necessary for the Americans to [withdraw at a slower pace] until we were ready to fight alone. Not just taking the equipment and leave. However, the JGS just stayed there and did nothing. They just did nothing until the end... they only received suggestions [from the Americans]. But everything is done at MACV Headquarters and sent to us, that is all. 155/

A high-ranking civilian, Nguyen Ba Can, who for a brief period toward the end was Prime Minister after having served for several years as Speaker of the House, reported that:

Vietnamese officials used to call vietnamization the "US Dollar and Vietnam Blood Sharing Plan." Vietnamization was often praised, but the assistance promised to the Vietnamese, upon which they had come to rely as the key of containment of Communist expansion in South East Asia was denied them after the signing of the Paris Agreements -- one might say after the US had staged a "peace with honor" solution. 156/

Other Vietnamese leaders felt that the program (see Figure 5-20) was not tailored to the true requirements and the actual situation, 157/ for example:

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ITEM:*	CUMULATIVE QUANTITIES:		
	FY 70	FY 71	FY 75
Rifle, M-16A1	790,866	791,225	792,237
Machine Gun, M-60	13,925	14,059	14,415
Grenade Launcher, M-79	45,478	46,092	47,802
Mortar, 81-mm., M-29	1,592	1,645	1,798
Howitzer, LT, 105-mm., M101A1	716	743	819
Howitzer, LT, 105-mm., M114A1	288	290	304
Tank, LT, M41A3	257	278	366
Carrier, Pers., M-113	1,010	1,088	1,149
Carrier, Mortar, M-125A1	132	137	154
Mask, Protective, M-17A1	424,085	432,685	465,526
Radio Set, AN/PRC-25	33,779	42,128	46,688
Radio Set, AN/VRC-12	6,944	7,089	10,377
Radio Set, AN/GRC-106	368	372	384
Truck, Utility, 1/4-T, M-151A1	21,040	26,325	34,169
Truck, Cargo, 2 1/2-T, M-33A2	15,802	18,865	27,222
Truck, Cargo, 5T, M54A2	612	676	856
Truck, WRKR, 5T, M543A2	595	622	712
Truck, CGO, 1T, M-601, & 3/4-T, M-37 Series	10,584	11,679	14,827
Tractor, 1T, Med., Dec.	435	528	623
Crane, TRK MTD, 20T	275	298	378
Semi-Trailer 12T, M-127	1,295	1,384	1,636
Helicopter	128	376	376

\*Items of equipment provided RVNAF on a cumulative basis by USG Fiscal Year.

SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs ARVN, Vietnamization and the Cease-fire, p. 48.

Figure 5-20. Typical Military Equipment Provided the RVNAF Under the Vietnamization Program

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- M-16 rifles were provided long after the enemy had employed the Russian AK-47 rifle
- M-48 tanks and 175 mm self-propelled artillery were provided only after the enemy had deployed T-54 tanks and 130-mm guns.

The outcome of the 1972 Easter Invasion provided the US with an uneven basis for assessing RVNAF performance and the status of Vietnamization. Some Divisions like the 23<sup>d</sup> (defending Kontum) and elements of the 5<sup>th</sup> (holding An Loc) acquitted themselves well. Elite units like the rangers and marines generally fought tenaciously. Other divisions, like the 3<sup>d</sup> and 22<sup>d</sup>, on the other hand revealed glaring weaknesses in discipline and effectiveness. Territorial forces performed unevenly and were rated from outstanding to poor. And, the contribution of the PSDF was evaluated as marginal.158/

Regardless of the uneven RVNAF showing in 1972, an important test had been passed and pacification and Vietnamization were moving ahead under heavy pressure from the US. American ground combat troops were no longer available to support and bail out the RVNAF. President Nixon began to press hard for a negotiated settlement. The stalemate in the negotiations was broken and after several false starts a cease-fire agreement was finally signed in Paris on 27 January 1973. All US combat forces were withdrawn within 60 days. In the interim, the departing US forces literally dumped tons of military equipment, hardware and supplies on the RVNAF. The effort was massive.159/ Vietnamization came to an end. By the terms of the agreement, the US could not introduce additional heavy weapons into RVN, but was restricted to supporting the equipment on hand at the time of the agreement.

The net result of providing such massive aid was that it increased the RVNAF's dependence on continuing US support to obtain:

- spare parts
- ammunition
- fuel
- special maintenance equipment and technicians 160/

RVN could produce none of these and the US willingness to continue to supply these commodities came into question as a war-weary

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Congress, in the face of a badly weakened executive, became increasingly anxious to liquidate any further US involvement in Southeast Asia.

### G. INSIGHTS

#### 1. Knowing the Enemy and Our Ally

This is a recurring theme which was played in Volumes I and II of this study. The US misread and underestimated the enemy's tenacity and determination to prevail at any cost. The North Vietnamese proved to be resourceful and able to learn from past mistakes. Their approach to insurgency was a stage-by-stage revolutionary process, based on redistributive policies of a socio-economic nature enforced by violence.

With respect to knowing our ally, the US misread and underestimated the resolve, determination, character and will of the South Vietnamese people. In the end, after years of US commitment and assistance, the South Vietnamese felt that US interest in their cause had waned greatly, whereas the enemy's support from the communist world continued unabated.

#### 2. Pacification

Between 1954 and mid-1968, the GVN's attempts at establishing pacification and rural development programs failed because they were little more than ill-devised blends of stop and start:

- military and police operations
- social control techniques
- emergency welfare efforts
- attempts to extend political-administrative linkage from Saigon to the countryside.

During the period, the GVN failed to come to terms with the communist movement because of their own fundamental political weaknesses, which were:

- their inheritance of France's colonial legacy
- their debilitating internal pursuit of power
- their reliance on US aid and doctrine rather than internal political support.

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In turn, the US efforts to support GVN pacification program were the product of:

- reliance on conventional military methods, equipment and training
- culturally unsuitable and impractical approaches to development
- an inability to devise conceptually relevant programs
- ineffective and insufficient application of leverage on the GVN 161/

Between 1968 and 1973 the GVN, with strong US aid, turned things around, and achieved success in their pacification and development programs primarily because:

- priority was finally given to security -- protecting and involving the people in their own defense
- policies of land reform and economic redistribution were promoted

The one key thing which the Thieu government failed to do during this period of pacification progress was to fashion a political community. 162/ As Ambassador Samuel Berger, deputy to Ambassador Bunker from 1968 to 1971 said, "Thieu failed to institutionalize his government" 163/ thereby losing the gains made through pacification.

Regardless, there is little doubt, having the advantage of hindsight, that pacification finally worked. The North Vietnamese ultimately could not have won the war via insurgency, but rather they had to resort to conventional military offensives by PAVN troops. In that sense pacification did succeed, though it alone, without a strong political base, could not withstand the final DRV onslaught.

Other pacification insights are:

- Security is a Prerequisite for Pacification. While both the provision of local security and certain nonmilitary undertakings are essential parts of a successful pacification program, the conditions for a sustained government presence must prevail if development efforts are to pay off. By eventually whittling down the enemy's political and military apparatus in the villages and hamlets of Vietnam, the GVN/US pacification effort began to pay off.

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- The Importance of Intelligence. Without reliable intelligence on the insurgents, a threatened government is likely to be at such a disadvantage that assistance, at almost any level, would be ineffective. A local intelligence capability is therefore a high-priority matter, and the US should have assured that one was organized prior to making its commitment to the RVN for extensive pacification assistance.
- The Use of Police and Constabulary Forces. Early on, the GVN/US pacification effort failed to use local police and constabulary assets effectively. Properly equipped and trained police forces could have been an effective tool in reducing communist control of the South Vietnamese countryside.
- The Extensive Use of Regular and Paramilitary Units With Aggressive, Small-Unit Tactics. In Vietnam precious time was lost because the ARVN and the Territorial Forces were reluctant to press the battle with Viet Cong guerrilla elements. Such a counterinsurgency strategy calls for aggressive small-unit action, which in turn calls for competent junior and noncommissioned officers and realistic training programs.
- Development Programs and Their Relationship to the Pacification Effort. There should be early agreement on the role of economic, social, and political programs. Because such agreement was lacking in Vietnam, a plethora of nonmilitary activities were undertaken, many of which were redundant, unwanted, or even counterproductive to the goal of defeating the insurgents.
- Handling of Grievances. In countering any insurgency, a vigorous and sustained effort must be made at the earliest possible moment to redress genuine grievances. Indeed, serious consideration should be given to conditioning US assistance to the government's taking such action. In South Vietnam, land reform constituted such a real and urgent need.



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- Refugee Control. With all the other problems confronting the inadequate Vietnamese bureaucracy, it is not surprising that the vast swarms of refugees from VC-controlled or bombed-out villages were among the residual claimants for attention and resources. But US and Vietnamese humanitarian efforts, private and public, should have been better coordinated. To some extent at least, the refugees could have been incorporated into the manpower pool available for military and nonmilitary programs.
- Urban Population Problems. Military operations in the countryside of Vietnam, combined with relative security and substantial employment opportunities in the larger towns and cities, created a dramatic population drift to the urban areas. But pacification efforts, primarily development programs, continued to be concentrated in the countryside. The experience in Vietnam in this regard does not stem from what was done well or poorly, but rather from not doing anything at all.
- A Case for Central Management. A successful pacification effort requires a single focus of authority and responsibility. And this means central management, both in Washington and in the field and on both the US and host-country sides, at a level high enough to wield adequate bureaucratic "clout".<sup>164/</sup>
- The Lack of a Common Approach. Early on in the Vietnam conflict, US military and civilian organizations failed to have a common approach towards defeating the insurgents and pacifying the countryside. The accepted view was that there were two programs instead of one for defeating the insurgency--pacification on the one hand, and the military effort to seek out and destroy VC forces on the other. This lack of unified direction was finally reversed when pacification was centralized under the COMUSMACV, and CORDS was established. Traditional military and civilian attitudes concerning the nature of the war and the level of bureaucratic involvement in pacification proved difficult to change until a common approach to the problem was developed and implemented.

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- The Need For Trained Military Advisers And Pacification Specialists. US combat units found themselves ill-equipped and inadequately trained for handling the problems passed by the pacification programs of the early and mid-1960's. Subsequent formal training of officers in US service schools, coupled with firsthand knowledge gathered from in-country experience (second and third-tour personnel), finally provided the cadre necessary to produce a significant impact on pacification in the late sixties and early seventies.

### 3. Vietnamization

After the Tet Offensive in 1968, President Thieu and General Abrams (then COMUSMACV) threw their support behind the buildup of the territorial forces, the National Police and the attack against the VC infrastructure. And so, some ten or twelve years after the initiation of the insurgency against the RVN, there was a coordinated approach to the security phase of pacification. Under the Nixon administration it was called Vietnamization.

The US goal to increase the RVNAF's military might and ability to hold off the enemy through the Vietnamization Program was thwarted in the end by the RVNAF's increased dependence on continuing US military aid and technical support. The more massive the aid, the more dependent they became. The RVNAF soldier had been "conditioned" by the US presence to rely on the almost ubiquitous air and artillery support in combat and had forgotten "how to walk," being used to vehicular and helicopter transportation which became scarce after the US pullout in 1973. Former ARVN leaders felt that their army had been organized along the wrong pattern. It had gotten a big logistics tail and it lacked the necessary equipment and mobile reserve divisions essential to counter the NVA's final assault. 165/

In light of the goals set by the Nixon administration, (i.e., the withdrawal of US forces from RVN and to bring about a negotiated settlement of the war) Vietnamization has to be considered a success. The unfortunate aspect was that it was a decade too late.

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After the 1973 Paris Agreements, the key to the continued success of Vietnamization, and for that matter the GVN's Pacification Program, was the support promised by the USG in the form of US airpower and sustained economic, materiel and technical support. When that promised support faltered, Vietnamization and Pacification became shaky, deteriorated and finally collapsed under the pressure of the DRV's final offensive.

### H. LESSONS

The following lessons are drawn from the material on counterinsurgency, Pacification and Vietnamization developed above:

- The US government should establish an agreed doctrine for counterinsurgency and pacification which complements national goals, objectives and related tasks.
- A government calling upon the United States for assistance in maintaining power in the face of an internal threat, as did the Vietnamese government, is unlikely to be efficient or effective or to meet American ideals of democracy or probity. American commitments to assist such governments must be made with the recognition that our act of commitment and our advice cannot change the nature of the client regime or the society of the host country.
- The ability and willingness of the US to exert leverage on a client state is inversely proportional to the perceived importance of that nation to US national security interests.
- Before committing itself to supporting an ally besieged from within, the United States should be confident that it knows the composition and the motivation of the threatening forces and the problems at issue. Only through such knowledge will we be able to assess the dimensions of the problem we might confront. Simple prudence requires that we know in advance whether the government's cause is dubious or its prospects hopeless.

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- The US should help, not substitute for, the government of our ally. To the extent that we "take charge," we postpone (and may even jeopardize) the achievement of our ultimate objectives. The application of this lesson in practice, as we have discovered in Vietnam, is difficult and calls for a careful selection and training of advisers. If we could turn back history, the process of "Vietnamization" probably would have been started in 1961, not 1969.
- To reduce corruption and minimize the undertaking of overly ambitious projects that cannot be made operational quickly, US officials should exercise restraint in initial programming. This, together with arrangements for continuing follow-through and accountability on the part of local officials, should serve to increase the effectiveness of US pacification assistance.
- The most efficient and farsighted national government will be unable to extend its influence unless it establishes an effective presence in the form of local officials. In Vietnam, province and district chiefs performed this role by providing a link between village and hamlet officials and Saigon. Government cadre also are an essential element in closing the gap between the national government and the people. But in Vietnam the importance of careful selection and good training was all too often overlooked. 166/

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## CHAPTER 5 ENDNOTES

1. Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to the Present (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1977), p. 223
2. Statement made by General Nguyen Duc Thang, Chief, National Pacification Campaign in an address to the Honolulu Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii, Feb. 7, 1966.
3. This summary was drawn from the works of : Douglas Blaufarb, pp. 22-23, and Lt. Col. Edward R. Wainhouse, "Guerrilla War in Greece, 1946-49 A Case Study," in Franklin M. Ozanka, Modern Guerrilla Warfare (New York: Free Press, 1962), pp. 48-49.
4. Blaufarb, pp. 23-27; Alvin H. Scaff, The Philippine Answer to Communism (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1955), pp. 20-21; and Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 20-42.
5. This summary comes from various works on the subject such as: Blaufarb, pp. 40-47; Lucian W. Pye, Guerilla Communism in Malaya (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956); Brigadier Richard Clutterbuck, The Long, Long War (New York, NY: Praeger, 1966); and Robert W. Komer, "The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of the Successful Counterinsurgency Effort," R-957-ARPA (Santa Monica, Calif: The Rand Corp., Feb. 1972).
6. Blaufarb, pp. 43-50. The problem was not without recognition as Paul X. Kelley developed in his Air War College Research Report, No. 3777, Air University, USAF, Maxwell Air Force Base, ALA entitled: "French Counterinsurgency in Algeria 1954-1962: Military Victory - Political Defeat," April 1969, pp. 41-42. The French Army established a "5th Bureau" in their general staff; known as the Psychological Warfare Section, it was responsible for psywar, civic action, public information and civilian and troop morale. The campaign for the hearts and minds of the people and pacification of the countryside began.
7. The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of U.S. Decision-making on Vietnam, Senator Mike Gravel, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Vol. 2, p. 571.
8. Lawrence E. Grinter, "South Vietnam: Pacification Denied," South East Asian Perspective, July 1975, p. 50.
9. Gravel Pentagon Papers, Vol. 2, p. 570.

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10. US Department of Defense United States - Vietnam Relations 1945-1967. Hereafter DOD US/VN Relations (Book 2 of 12, IV. A.5 Tab 2) pp. 56-60 cites several sources in describing the increasing level of violence in South Vietnam. Bernard B. Fall, Vietnam Witness (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers 1966), p. 185 and his Last Reflections on a War (NY: Schocken Books, 1972) pp. 196-199 also refer to the insurgency problem circa 1956-1957.
11. This finding is supported by The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I; U.S. Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam" (short title: PROVN), 1 March 1966; General William C. Westmoreland's Private Papers on file at the US Army Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C. and "The Cooper Report," The American Experience with Pacification in Vietnam (U), Vol. I, "An Overview of Pacification (U)," Authors: Chester Cooper, et. al., March 1972, IDA, ARPA Special Studies, pp. 13-14.
12. George C. Herring, America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1950-1975. Manuscript of the book to be published by Wiley late in 1979, p. 57. Professor Herring kindly provided a copy of his manuscript to the BDM study team.
13. William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York, NY: Frederick Praeger, 1966), p. 36.
14. Grinter, pp. 51-52.
15. The Cooper Report, Supra note 11, pp. 120-122.
16. Ibid.
17. Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) p. 247.
18. Ibid.
19. The Cooper Report, p. 122.
20. John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 72-83.
21. Ibid., p. 129.
22. Grinter, p. 70, details why the land reform never really got off the ground. Other references include: RVN presidential decrees - Ordinance No. 2 of 8 January 1955, Ordinance No. 57 of 22 October 1956; Price Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform," in Lindholm, Vietnam: The First Five Years (New York, NY: Frederick Praeger, 1968), pp. 200-208;

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- Lansdale, pp. 355-365. Also see David Warfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam," Far Eastern Survey, XXVII, No. 8. (August 1959): 113-126; J. Price Gittinger, "Progress in South Vietnam's Agrarian Reform, Part I," Far Eastern Survey XXIX, No. 2 (February, 1960): 17-21. Also James B. Hendry, "Land Reform in South Vietnam", Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX, No. 1, (October 1960) and Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reforms in the Republic of Vietnam," in Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence, ed. by Wesley R. Fisher (New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 153-175.
23. John T. Dorsey, "South Vietnam in Perspective," Far Eastern Survey, Vol. XXVII, No. 12 (December, 1958): 177.
  24. George A. Carver, Jr. "The Faceless Viet Cong", Foreign Affairs, XLIV, 3 (April, 1966): 359-360.
  25. Ibid., p. 362. As a captured Lao Dong document stated:  
"The People's Revolutionary Party has only the appearance of an independent existence; actually, our party is nothing but the Lao Dong Party of Vietnam (Viet Minh Communist Party) unified from north to south under the direction of the central committee of the party, the chief of which is President Ho."  
This document dated 7 December 1961, was captured in Ba Xuyen province, RVN.
  26. Grinter, p. 54.
  27. The Cooper Report, p. 133.
  28. Robert G. Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 133.
  29. The rise and fall of agglomeration camps are well reported in John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 72-127; also see Robert G. Scigliano, South Vietnam. Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), pp. 179-199; Joseph J. Zasloff, Rural Resettlement in Vietnam: An Agrovillage in Development (Saigon and Washington, DC: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group (MSUVAG), 1963), pp. 6-7 and App I, p. 34; and the Cooper Report, p. 133.
  30. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers Vol I, p. 312; Zasloff, p.9; and Grinter, p. 54 all discuss this GVN resettlement program.
  31. Grinter p. 71. The origin of the French expression - agrovillage (rural town) - goes back to earlier pacification operations in Tonkin.

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32. Ibid., p. 54
33. The following documents, among others, reflect early peasant objections to the agrovillage program: Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, p. 312-313; Grinter, pp 54-55; Bernard B. Fall, The Two Vietnams (New York, London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 310; Zasloff, p. 21; also John C. Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority in Conflict" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Univ. of California at Berkeley, 1964), p. 187.
34. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol I, p. 313.
35. Grinter, p. 54.
36. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, p. 313. Others, listed below, concluded that 23 of the original 80 Agrovilles were nearing completion when the program was halted -- 32,000 out of the 43,000 people (who actually moved) stayed, far short of the planned-for total of 500,000 people. See Nguyen Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), p. 158; Duncanson, p. 261; Nguyen Khoc Nhan, "Policy of Key Rural Agrovilles", Asian Culture, Vol. III, No. 3-4 (July-Dec., 1961): 28-49; and Grinter, p. 54.
37. W. Scott Thompson & Donaldson D. Frizzel, eds. The Lessons of Vietnam (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1977), pp. 222-223.
38. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, ARVN. Pacification, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History (McLean, VA: General Research Corp, October, 1977), p. 11.
39. Tran Dinh Tho, p. 12.
40. Gravel The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, p. 313.
41. Tran Dinh Tho, p. 12.
42. Sir Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 121-140.
43. Tran Dinn Tho, p. 12.
44. See Grinter, p. 55; as well as John Mecklin, Mission in Torment (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 45; and Gravel The Pentagon Papers, Vol II, pp. 50-51.
45. Blaufarb, p. 106.



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46. Ibid., p. 100.
47. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol II, p. 27.
48. Blaurarb, p. 104.
49. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, pp. 143-144.
50. Blaufarb, p. 114.
51. In Bernard Fall's, The Two Vietnams, p. 373, he quotes official statistics which put the number of planned hamlets at 5,000 enclosing over 7 million people in December 1962; and by the end of 1963 there were to be 12,000 hamlets enclosing over 13 million people. Milton E. Osborne's, "Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam, a Survey and a comparison," Data Paper No. 55, Southeast Asia Program, Dept of Asian Studies, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1965), p. 33, quotes official sources as saying that over 3,000 strategic hamlets were completed by October 1961 and the figure rose to 7,200 in July 1963. The population projected using these figures rose from a claimed 4,322,000 in October 1962 to 8,737,000 in the following year. The following criteria, as outlined in Tran Dinh Tho, p. 13, was to have been met before a strategic hamlet was considered completed:
  - The enemy infrastructure had been neutralized.
  - The population had been organized for hamlet defense.
  - The defense system (barrier, moat, trenches, traps, etc.) had been physically established.
  - Secret underground shelters for weapons and personnel had been constructed for the hamlet defense force.
  - The hamlet council and administrative body had been elected and functioning.
53. Blaufarb, p. 120; Duncanson, p. 326; and, Osborne, p. 36.
54. Thompson, p. 141.
55. Ibid , pp. 141-142.
56. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, pp. 312-313.
57. Blaufarb, p. 123.
58. Guenther Lewy, America In Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 25.

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59. "Personalism," Diem's political philosophy, is discussed in detail in Volume II, Chapter 5, of this study.
60. Douglas Pike, Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 78.
61. Duncanson, p. 321 and Lewy, p. 25.
62. Tran Dinh Tho, p. 15.
63. William Colby and Peter Forbath, Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1978), pp. 165-166.
64. Francis J. Kelly, Col., U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971, U.S. Army Vietnam Studies Series (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 19.
65. Colby. pp. 166-167.
66. Blaufarb, p. 106, additional details are available in "The Highlanders of South Vietnam," a study performed by the Central Intelligence Agency, declassified in August 1974 under Executive Order No. 11652.
67. Blaufarb, p. 106.
68. Roger Hilsman, To Move A Nation, (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1967) p. 455.
69. Col. Kelly, p. 42.
70. Ngo Quang Truong, Lt. Gen., ARVN, Territorial Forces, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History, by General Research Corp., McLean, VA., 22101, p. 5.
71. Truong, p. 26.
72. Ibid., p. 27.
73. James Lawton Collins, Jr., B. Gen, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972, U.S. Army Vietnam Studies Series. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, pp. 41-42.
74. Collins, pp. 41-43.
75. Ngo Quang Truong, op. cit., p. 32.

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76. The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Vol. I, pp. 305-306.
77. Ibid.
78. Blaufarb, pp. 118-120
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Duncanson, p. 326 and Osborne, p. 36.
82. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 717.
83. Nighswonger, pp. 63-64.
84. Tran Dinh Tho, p. 15.
85. Grinter, p. 57.
86. See The New York Times, January 15, 1964, p. 1 and excerpts from memorandum, "South Vietnam," from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to President Johnson, March 16, 1964, reprinted in The New York Times, June 13, 1971, pp. 35-36; also see Lt. Col. Edwin W. Chamberlain, Jr. USA, "Pacification", Infantry (November/December 1968), p.38. Grinter, p. 57, points out that "between February and July 1964 there were five different province chiefs in Long An."
87. Nighswonger, p. 118.
88. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II., p. 516. This point was confirmed during a review of General Westmoreland's personal papers on file at the Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept of the US Army. Following his assignment to MACV as the Deputy Commander in early 1964, General Westmoreland found himself an active and key member on the "New Pacification Committee" (Mr. David Nes was the Deputy Chief of the Mission and the Embassy's number two man behind Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge). In April 1964, Ambassador Lodge had his administrative aide take action to dissolve the Nes Committee because of its "uncoordinated" activities in the Pacification field. Soon after, Mr. Nes wrote a letter to the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Dept of State to complain about Lodge's actions to cut both him and Westmoreland out of the pacification picture. Ambassador Lodge's management difficulties are also detailed in The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 565.
89. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 521.
90. Life Magazine, "Vietnam, A Life Panel: The Lowdown from the Top U.S. Command in Saigon," December 19, 1964, p. 46B.

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91. Gravel, The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 521. In a paper presented to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara and incoming Ambassador Taylor at Honolulu (dated June 19, 1964), Lodge wrote: "A combined GVN-US effort to intensify pacification efforts in critical provinces should be made . . . The eight critical provinces are: Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Long An, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Vinh Long, and Quang Ngai. Top priority and maximum effort should be concentrated initially in the strategically important provinces nearest to Saigon, i.e., Long An, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong. Once real progress has been made in these provinces, the same effort should be made in the five others."
92. William C. Westmoreland, Gen. USA, A Soldier Reports (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1976), pp. 82-84.
93. The Pentagon Papers Vol. II, p. 521.
94. The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 522.
95. There are several status reports on Hop Tac and memos on major Hop Tac problems from late 1964 through 1965 (e.g., Hop Tac Status, dated 9 Oct 64; major Hop Tac problems dated 30 Nov 64; Position Paper on Vietnam, dated 7 Dec 64; and accomplishments of Hop Tac, dated 29 Aug 65) are available in General William Westmoreland's Private Papers on file at the US Army Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C.
96. The Pentagon Papers, Vol II, p. 527.
97. For a more detailed analysis on the Hop Tac program see The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, pp. 521-527.
98. Westmoreland, p. 85.
99. Grinter, p. 57.
100. The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 532.
101. Grinter has a good development of the various pacification techniques utilized by the third country allies during the period under discussion, pp. 58-59.
102. The Pentagon Papers, Vol II, p. 536.
103. On 5 April 1965, the GVN supplanted the term "pacification" with "rural reconstruction" which in turn was changed to "rural construction" on 30 July 1965. See directive on Rural Reconstruction Policies, GVN Central Rural Reconstruction Committee Instruction No. 1535, dated 11 December 1965. In January 1964, when the junta had renamed the

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Strategic Hamlets "New Life" Hamlets, they were later made a part of the Rural Reconstruction Program within the general concept of the Chien Thang national pacification plan. (See GVN Decree No. 64, 5 April 1965.) The name "Rural Reconstruction" continued until 30 July 1965, when Premier Ky renamed it "Rural Construction", and in February 1966, the American Mission began to refer to it as "Revolutionary Development". See George K. Tanham, War Without Guns (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 35.

104. the Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 549.
105. Frances FitzGerald, "The Struggle and the War: The Maze of Vietnamese Politics," Alartic, Vol. 220, No. 2 (August 1967): 84.
106. The Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, pp. 554-557.
107. General William C. Westmoreland, (USA, Retired), Interview at the BDM Corp, McLean, Va. on August 17, 1979.
108. General Maxwell D. Taylor, (USA, Retired), Interviewed at his residence in Washington, D.C., on July 11, 1979.
109. DoD US/VN Relations, Book 6 of 12, IV. C. 11., pp. 74-74.
110. The PROVN Study, Supra note 11, was made available for review by the US Army office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C. PROVN recommended two major initiatives: (1) Creation of an organization to integrate total US civil-military effort; and (2) the exercise of greatly increased direct US involvement in GVN activities.
111. DoD US-VN Relations, Book 6, IV. C. 11., p. 74.
112. Walter Guzzardi, Jr., "Management of the War: A Tale of Two Capitals," Fortune, April 1967, p. 137.
113. Grinter, p. 59 and DoD US-VN Relations, Book 6, IV, C. 9(b), pp. 35-36.
114. DoD US-RVN Relations, Book 6, IV. C. 8, P. 55.
115. Robert Shaplen, The Road from War: Vietnam 1965-1970 (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 36-37.
116. Grinter, P. 60, points out that in 1956 the Diem Government had done away with village government and local initiative; and that in 1967 village chiefs and village councils were given new authority by the

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GVN in an attempt to counter the inroads made by the VC infrastructure during the interim years.

117. Thompson & Frizzell, 231.
118. Ibid., p. 233.
119. DoD US-VN Relations, Book 6, IV. C. 11., p. 125.
120. Ibid., p. 127
121. Blaufarb, p. 235.
122. Grinter, p. 61 and R. W. Apple, Jr., The New York Times, July 10, 1967, p. 2.
123. Corson, p. 213.
124. Blaufarb, pp. 240-241; and General Westmoreland's Private Papers at OCMH, Washington, D.C. Westmoreland wrote a memo following a June 1967 meeting with General Thieu during which they discussed Ambassador Bunker's announcement of the new CORDS program. Thieu asked Westmoreland's advice on what the GVN should do in the way of developing a shadow Vietnamese CORDS organization and if that group should be in the Ministry of Defense. Westmoreland advised him to wait until the US reorganization of the OCO was complete before making any changes.
125. Blaufarb, pp. 241-242.
126. Thompson & Frizzell, pp. 217-218. Chapter 13, "Was There Another Way?", written by Robert Komer, provided the basis for the listing of the stages as presented in the text.
127. Grinter, p. 62.
128. Grinter, p. 62; The Washington Post, February 16, 1968, p. A-15; Time Magazine, February 16, 1968, p. 32; and The New York Times, February 25, 1968, p. 20.
129. Grinter, p. 62.
130. The PSDF was officially established on 3 May 1968, by GVN Decree No. 159-TT/SL and reconfirmed in the General Mobilization Law, GVN Decree No. 003/68 of June 19, 1968. By late 1969, there were reportedly two million on the PSDF rolls and about 4,000,000 arms had been issued (see Robert Komer, "Clear, Hold and Rebuild," Army Magazine, XX, No. 5 (May 1970): 21, and "Pacification: A Look Back and Ahead," Army Magazine, XX, No. 6, (June 1970): 24.

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131. Grinter, p. 62 and Tran Dinh Tho, P. 26.
132. John Paul Vann, opening statement, February 18, 1970, before US Congress, Senate committee on Foreign Relations, Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970, Hearings, p. 90.
133. Blaufarb, pp. 274-276.
134. Blaufarb, p. 276.
135. Grinter, P. 63 and JUSPAP/Saigon, "Village and Hamlet Elections," JUSPAO Saigon Psyops Circular #22, September 8, 1969, p. 3.
136. Allen E. Goldman, "South Vietnam and the New Security," Asian Survey, XII, No. 2 (February 1972): 129.
137. The Comptroller General of the United States, "Report to the Congress: Progress and Problems of US Assistance for Land Reform in Vietnam," USAID, Department of State, June 22, 1973, B-159451, pp. 10-11.
138. Roy L. Prosterman, "Land-to-the-Tiller in South Vietnam: The Tables Turn," Asian Survey, X, No. 8 (August 1970), and Mr. Prosterman's "Land Reform as Foreign Aid," Foreign Policy (Spring 1972): 135.
139. Grinter, P. 64
140. Robert Shaplen, "Letter from Vietnam," The New Yorker, June 24, 1972. p. 70; and the transcript of President Nixon's broadcast address on Indochina in The New York Times, June 21, 1972, pp. 1, 14.
141. Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., "On Basis of Pacification, Vietnam War Has Been Won," The Armed Forces Journal (February 1972): 50.
142. Ibid.
143. Thompson & Frizzell, p. 236.
144. Douglas Kinnard, The War Managers (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), p. 76.
145. Thompson & Frizzell, p. 236.
146. Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 349.
147. Ibid., p. 350.
148. General Willaim C. Westmoreland's Private Papers on file at the office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, Washington, D.C. (Historical File: 1-31 May 1976).

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149. Bernard B. Fall, Vietnam Witness: 1953-66 (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1966), p. 188.
150. Lewy, P. 165.
151. Nguyen Duy Hinh, M Gen, ARVN, Vietnamization and The Cease-Fire, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, (McLean, VA: General Research Corp, September 1976), pp. 16-17.
152. Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of the US Department of Defense, a policy speech given in 1971 on "Vietnamization and Total Force Planning."
153. Stephen T. Hosmer, et al., The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders, a report (R-2208-OSD-HIST) prepared for Historian, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Santa Monica, CA, The RAND Corp, December 1978), p. 9.
154. Hosmer, et al., p. 9.
155. Ibid., pp. 9, 10.
156. Ibid.
157. Nguyen Duy Hinh, p. 183.
158. Lewy, p. 199 and MACCORDS-PSG, "Impact of the Enemy Offensive on Pacification," September 16, 1972, p. 2.
159. Lewy, p. 206.
160. Ibid.
161. Grinter, p. 67.
162. Ibid., p. 68.
163. BDM interview with Ambassador Samuel D. Berger at his residence in Washington, D.C. on June 22, 1979.
164. The Cooper Report, pp. xiv-xvii, and Thompson and Frizzell, pp. 231-279.
165. Hosmer, et al., p. 129.
166. The Cooper Report, pp. xiv-xvii, Thompson and Frizzell, pp. 217-279, and Gelb and Betts, pp. 349-352, all provide collaborating as well as additional supporting insights and lessons.



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## CHAPTER 6 US WITHDRAWAL

For four years General Abrams had performed with dignity, one of the most thankless jobs ever assigned to an American general. He took over a force of 540,000 men in 1968 but was immediately shackled by mounting restrictions. He was continually given assignments that made no military sense. Starting in 1969 he was asked to dismantle his command at an ever-accelerating rate while maintaining the security of South Vietnam and putting the South Vietnamese forces into a position from which they could undertake their own defense.<sup>1/</sup>

- Henry A. Kissinger  
White House Years, 1979

### A. INTRODUCTION

The initial withdrawal of US Forces in South Vietnam -- 25,000 combat troops from a peak level of 543,000 personnel -- was announced by President Nixon in his meeting with President Thieu on Midway Island 8 June 1969.<sup>2/</sup> So began the irreversible process of an accelerated unilateral withdrawal of US military forces.

Efforts to strengthen South Vietnamese forces and to negotiate with the North Vietnamese to end the conflict were begun by the Johnson Administration in the summer of 1967. The Nixon Administration reaffirmed the priorities of the Johnson Administration policies as part of the strategy for ending the war and withdrawing US troops in National Security Decision Memorandum 9 (NSDM 9) on April 1, 1969. The three-point memorandum outlined Vietnamization <sup>3/</sup>, negotiation and withdrawal:

- Rapid and effective preparation of the RVNAF to stand alone, i.e., Vietnamization
- Insistence on mutual withdrawal of DRV and US troops with adequate inspection procedures in negotiations with the North Vietnamese
- Development of a specific timetable for the progressive withdrawal of US troops regardless of progress made at the Paris Peace talks.<sup>4/</sup>

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President Nixon's overall strategy in the first few months of his administration was to try to weaken the enemy to the maximum possible extent, to speed up the modernization of GVN forces and then to begin withdrawals. The withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam was dependent upon:

- The ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves without American troops
- The progress of negotiations at the Paris Peace Talks
- The level of enemy activity.5/

As discussed in Volume V, Chapter 5, the Vietnamization program consisted of generally three phases:

- Turning over the ground combat responsibility to the RVNAF -- US to continue to provide air, naval and logistics support.
- Helping the RVNAF to develop its own combat support capabilities in order to achieve self-reliance on the battlefield.
- Reducing the US presence to a military advisory role.

In developing negotiation strategies and requirements, President Nixon abandoned the Manila Formula of President Johnson which required North Vietnamese forces to be withdrawn six months before the withdrawal of US forces would begin. A new and more concrete negotiating proposal of simultaneous withdrawal was adopted. The US was subsequently to move from the position of mutual to unilateral withdrawal and from a position of residual US forces in country to complete departure within two months of successful negotiation. We were clearly on the way out of Vietnam by negotiation if possible, by unilateral withdrawal if necessary.6/

It was thought that a policy of Vietnamization and negotiation would reduce casualties and mollify public opinion. The Nixon Administration attempted to provide a scenario in which most advocates of alternative policies could see some aspects of their recommendations in the administration's policies.7/ In the process President Nixon gained some time as a result of reduced domestic pressures and could focus attention on further developing the strategy for withdrawal.

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The Vietnamization and negotiation approach, however, was viewed with varying degrees of skepticism by the key decision makers. President Nixon was most skeptical about efforts to negotiate. He didn't believe that negotiations would amount to anything until the military situation changed fundamentally, and he was not too eager for negotiations until some military progress had been made.<sup>8/</sup> Once the initial withdrawal announcement had been made, Kissinger, as did others, saw that the administration would be pressured more and more by the public and the administration's critics to accelerate the withdrawal at an ever increasing level. This expected increased pressure to expedite withdrawal of US forces could only serve to strengthen Hanoi's position in the upcoming negotiating process.

Secretary of Defense Laird was as skeptical about the utility of negotiations as he was about the possibility of military victory. He felt it was essential to get the United States out of Vietnam before the administration lost too much domestic support. Both Nixon and Kissinger, however, thought that Vietnamization should proceed less precipitantly than Secretary of Defense Laird advised. President Nixon repeatedly told the public and his aides that he wanted a peace and not an armistice -- a peace that would last. According to some analysts, Nixon intended Saigon to have "the maximum amount of time to develop an effective self-defense capability."<sup>9/</sup> Hence Vietnamization had to proceed slowly so as to develop RVNAF capability to handle what would be an obviously serious threat from the North Vietnamese for sometime to come.<sup>10/</sup> Kissinger saw Vietnamization as essential to assure, when an agreement was at hand, that Saigon would have little ground on which to argue that it was premature.<sup>11/</sup>

### B. CONSIDERATIONS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING US WITHDRAWAL

The Johnson Administration established a troop ceiling of 549,500 for South Vietnam in April 1968. That troop ceiling included all military personnel authorized in the country of South Vietnam, but did not include naval forces operating off shore with the Seventh Fleet nor US forces stationed outside the country, i.e., Thailand, Philippines, etc. Actual US

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troop strength in South Vietnam, however, peaked at about 543,000 in April of 1969.<sup>12/</sup>

Although President Nixon had stated that he had a timetable in mind for the withdrawal of US forces, it was not announced in total because of the negative impact such an announcement would have had on US flexibility in negotiations with Hanoi. Nonetheless, each time a troop withdrawal decision was announced by the president, it triggered a re-examination of all military spaces remaining in-country to assure that a balanced-force withdrawal was maintained and that all military spaces were being effectively and efficiently utilized. Competition for the ever declining military spaces authorized in-country became the order of the day as the withdrawal gathered momentum.<sup>13/</sup> Furthermore, once the decision to withdraw was made and announced, the US commitment to unilateral withdrawal was manifest and irreversible both in Vietnam and the US. The Department of Defense began to plan its budget on the basis of anticipated troop reductions.<sup>14/</sup> And the appetite for withdrawals was insatiable; withdrawal became an end in itself.<sup>15/</sup>

### 1 Withdrawal Goals

In June 1969 Secretary Laird offered alternative time tables ranging from eighteen to forty-two months and ceilings for the residual American force -- those troops remaining in-country until Hanoi's forces withdrew -- ranging from 260,000 to 306,000. In his memorandum to the president on June 2, 1969, he offered a 'feasible' time table of forty-two months (stretching the withdrawal to the end of 1971) and a residual force of 260,000. He warned that in the absence of North Vietnamese reciprocity, a more rapid withdrawal would result in serious setbacks to the pacification program, a significant decrease in allied military capacity, and the possibility of a South Vietnamese collapse.<sup>16/</sup> As it turned out, the increasing domestic pressures for a speedier withdrawal and termination of the military conflict, coupled with reasonably favorable assessments on progress of the Vietnamization effort, led to an acceleration of the initial schedule -- the US troop level in country was approximately 180,000 at the end of 1971. It should be recalled that initial plans provided for a

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large residual US force to remain in-country. However, President Nixon in his 3 November 1969 speech changed that provision when he offered to accept a total American pullout in a year in case of agreed mutual withdrawal.

The public protests and demonstrations in 1969 as well as demands in the media and Congress for unilateral concessions in the negotiations -- and the October Moratorium -- clearly indicated that President Nixon was going to have extreme difficulty in maintaining public support for the two to three years he would need to work the US out of Vietnam "with honor." This despite the fact that by October 1969 the administration had announced withdrawal of over fifty thousand troops -- on 12 September the President had announced a second withdrawal of 40,500 personnel by 15 December -- including a reduction in B-52 sorties by 20 percent and tactical air operations by 25 percent, and a change in the mission objectives for General Abrams that amounted to a decision to end offensive operations.<sup>17/</sup> Secretary Laird, a skilled politician, may have had such thoughts in mind when in late November and early December 1970, on a visit to South Vietnam, he informed General Abrams that his office (OSD) would develop redeployment plans for the long-term period.

General Abrams convinced Mr. Laird that the planning effort should, for obvious reasons, be undertaken by the MACV staff. In late December 1970, COMUSMACV directed the creation of a small planning group to develop a plan for the redeployment of US forces from South Vietnam. He gave a troop-level goal of 50,000 to 60,000 remaining in country by September 1972. All of the planning effort was conducted under very tight security conditions with the planning group members enjoined to secrecy and only a handful of key general officers on the staff authorized a need-to-know by COMUSMACV.<sup>18/</sup> In the latter part of March 1971, the redeployment plan was briefed to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Laird. The team briefed CINCPAC in Hawaii en-route to Washington. It should be noted that the Chairman JCS and CINCPAC were not aware of this planning effort until the briefing and, as will be discussed later, this fact caused difficulties.

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The redeployment plan developed as a result of this effort became the basis for subsequent withdrawal actions. Although modified several times to provide for changes adopted in the RVN force structure, US presidential decisions on timing of withdrawal increments, and updates of assessments on expected DRV actions, the plan provided a general roadmap for accomplishing gradual withdrawal of US forces.

### 2. Change in Objectives for the Field Commander

The existing mission statement for US forces in Southeast Asia, under the Johnson administration, was to "defeat the enemy and force its withdrawal to North Vietnam." The new mission statement (which went into effect 15 August, 1969) focused on:

- Providing maximum assistance to the South Vietnamese to strengthen forces.
- Supporting pacification efforts.
- Reducing the flow of supplies to the enemy.

Reportedly the president changed his mind on the new mission statement at the last minute but Secretary Laird had already issued the new instructions on the change in mission.19/

In an earlier position critical of the US military strategy for Vietnam, Kissinger stressed that US military operations through 1968 had little relationship to the US declared political objectives -- the US fought a military war, while our opponents fought a political war; the US sought physical attrition, while our opponents aimed for our psychological exhaustion. Further, the criteria and indicators used to assess or measure attainment of our objectives were ambiguous and misleading.20/ While Vietnamization and Pacification were the priority programs from 1969 onward, under the new commander, General Abrams, the military policy was changed from "search and destroy" to "clear and hold" with a major effort devoted to clearing and holding operations to keep NVA units out of the populated areas -- this was a major task of the remaining US forces but it was increasingly being taken over by ARVN.21/ On 6 January 1971 Secretary of Defense Laird announced that the US ground combat role would end by mid-summer; thereafter the US role would be to provide air and logistics support.

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### 3. Concepts for Planning Withdrawal at the Field Command 22/

By way of background, the MACV staff had prepared contingency plans for a number of probable circumstances, such as troop withdrawals under non-hostile conditions that would take place if the Paris Peace Talks were successful and hostilities were terminated. There was no long-range planning by the staff, however, for redeployment of forces under continued conditions of hostilities. Analysis of the president's announcements clearly revealed his intent to drawdown US force levels in South Vietnam at a fairly steep rate to show the American public substantial progress with his Vietnamization program by the 1972 election year.

Unfortunately, the field command, MACV, had to continue to implement the campaign plan with no advance knowledge of when the president would announce the next withdrawal, the amount of troops involved, or the period of time available to MACV for execution of the president's decision. Prior to the development of a long-range redeployment plan, referred to earlier, the withdrawal planning effort was conducted in a reactive and hasty planning mode. At most, COMUSMACV was advised less than 24 hours before the announcement was to be made. Within hours following the presidential announcement the joint staff would request MACV to advise on the units designated to redeploy, strengths and spaces involved, redeployment dates and impact assessments. Needless to say, this hasty reactive planning and implementation of redeployments within a constrained time frame, while concurrently conducting military operations, was disruptive, inefficient and not without risk to the continued security of the command.

At the field command level, the guidance of COMUSMACV was essentially as follows: ensure that a balanced force concept was maintained throughout the redeployment period; as ground combat forces depart, ensure the maintenance of capabilities essential for strategic and tactical combat air sorties -- these were to be the only reserve immediately available to the commander for influencing operations when necessary; and ensure that the US units withdrawn do not eliminate a mission-capability requirement of the approved RVNAF force structure.

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The programmed and planned force structure of the GVN's military forces was used as a basic starting point in the redeployment planning process. In essence, this required a detailed evaluation of RVNAF mission capabilities projected for the fourth quarter of CY 1972. For example, if 10 medium truck companies were a programmed RVNAF force requirement and only eight companies were in the force structure in the mid-fourth-quarter of CY 1972, with the remaining two companies programmed to be formed and operational sometime in 1973, then a US capability to provide for the shortfall was retained in-country. <sup>23/</sup> In this manner a list of US forces required in country to match the GVN shortfall was initially developed. A mission analysis of all US forces stationed in country was also undertaken to identify those units which would be required to remain in country in support of the US forces earmarked in the shortfall category.

The requirements for the US advisory element in country, beyond the fourth quarter of CY 1972, were also examined to determine what reductions and reorganizations would be needed in that time frame. It was envisioned that a small advisory team at the ARVN division level would be appropriate.

A reinforced airmobile element was retained in country to provide MACV with a US security force. Additionally the 196th Brigade was retained in MR I to provide security for the substantial residual US air force elements that would be required to continue operating out of Da Nang air base. While GVN forces were expected to assume increasing responsibility for providing local security of residual US forces, it was felt not in the best interest of the US to be solely dependent upon them for security of the command. Additionally, it was considered prudent to have quickly available in country a small US force for emergencies or other unforeseen contingency situations.

A command and control structure for the residual forces was also developed in order to determine what changes were necessary in the existing levels of headquarters in the country, and when they should be undertaken.

After having scoped the size and composition of the 60,000 man force to remain in country beyond September of 1972, planning focused on



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establishing and scheduling the force increments to be redeployed. This activity required the determination of units to be included in each force increment package, and the sizing of the package -- manpower spaces and tonnage, analysis of port capability in country and available shipping, changes required in the existing stationing program, and impact on existing in-country interservice agreements.

Frequent assessments of the enemy's capabilities were also conducted as the vulnerability of the command in country would be increased with each force redeployment. The initial planning effort considered the continued presence of South Korea's two army divisions in the northern part of the country thru 1971. It was further assumed that the South Korean Marine Brigade would be returning to South Korea sometime in mid 1971. The assessment of US withdrawals from MR I indicated an imbalance of combat forces remaining in that region and the RVN force structure was amended to include provisions for an additional combat division in MR I. Unfortunately considerable delay was experienced in organizing and equipping the additional division (The division designated, the 3rd ARVN Division, was heavily pounded by greatly superior NVA units in the Easter offensive, but before it broke it had held on at Dong Ha for a month).

The need for tactical air resources, immediately available to the field commander, became increasingly important as the withdrawal of combat ground forces picked up. Where possible, tactical air units which could perform their missions from bases in Thailand were relocated out of GVN in order to permit maximum utilization of the ever-declining, troop-ceiling spaces authorized for the forces remaining in country.

Composition of the redeployment force increments are indicated in Table 6-1.

### C. ASSESSMENT OF US WITHDRAWAL

#### 1. Influences Leading to Withdrawal

A detailed discussion of the key decisions and decision makers involved in the US withdrawal from Vietnam is provided in Volume III of

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TABLE 6-1. TOTAL US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN SOUTH VIETNAM

DATE	ARMY	NAVY	MARINE CORPS	AIR FORCE	COAST GUARD	TOTAL
31 DEC. 1960	800	15	2	68	-	ABOUT 900
31 DEC. 1961	2,100	100	5	1,000	-	3,205
30 JUNE 1962	5,900	300	700	2,100	-	9,000
31 DEC. 1962	7,900	500	500	2,400	-	11,300
30 JUNE 1963	10,200	600	600	4,000	-	15,400
31 DEC. 1963	10,100	800	800	4,600	-	16,300
30 JUNE 1964	9,900	1,000	600	5,000	-	16,500
31 DEC. 1964	14,700	1,100	900	6,600	-	23,300
30 JUNE 1965	27,300	3,800	18,100	10,700	-	59,900
31 DEC. 1965	116,800	8,400	38,200	20,600	300	184,300
30 JUNE 1966	160,000	17,000	53,700	36,400	400	267,500
31 DEC. 1966	239,400	23,300	69,200	52,900	500	385,300
30 JUNE 1967	285,700	28,500	78,400	55,700	500	448,800
31 DEC. 1967	319,500	31,700	78,000	55,900	500	485,600
30 JUNE 1968	354,300	35,600	83,600	60,700	500	534,700
31 DEC. 1968	359,800	36,100	81,400	58,400	400	536,100
30 APR. 1969	363,300	36,500	81,800	61,400	400	*543,400
30 JUNE 1969	360,500	35,800	81,500	60,500	400	538,700
31 DEC. 1969	331,100	30,200	55,100	58,400	400	475,200
30 JUNE 1970	298,600	25,700	39,900	50,500	200	414,900
31 DEC. 1970	249,600	16,700	25,100	43,100	100	334,600
30 JUNE 1971	190,500	10,700	500	37,400	100	239,200
31 DEC. 1971	119,700	7,600	600	28,800	100	156,800
30 JUNE 1972	31,800	2,200	1,400	11,500	100	47,000
31 DEC. 1972	13,800	1,500	1,200	7,600	100	24,200
30 JUNE 1973	**	**	**	**	**	**

\* PEAK STRENGTH.

\*\* TOTALS FOR ALL FIVE SERVICES COMBINED LESS THAN 250.

SCURCF: US Department of Defense, OASD (Comptroller),  
 Directorate for Information Operations, March 19, 1974

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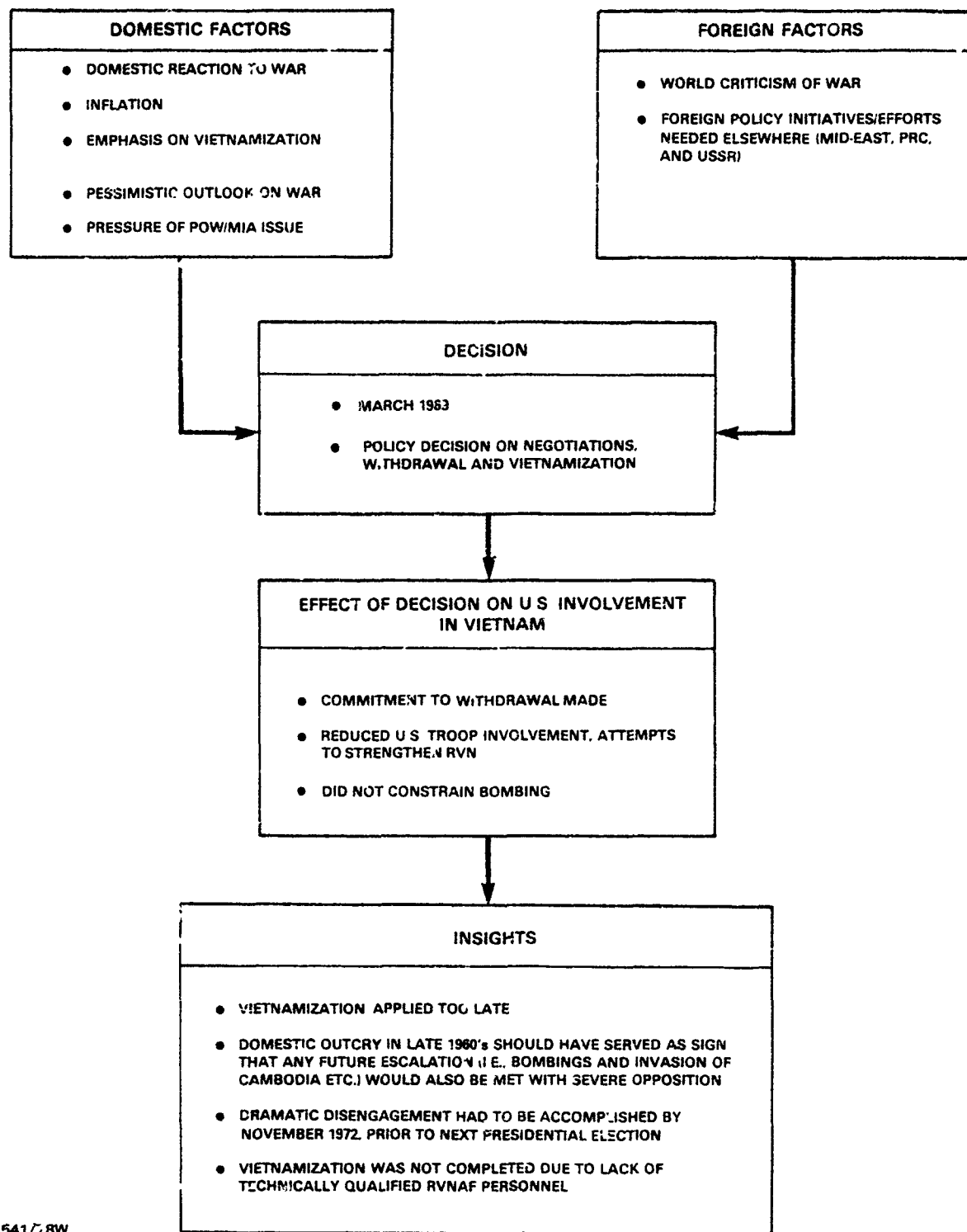
this study. (See Chapter 3, pp. 3-39 to 3-47, and Appendix A to Volume III, pp. A-65 to A-70.) The primary influences leading to withdrawal included congressional and public disenchantment with the war which had defied the best efforts of two presidents trying to bring it under control, growing inflation, and the seemingly endless casualty lists. Criticism, even from allies, was strong and the government that the United States was supporting in Vietnam was held up to ridicule, both in the US and abroad. Figure 6-1 depicts the major factors involved in the US policy decision to negotiate, Vietnamize, and withdraw.

### 2. Consequences of US Withdrawal on the War

Despite the great personnel turbulence caused within US units in RVN during the withdrawal, the extrication of US forces was accomplished with surprising success. The size of the increments to be withdrawn was established arbitrarily by the president, another example of how statistics drove much of the war, and the field force commander was not consulted or otherwise asked for his views on the size or timing of the withdrawals. Only because of General Abrams' insistence did Secretary Laird agree to permit the Military Assistance Command special planning staff to determine the precise composition of the increments. To assure tactical integrity among the remaining forces, both RVNAF and US/FWMAF, the forces in the southern areas came out first, leaving a shield of US and ROY units in the northern provinces to prevent an incursion across the DMZ by PAVN divisions. At the same time, additional ARVN divisions were formed to take up the slack. In the post-Tet period, the GVN had instituted a draft, and the steady increase in RVNAF roughly matched the draw down of US and FWMAF forces.

When withdrawal was first contemplated, a US residual force was programmed for RVN indefinitely. Had such a force actually remained in country, the course of events since 1973 might have been different. In any event, the Vietnamization program was orchestrated to provide the RVNAF with well-equipped, modern, effective fighting force. Implicit in the GVN's ability to defend the RVN, however, was the promise by President Nixon that the US would take decisive action on behalf of the South

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Figure 6-1. US Policy Decision on Negotiations, Withdrawal, and Vietnamization

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Vietnamese in the face of any major threat or violation of the cease-fire which ultimately was signed. US response in May-October 1972, beginning with the DRV's Easter offensive, showed that the newly modernized PAVN forces could be hurt and that they had acquired an inventory of sophisticated arms that also made them more vulnerable than they had been, at least to a modern force. General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker thought that the RVNAF could successfully defend the Republic as long as the US kept its part of the bargain by providing air and naval support in the event the RVNAF was threatened.24/ (See Appendix A)

By 1972 the heavy drawdown of US forces had forced the RVNAF to build up its own army. Despite substantial, valid criticism of the RVNAF, the results were promising if one compares the building process with that which occurred in Korea.25/ After three years of fighting, 1950-1953, the Korean Army was still considered to be poor, except for a few units which had distinguished themselves during the war. It required several years after the war for the ROK forces to develop the training, esprit, and combat capability that they finally achieved. In a similar vein, the RVNAF had the potential to develop in a few years into a competent military force. To do so, however, required time. To buy time, the US had to make good on its commitments, which was not done.26/

To the DRV, the US withdrawal provided the opportunity for overpowering the RVNAF if they could do so when the US was unable to retaliate and before the RVNAF gained sufficient strength to defend RVN successfully. The unilateral US withdrawal made it possible for the DRV to consummate the cease-fire negotiations with the expectation that they could soon defeat the RVNAF, particularly once the US fell off its earlier negotiating position requiring the withdrawal from Laos and Cambodia of the PAVN forces in those areas.

### 3. Consequences of US Withdrawal on International Relations

US international relations were strained throughout most of the war. This subject is presented throughout Volume III of this study. In brief, the withdrawal had positive and negative effects in the sphere of international relations. Allies in Europe had been concerned that the US

was squandering its assets and attention in a remote part of the world to the detriment of the NATO countries. They generally expressed relief when the US began its withdrawal, convinced that the US would reaffirm its ties to NATO. At the same time, however, some European officials expressed concern about the steadfastness of the US as an ally.27/

In Asia, several nations owe their present healthy and independent status to the US involvement in Vietnam. The Second Indochina War absorbed much of the attention of the DRV and China; Indonesia successfully put down a Chinese Communist-inspired coup in 1965 and maintained its independence after overthrowing its communist-leaning president, Sukarno.28/ The ASEAN nations had time to establish strong economic ties and what appear to be viable governments.29/

#### 4. Consequences of the War on Asian Power Relationships

This topic is addressed at some length in Volume VIII of this study. It is interesting to note here, however, that the DRV's seizure of RVN caused the PRC considerable anxiety. Hanoi's incursions into Cambodia brought a Chinese attack into northern Vietnam -- as a lesson. Cambodia now is torn by an internecine struggle, with strong PAVN forces in the van. Laos has long since slipped into the Soviet orbit.

Japan is wary. A recent public opinion survey in Tokyo showed that 65% of those questioned did not consider the US to be a reliable ally.30/ Yet the Japanese prefer to see the US out of Vietnam.

#### 5. Consequences of US Withdrawal Planning

The withdrawal was accomplished in a reasonably orderly manner. Tactical integrity was maintained. The short span of time allocated to the withdrawal did not permit sufficient time for the parallel effort, Vietnami- zation, to be accomplished effectively. The planning was done by the field commander's staff, as properly it should have been. Critics of that planning, generally the staffs of subordinate commanders who felt the burden of short deadlines which were necessary because of the secrecy required, also accomplished their tasks in orderly fashion.

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## D. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Redeployment planning in such contingencies should be initiated early and assigned a high priority effort. Staffing for this function needs to be provided for in contingency planning. One might argue that redeployment planning is a normal component of the overall planning function that should be performed, but, if treated in this fashion, the redeployment planning effort is more likely to be assigned the last priority in the lengthy list of actions a planner must consider, particularly at the outset of contingency operations. The function, if done properly, should embrace the political, economic and military spectrum involved when withdrawal of US forces is directed, whatever the reason, i.e., a decision by the president in response to the public's will or a recommendation by the field commander when mission and objectives are attained from the US point of view. In this connection there needs to be incorporated a more systematic method with generally agreed criteria for assessing or measuring the degree of progress towards satisfying attainment of the national strategic objectives established for the operation.

Force structure planning for host country forces was an area that should have received a greater degree of in-depth analysis. The doctrine and mission responsibilities of the Services as expressed in JCS Publication #2 may be workable for the US military but may be quite impractical to apply in other countries, particularly the less developed countries.

Force structure planning must go beyond assessment of military requirements and the military capabilities needed to meet those requirements. It must also consider such areas as the human resources available and the competing demands for them to satisfy military and non-military requirements, the education system and base of technical knowledge available, the infrastructure required in country, and major program lead times as well as the realities imposed by political, economic and budgetary restraints.

Modifications to the RVNAF force structure, particularly the RVN Air Force (VNAF), hampered effective planning and distribution of personnel resources allocation. When it became obvious that US forces would be

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redeployed at a fairly fast rate, there appeared to be a Washington emphasis on giving the GVN all the mission-essential capabilities similar to those which US units were then providing in the country. There was relatively little serious study given to the impacts on the total RVNAF force structure, the limited manpower spaces available, training and logistical problems, and lead times involved to acquire an operational capability by newly created units.

The need for complete secrecy in planning the redeployment of US forces from RVN while concurrently conducting military combat operations is self evident and requires no further explanation. The requirement for secrecy, however, prevented orderly redeployment planning at all levels.

The personnel replacement system and the logistical systems of the military services, particularly the Army, which had the larger strength level in country, had to react and adjust almost on a constant basis since unit stand-down dates for redeployment increments were not announced until 30 days prior to scheduled departure dates. In the meantime, in response to requirements levied earlier, replacement personnel, supplies and equipment were already enroute to South Vietnam. This necessitated frequent and often disruptive in-country personnel reassignments among units earmarked for redeployment and those designated to remain in country.

RVNAF, which engaged in the process of rapidly expanding their forces and assuming more of the ground combat role, could not do any realistic planning for taking over the bases and camps vacated on relatively short notice by redeploying US forces. Further, provisions for adequate manpower spaces required to operate and maintain those bases and camps, were not fully considered in development of the SVN force structure.

The training problems inherent in developing an expanding military force of the size encountered in South Vietnam impacted on development of the redeployment schedule for the withdrawal of US forces as well as the lead time required for RVNAF units to acquire an operational capability. When training was required in the CONUS school systems, an individual took approximately 36 weeks of English language training before being entered in the skill-oriented course of instruction. This long-lead requirement for



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English training proved to be a significant obstacle in CONUS training for all RVN military services, particularly the Air Force. The lack of effective aptitude testing in country added to the problem since there was no way to determine if the student who successfully completed 36 weeks in language training had the aptitude to complete the end course of instruction successfully, i.e., vehicle mechanic, radio mechanic, communications officer, helicopter pilot, etc. Attempts to develop a master training plan for the RVNAF began in 1968-1969, far too late in the process. The plan identified only the training requirements with little focus on problems anticipated in its implementation. A higher priority should have been given to the overall RVN training problem and the role of the US training establishments to provide the level and quality of instruction required. It should be noted, however, that the Vietnamization program -- turning the war over to GVN forces -- did not get priority attention until the Nixon era.

Free World forces in GVN included those nations indicated in the Appendix. Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Republic of Korea contributed combat forces, and the Republic of the Philippines provided a civic action group which had its own security force. Just as the US administration was sensitive to casualty figures, so were the allied forces, particularly the Korean and Thai forces whose contributions to field operations were often criticized as being less aggressive than desired. While it was expected that allied free world forces would begin withdrawal of their forces along with the US force withdrawal, the timing for withdrawal of the two South Korean divisions positioned in MR I and II impacted on the US redeployment plan. Since US combat forces in MR I were earmarked for late withdrawal in the planning effort and a new ARVN division was to be established in MR I, it was important that combat strength levels in MR I be maintained until an orderly adjustment of the RVNAF force deployment could be effected. In that regard, retention of the two ROK combat divisions was necessary.

Protection of the US command after late 1971 was largely dependent on the ARVN forces. After the "ground combat role" had been assumed by ARVN

in accordance with the schedule of Vietnamization program -- Phase I -- the US command was pressured by the administration to withdraw all ground combat forces from the country. The command frequently argued the need for conducting a "dynamic defense" during the course of the withdrawal and a US combat force, to remain in country, was essential for security of the command. Nevertheless the 3<sup>d</sup> Bde, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav which had been designated in the MACV redeployment plan as the contingency force along with the 196<sup>th</sup> Bde in MR I were redeployed in July-August 1972 leaving 40,000 US military remaining in country. The principle of maintaining a balanced force throughout the course of the withdrawal was no longer possible.

Given the situation, the increasing US reliance on RVNAF for security appeared to be unwise and not without grave risk to the US military and civilian forces remaining in country. Further, it placed an additional and unnecessary burden on the already strained RVNAF ground forces.

The key insights from the study of US withdrawal planning are as follows:

- The President, driven by domestic considerations, set the pace of US withdrawal and announced the rate of withdrawal to MACV planners virtually without warning. This procedure left MACV too little flexibility to design withdrawal plans which would ensure that the RVNAF could successfully assume the diverse responsibilities which it was now required to fulfill.
- MACV was forced to serve two different masters with different aims. the Secretary of Defense who pressed for accelerated withdrawals, and the National Security Adviser who required continued US combat presence in Vietnam as a negotiating chip.

#### E. LESSONS

- Withdrawal of combat forces may be accomplished in a hostile or non-hostile environment; either case requires efficient planning by trained personnel who are in possession of all of the required information, and the senior field force commander must designate

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the sequence of withdrawal to assure tactical integrity and efficient retrograde of personnel and equipment.

- Withdrawal plans must be designed to respond not only to US needs and considerations, but also to conditions in the host country and, especially, the host country's ability to adjust effectively to US withdrawal.

## APPENDIX

<u>Sea Program Number</u>	<u>Approval Date</u>	<u>Force Level Authorized</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Increase/Decrease</u>
<u>Build-up</u>				
1 (Phase I)	Jul 31, 65a/	190.1	Jun 67	-
2 (Phases II, IIA, IIIB)	Dec 11, 65a/	393.9	Jun 67	+203.8
3	Jul 2, 66b/	437.0	Jun 67	+ 43.1
4	Nov 18, 66c/	470.0	Jun 68	+ 33.0
5	Aug 14, 67d/	525.00	Jun 69	+ 55.0
6	Apr 4, 68e/	549.5	Jun 69	+ 24.5
<u>Withdrawal</u>				
7 (Increment 1)	Jun 8, 69f/	524.5	Aug 31, 69	- 25.0
8 (Increment 2)	Sep 16, 69g/	484.00	Dec 15, 69	- 40.5
9 (Increment 3)	Dec 15, 69h/	434.0	Apr 15, 70	- 50.0
				<u>-115.5</u>
President announces reduction of 150,000 US spaces. Done in stages				
	Apr 20, 70i/	(284.00)	May 1, 71	
10 (Increment 4)	Jun 3, 70j/	384.00	Oct 15, 70	- 50.0
11 (Increment 5)	Oct 12, 70k/	344.0	Dec 31, 70	- 40.0
12 (Increment 6)	Mar 1, 71l/	284.0	May 1, 71	- 60.0
				<u>-150.0</u>
President announces reduction of 100,000. Done in 3 stages.				
	Apr 7, 71m/	(184.0)	Dec 1, 71	
13 (Increment 7)	Apr 9, 71n/	254.7	Jun 30, 71	- 29.3
14 (Increment 8)	Apr 9, 71o/	226.0	Aug 31, 71	- 28.7
15 (Increment 9)	Apr 9, 71p/	184.0	Dec 1, 71	- 42.0
				<u>-100.0</u>
16 (Increment 10)	Nov 12, 71q/	139.0	Jan 31, 72	- 45.0
17 (Increment 11)	Jan 13, 72r/	69.0	May 1, 72	- 70.0
18 (Increment 12)	Apr 26, 72s/	49.0	Jul 1, 72	- 20.0
19 (Increment 13)	Jun 28, 72t/	39.0	Sep 1, 72	- 10.0
20 (Increment 14)	Aug 28, 72u/	27.0	Dec 1, 72	- 12.0
				<u>-157.0</u>

Figure 1. Authorized US Force Levels in South Vietnam, in Thousands

FOOTNOTES

- a. SEA Programs 1 and 2 were referred to as Phase I and Phase II Deployments, respectively. Phase II was then modified, and programs Phase IIA and Phase IIB were adopted in late 1965 and early 1966. A draft Presidential memorandum of Dec. 11, 1965 incorporated the Phase II Deployments, called the "December Plan."
- b. SecDef memorandum July 2, 1966, "Southeast Asia Deployment Plan."
- c. SecDef memorandum, Nov. 18, 1966, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #4."
- d. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Aug. 14, 1967, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #5."
- e. Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum, April 4, 1968, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #6."
- f. Presidential announcement on June 8, 1969, followed by SecDef memorandum, July 15, 1969, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #7."
- g. Presidential announcement on Sept. 16, 1969, followed by SecDef memorandum, Oct. 6, 1969, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #8."
- h. Presidential announcement on Dec. 15, 1969, followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Feb. 9, 1970, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #9."
- i. Presidential announcement on April 20, 1970 to reduce 150,000 troop spaces in South Vietnam by May 1, 1970, promulgated by incremental redeployments, SEA Program #10 through SEA Program #12.
- j. Presidential announcement on June 3, 1970, followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Aug. 27, 1970, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #10."
- k. Presidential announcement on Oct. 12, 1970, followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Dec. 15, 1970, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #11."
- l. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, March 1, 1971, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #12."
- m. Presidential announcement of April 7, 1971 to reduce 100,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by Dec. 1, 1971.
- n. SecDef memorandum, April 9, 1971, "U.S. Redeployments." followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, June 2, 1971, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #13."
- o. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, July 15, 1971, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #14."
- p. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Sept. 28, 1971, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #15."
- q. Presidential announcement of Nov. 12, 1971 to reduce 45,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by Jan. 31, 1972 and SecDef memorandum, Nov. 15, 1971, "U.S. Redeployments From South Vietnam," followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, Dec. 30, 1972, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #16."
- r. Presidential announcement of Jan. 13, 1972 to reduce 70,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by May 1, 1972 and SecDef memorandum, Jan. 13, 1972, "U.S. Redeployments From the RVN," followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, March 17, 1972, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #17."
- s. Presidential announcement of April 26, 1972 to reduce 20,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by July 1, 1972 and SecDef memorandum, May 4, 1972, "Redeployments From the RVN," followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, June 12, 1972, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #18."
- t. Presidential announcement of June 28, 1972 to reduce 10,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by Sept. 1, 1972 and SecDef memorandum, July 1, 1972, "U.S. Redeployments From the RVN," followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #19."
- u. Presidential announcement of Aug. 28, 1972 to reduce 12,000 U.S. spaces in South Vietnam by Dec. 1, 1972 and SecDef memorandum, Sept. 5, 1972, "U.S. Redeployments From the RVN," followed by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) memorandum, "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #20."

SOURCE: Journal of Defense Research, Fall 1975

Third-nation forces: end-of-year strength in thousands.

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Australia	.2	1.5	4.4	6.8	7.6	7.6	6.8	2.0	0
Korea	.2	20.7	45.6	47.8	49.9	50.2	48.6	45.7	35.4
New Zealand	.03	.1	.2	.5	.6	.5	.6	.1	0
Philippines	.03	.1	2.1	2.0	1.6	0.2	0.1	.1	.1
Thailand	<u>.02</u>	<u>.02</u>	<u>.2</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>5.9</u>	<u>11.8</u>	<u>11.6</u>	<u>6.0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	.5	22.4	52.5	59.3	65.6	70.3	67.7	53.9	35.5

SOURCE: Table 3, Southeast Asia Statistical Summary Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), February 14, 1973.

Figure 2. Third-Nation Forces. End-of-Year Strength in Thousands

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## CHAPTER 6 ENDNOTES

1. Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1976) p. 1111.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
3. In White House Years Kissinger points out that the term "de-Americanize" was used by General Goorpaster in a briefing to the President. Secretary of Defense Laird said that a term was needed to place emphasis on the right issues -- a term like "Vietnamization." Hence the term was born.
4. Charles MacDonald, An Outline History of US Policy Toward Vietnam (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 74.
5. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 271.
6. Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, September 10, 1969, subject "Our Present Course in Vietnam." Reprinted in White House Years, pp. 1480-1482. Also see Henry Kissinger, "Vietnam Negotiations," Foreign Affairs, January 1969; and John Stoessinger, Henry Kissinger: The Anguish of Power (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 51.
7. Allen E. Goodman, The Lost Peace (Stanford, Cal.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 87.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
10. Kissinger, *supra* note 6, pp. 1481-1482.
11. Goodman, p. 87.
12. Thomas Thayer, "Series B: Tactical Warfare Analysis of Vietnam Data", Journal of Defense Research, Volume 7B, Number 3, Fall 1975. Prepared by Battelle Columbus Laboratories for the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense. Recently declassified. See Appendix A to this chapter for a table depicting the buildup and withdrawal of US forces in RVN, extracted from this study.
13. Colonel Edward F. Astarita, US Army (Ret) was the chief withdrawal planner for General Creighton Abrams, COMUSMACV. Col Astarita directed the planning, and presented briefings on the withdrawal planning to CINCPAC, the Chairman of the JCS and Secretary of Defense.

14. William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 359.
15. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1101.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
17. Col. Astarita interviews, November 1979. Col. Astarita was a principal contributor to this chapter based on his extensive first-hand experience as the chief withdrawal planner.
18. *Ibid.* Col. Astarita described the need for utmost secrecy in the planning phase since premature release of information on the identity and sequence for unit withdrawals would risk counteractions by the enemy while at the same time the combat effectiveness of units scheduled for withdrawal would undoubtedly suffer. Col. Astarita acknowledged the fact that combat units did not have much time to stand down and prepare for withdrawal as a result of the very necessary policy regarding secrecy.
19. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 276. Also see MacDonald, pp. 75-76.
20. Kissinger, "Vietnam Negotiations", supra note 6. Also see USMACV, J-52 Strategic Objectives Study, October 1968. Declassified. Filed in Military History Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.
21. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker described to a BDM study team the difference in tactics implemented when General Abrams assumed command of USMACV in 1968. He stated that General Westmoreland looked on the war as one of attrition, but you can't win such a war when the enemy has sanctuaries. He said that General Abrams felt that one had to hold territory to make Pacification and Vietnamization work while strengthening the RVNAF until they could take over on their own. Interview at The BDM Corporation on 8 November 1979. Ambassador Bunker's deputy, Ambassador Samuel Berger, concurred with the foregoing evaluation in a BDM study team interview at his home on 22 June 1979. The increasing security responsibility of the ARVN was described by Col. Astarita and confirmed by several members of the BDM staff who served in RVN during that period.
22. This section is based mainly on information provided by Col. Astarita.
23. Of course a residual US presence was maintained only after an evaluation of the stated requirement and a determination that the RVNAF shortfall had to be compensated for.
24. Bunker interview



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25. Army Attache Saigon, Intelligence Report, subject "Assessment of Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), 5 July 1974. Declassified July 1975. The attache provided a realistic and uncomplimentary assessment of the ARVN, and when he learned that his report had not been forwarded to Washington, he provided copies to the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor to the President.
26. Bunker interview.
27. General John Vogt, USAF (Ret) reported that he had been asked by several senior NATO officials whether or not the US would really back NATO, basing their questions on the US withdrawal from Vietnam and the subsequent failure to make good on the promise to come to the GVN's aid.
28. Berger interview.
29. General agreement was expressed at the Senior Review Panel meeting on September 8, 1979 that ASEAN was healthy and viable and that it owed much to the US actions in Southeast Asia.
30. Dr. Henry J. Kenny, Special Assistant to Ambassador Mansfield in Tokyo, told of the Asahi Shimbun public opinion survey that reflected the attitude of the Japanese man on the street. The survey was taken in 1978.

CHAPTER 7  
NEGOTIATIONS

The partition of Vietnam in 1954, despite the military defeat of the French in the battle for Dien Bien Phu, meant that the North Vietnamese achieved less at the conference table than they had won on the battlefield. They resolved to never let that happen again. By the early 1960s, the North Vietnamese had come to see negotiations only for their tactical value. Thus, what Hanoi sought in direct talks with the United States was a way to improve its chances of winning a war, not a way of preventing or ending one.<sup>1/</sup>

Allen E. Goodman  
The Lost Peace, 1978

A negotiating procedure and a definition of objectives cannot guarantee a settlement, of course. If Hanoi proves intransigent and the war goes on, we should seek to achieve as many of our objectives as possible unilaterally. We should adopt a strategy which reduces casualties and concentrates on protecting the population. We should continue to strengthen the Vietnamese army to permit a gradual withdrawal of some American forces, and we should encourage Saigon to broaden its base so that it is stronger for the political contest with the communists which sooner or later it must undertake.<sup>2/</sup>

Henry A. Kissinger  
Foreign Affairs, Jan. 1969

A. INTRODUCTION

At various times during the post-WWII period of US involvement in Southeast Asia, American diplomats attempted to use negotiations as a means to attain a positive balance of power in the area. Those efforts were hampered by a US foreign policy which varied from ambivalence in the late forties to ambiguity in the fifties and sixties, while the policy of the Communist Vietnamese throughout remained constant.

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This chapter will outline the extent to which the negotiating process assisted or detracted from the attainment of US goals in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. The strengths and weaknesses exploited by the participating parties will be identified and analyzed within the context of the approaches taken in the negotiating process.

Insights and lessons will be extracted from this analysis, and recommendations on how the US should approach and conduct negotiations in the future will be developed.

### B. PHASED ANALYSIS OF NEGOTIATIONS

To provide the desired perspective in this analysis, it was convenient to consider the negotiations in Vietnam in the following three phases:

- immediate post-WWII through the Geneva Conference to 1951
- the period 1961 to mid-1968
- the Paris Negotiations.

#### 1. Phase 1: Post-WWII to 1961

US policy toward Southeast Asia during WWII was dictated by the expedient military strategy of concentrating its forces against the Japanese homeland and British intransigence on the colonial issue. The result was that the US accepted British military primacy in Southeast Asia and concurred in the division of Indochina at the 16th parallel between the British and the Chinese for the purpose of occupation after the conflict had ended.<sup>3/</sup>

In September 1945, with British cooperation, the French reestablished themselves south of the 16th parallel. The return of the French to the South was facilitated by the lack of firm control by the newly independent Vietnamese government over competing nationalist elements. At that time the situation in the North was different. The government of Ho Chi Minh had established itself in power, but the Chinese were expected to arrive momentarily to exercise their occupational functions. The return of the French to the North became conditional on two counts:

- there had to be an agreement whereby French troops would replace Chinese forces, and

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- there had to be some form of accord with Ho and the DRV government.4/

- a. French-Chinese Negotiations

The French undertook negotiations with the Chinese in Chungking and, at the cost of major concessions, reached an agreement on February 28, 1946, permitting them to move military forces north of the 16th parallel. In this the French were probably assisted by the fact that Chiang Kai-shek needed his troops for operations against Chinese Communist forces in China.5/ During this early period a series of conversations between the French and Ho Chi Minh showed that there were compelling reasons for tolerance and compromise on both sides. For example, the French were easier to deal with than the Chinese.

- b. French-Vietnamese Negotiations

French-Vietnamese negotiations conducted from early 1946 through the Geneva Accords in 1954 were characterized by French reluctance to alter in any significant way the pre-war colonial perquisites they had once enjoyed. At least 13 agreements, conferences or declarations suggested progress towards some form of Vietnamese independence, but little real progress materialized. These events are presented in brief in Appendix A to this Chapter.6/

- c. The Geneva Conference of 1954

Soon after the cease-fire in Korea, in July 1953, Ho Chi Minh's new Chinese Communist allies began to increase the flow of combat materiel and advisers to his Viet Minh forces fighting the French in Indochina. Pressure began to build up in France for a negotiated settlement along lines of the one being worked out in Korea. At the Bermuda Conference of December 1953, President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Joseph Laniel of France decided to discuss the Indochina problem with the Soviet Union at the foreign minister level. 7/

The foreign ministers met in February, 1954, and agreed to a conference of interested powers to discuss both Korea and Indochina, to be held at Geneva in April of that year. That was the signal for General Vo Nguyen Giap, Ho's field combat commander, to deliver a crippling

blow to the French at Dien Bien Phu so as to strengthen his side's negotiating position.8/ US officials reluctantly agreed to the meeting, since it was their belief that any settlement would probably be contrary to US interests. The US aim, therefore, was to take the emphasis off the conference and put it back onto the battlefield, a view which was referred to in Washington as "united action" (of the same character as the UN intervention in Korea--broad, multilateral and military).9/

The participants in the Geneva talks included the US, France, Great Britain, the French-sponsored State of Vietnam (GVN), Laos, Cambodia, the DRV, the Soviet Union and Communist China. Britain and the Soviet Union, in the persons of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, were co-chairmen.

When the Geneva conference began on April 27th, the news of the Dien Bien Phu battle completely overshadowed the Korean part of the negotiations. By the time the delegates turned to discussion on Indochina matters (May 8th), Dien Bien Phu had fallen.

Initially, the US postured itself as an "interested observer nation" during the Indochina discussions, attempting to remain influential but unentangled and unobligated as a participant.10/ In contrast to the US attempt to cut back on its involvement in the Conference proceedings, the French hoped to obtain sufficient US and British support to bolster their negotiating position in the face of broad communist pressure.

In response to a French aide-memoire requesting support, the US and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on 28 June 1954, which warned: "If at Geneva the French Government is confronted with demands which prevent an acceptable agreement regarding Indochina, the international situation will be seriously aggravated."11/

The US and the British formulated an unpublicized agreement between themselves on a set of principles which, if worked into the settlement terms, would enable them to "respect" the armistice. The principles, known subsequently as the "seven points", were communicated to the French. They were:

- Preservation of the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia, and assurance of Viet Minh withdrawal from those countries;

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- Preservation of at least the southern half of Vietnam, and if possible an enclave in the Tonkin Delta, with the line of demarcation no further south than one running generally west from Dong Hoi;
- No restrictions on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam "materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes, and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers";
- No "political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control";
- No provision that would "exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means";
- Provision for "the peaceful and humane transfer, under international supervision, of those people desiring to be moved from one zone to another of Vietnam";
- Provision for "effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement."12/

The French exploited US ambivalence during the conference, and after getting Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to agree to returning high level US representation to the table, they began pressuring the Chinese and Soviet diplomats to bring the proceeding to a conclusive ending. Although privately the Western "Big Three" were not in complete agreement on how to proceed, the communists at Geneva apparently took Western public pronouncements and the return of high level US negotiators (by mid-July) to the table as a sign of a united Western front. With strong British support, the French ploy (skillfully directed by Mendes-France) worked and the communists -- Russian and Chinese -- forced major concessions from their DRV ally which brought settlement essentially in line with the seven points outlined above.13/

The final Geneva Accords consisted of Armistice agreements for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as well as a Final Declaration of the Conference. They were designed to:

- provide conditions to end hostilities and re-establish peace in Indochina, and,

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- provide conditions conducive to the future independent political development of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The signatories to the Armistice were delegates of the Generals in Command of the combat forces. The DRV signed all three agreements (for separate cease-fires in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), while France signed the Vietnam and Laos agreements. The Khmer National Army signed the Cambodian one.<sup>14/</sup> The Final Declaration, which called for a political settlement -- elections in Laos and Cambodia in 1955 and in Vietnam in 1956 -- was not signed by any of the participants.

The French and Viet Minh were the designated executors of the Accords, while the GVN, under the Bao Dai regime, clearly repudiated the Accords and declined to accept any responsibility for observing or enforcing them. In fact, the GVN was given its independence by France before the Accords were signed, and they were treated as a separate state throughout the conference. The GVN signed nothing at Geneva. Through the concessions of the communist countries and the firmness of its Western Allies, the GVN had been given an opportunity to get its act together and consolidate itself.

A few days after the Accords had been signed, Secretary of State Dulles, referring to "the loss of Northern Vietnam", expressed the hope that much would be learned from the experience toward preventing further communist inroads in Asia. Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, in a separate declaration, said that the US would "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb" the agreements and "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."<sup>15/</sup>

### 1) Outcomes as Viewed by the Participating Nations <sup>16/</sup>

- United States

- public view was cautious, the best of a bad situation
- private reactions were gloomy: NSC evaluated the conference as a major defeat, OCB considered it a

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stride forward for communism, and others viewed it as a loss of prestige

- officially, the US took note of all three armistice agreements and paragraphs 1 through 12 of the Final Declaration.

- Great Britain

- their diplomacy was an unqualified success
- their prestige as a peace-maker was heightened
- the danger of a wider war was averted
- they re-established diplomatic ties with PRC
- the way was cleared for Britain to join SEATO

- France

- they were allowed to extricate themselves with honor
- they retained a significant foothold in Indochina through the French Union
- they continued to be a significant force of influence in the region

- GVN

- they were allowed to establish a viable governmental authority in South Vietnam
- they were given time to consolidate territory and regroup the population
- they lost control of territory north of the 17th parallel
- international inspection teams were designated to enforce the treaty.

- DRV

- they gained control of all Vietnamese territory north of the 17th parallel
- united action in support of France by Western allies was averted



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- their national unity was compromised
- a quick political solution (elections within 6 months) was deferred for 2 years
- they were forced to yield their claims advanced in support of the Pathet Lao and the Free Khmer Forces
- they were forced to accept international inspection teams over indigenous ones
- Soviet Union
  - the threat of massive US intervention was forestalled
  - their prestige as a world peacemaker was enhanced
  - they saw France's rejection of the European Defense Community (one month after the conference) as a result of their strategy
  - communist consolidation of all Indochina was not achieved
- China (PRC)
  - they saw the treaty creating a neutral buffer zone
  - they preempted US military moves by diplomacy
  - their domestic economy was protected (the Korean war had exacerbated economic problems in the PRC).
  - the treaty did not preclude the return of US influence to Southeast Asia.

### 2) Impact on US Goals for Southeast Asia

The Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu signalled to the world the military impotence of the French forces in Indochina. The US, with the bitter experience of Korea still in mind, feared that the French tactical defeat presaged strategic disaster. The US goal of preventing the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit was beginning to crumble. After somewhat reluctantly joining the Geneva conferences, the US gave consideration to the following options:

- merely urging the French to a greater effort

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- assisting the French with material support in varying degrees
- intervening in conjunction with the British
- taking military action with all those prepared to do so
- working out a long range Southeast Asian alliance.

None of these courses of action proved practical at the time. Nonetheless, the outcome of the Geneva Conference did serve to catalyze the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). At the highest levels of the US government, the "loss" of the northern half of Vietnam to the communists was considered another retreat before communist expansion.

Secretary of State Dulles publicly drew two lessons from the Geneva Conference: 17/

- popular support was essential to combat communist subversion, and
- collective defense against aggression could not be devised after the aggression was in progress.

Dulles moved promptly to counter further communist advances by spearheading the development of a NATO-like collective security treaty for the region. An international conference was convened at Manila late in the summer of 1954 to devise such a security system.

### d. The Manila Conference of 1954: Formation of SEATO

The Geneva Accords were flawed from the very date of signing. The DRV presumed that there would be a near term unification of North and South Vietnam under their leadership. On the other hand, the GVN immediately announced its intention to resist, and the temporary demarcation line, which was a key element of the settlement, soon became the basis for conflict. Furthermore, President Eisenhower quickly let it be known that the US did not feel "bound" by the accords, which to him were simply the "best...under the circumstances." 18/

In less than two months after Geneva, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) came into being. Composed of the US, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand, with South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia added as protocol nations, SEATO was to be the new shield against further communist expansion. 19/

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US representatives to Manila had been instructed to insist on several preconditions for US military action in Southeast Asia. They were:20/

- that the US would refuse to act unilaterally in Asia, because of heavy commitments to NATO
- that any military action (by the US) would have to involve not only Asian nations, but also major European partners
- that the US would not be prepared to commit ground troops into combat in Asia; other nations would do the ground fighting under a cover of US sea and air power
- that the US defined the communist threat as the only real danger to the region.

### 1) Conference Outcomes

The Manila Conference culminated in a pact termed the "Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty and Protocol Treaty, September 8, 1954"; the treaty was ratified by the US Senate by a vote of 82 to 1, and entered into force on February 19, 1955.

Throughout the discussions at Manila the US insisted that the focus of the treaty be on the prevention of further communist expansion in the region. When the other nations would not acquiesce to US pressure to make anticommunism the treaty's specific objective, the US requested and got an "understanding" appended to the treaty.21/ In event of other kinds of aggression the US agreed to consult with the other member nations.

The final item of the treaty was a "protocol," which stated unanimous agreement among the member nations to include Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam under the provisions of the treaty. In other words, these countries, without actually becoming members of the pact, became entitled to "economic support including technical assistance" and also "to defense against any attack, overt or not, from without or within."22/ The US wanted these nations included under the SEATO Treaty, but membership would have been legally in contravention of the Geneva Accords.

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Vice Admiral A. C. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) and Chief Defense Department representative in the US delegation to the Manila Conference had the following to say at the conclusion of the proceedings:

I believe the Manila Conference accomplished the objective expected of it from the United States point of view. In my judgment our Defense representation in the U.S. Delegation succeeded in its efforts to insure that the Treaty is consistent in its military implications with the positions taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by this Department. 23/

In the final treaty the US, in effect, had made a statement of its intent to counter further communist expansionist moves in Southeast Asia, but left vague the specifics of its probable response. There was to be no unified command, no bases, and no contribution of combat troops to a standing army or group.

### 2) SEATO Compared to NATO

Although the other Manila conferees intended the SEATO pact to be similar to the NATO pact, the US was not prepared to pay the price of such a strong coalition. The US, with its NATO commitments already a sizeable burden, was reluctant to commit itself to SEATO as it had to NATO. Therefore, the conferees took pains with the SEATO terminology, calculating carefully the effect the pact would have on their own domestic politics as well as on the communist-threatened nations. It remains, however, that the SEATO treaty wording on the point of just what response would be made by the members in the event of an armed attack was intentionally ambiguous.

With respect to treaty institutions, both the NATO and SEATO treaties established councils for military and planning purposes. In the NATO treaty this council was authorized to set up "subsidiary bodies," while in the SEATO Treaty such authorization was not given. This was a disappointment to several of the delegations at Manila. Initially, the Australians proposed that the conference set up a strong military organization, but they were persuaded by the US representatives to accept a

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modification to their proposal -- the concept of consultation. Thus, military participation in SEATO was to be "consultative" rather than permanent and formal as in the NATO Treaty.24/

### 3) The Impact of the SEATO Treaty on US Objectives in Southeast Asia.

The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty was to be a "new initiative in Southeast Asia" to protect the US position in the Far East and stabilize "the present chaotic situation ... to prevent further losses to communism" through subversion or overt aggression.25/ But the SEATO pact proved to be neither the new initiative nor the strong anti-communist shield sought by Secretary of State Dulles.

The failure to attain the goals set for US negotiators at Manila were self-induced. While Dulles wanted to put the communists on notice that aggression on their part would be vigorously opposed, the JCS insisted the US must not be committed financially, militarily or economically to unilateral action in the Far East and that US freedom of action must not be restricted. The two objectives conflicted and one cancelled out the other. Thus, the article of the SEATO treaty which was to provide the mechanism for collective action in the event of an enemy threat was diluted and was written so as not to pledge an automatic response to meet force with force. Instead, each signatory promised to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."26/ The US attempted to put teeth into the SEATO pact through unilateral declarations of US readiness to act. Secretary Dulles defined the obligations under the treaty as being a clear and definite agreement on the part of the signatories, including the US, to come to the aid of any member of the Pact who under the terms of the treaty was being subjected to aggression.27/ However, he failed to instill the same dedication to instant intervention into the other SEATO member nations.

The obligation assumed at the Manila conference emphasized the importance attached to Southeast Asia by the US. Refusal by the US to pledge unqualified support to SEATO demonstrated the need for indigenous strength and stability in the region in order to counter communist

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power, to make infiltration and aggression less appetizing to the potential enemy. Of the three protocol states, the most important in the eyes of US leadership, was the newly created South Vietnam.

Although SEATO was intentionally ambiguous on the point of just what response would be made by the members in the event of an armed attack, it did provide Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon with a justification for subsequent US policy -- aid and military presence in Vietnam. Though no one seriously challenged US military and economic aid provisions under the SEATO Treaty, the Johnson and Nixon administrations came under fire for the use of US ground combat forces in the conflict.

SEATO may have delayed communist aggression in South-east Asia, but in the end, the treaty organization did not deter the communists from actively pursuing their goals there.

### 2. Phase 2: 1961 to Mid-1968

Early on in this phase, the overriding US objective was to limit involvement in what President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense McNamara regarded as essentially a Vietnamese war. In the spring of 1962, the military situation in South Vietnam was showing some signs of improvement, and by mid-year the prospects looked bright for the RVNAF. To some, the end to the insurgency seemed in sight, although that optimism was not without the recognition that there were unsolved political problems and serious soft spots in areas of the military effort. US leadership, both on the scene in Vietnam and in Washington, was confident though cautiously optimistic.<sup>28/</sup>

During the same timeframe, events in other parts of the world, some ostensibly unrelated, were asserting direct relevance on US policy in Vietnam. Developments in Berlin, Cuba and Laos far overshadowed Vietnam, and forced the Kennedy Administration to put Vietnam in the perspective of other US world interests.

With respect to Indochina, the Kennedy Administration established the following objectives:<sup>30/</sup>

- to seek the neutralization of Laos
- to avoid an open-ended Asian mainland land war

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- to seek the withdrawal of US military support personnel and advisers from RVN
- to treat the insurgency in RVN as fundamentally a Vietnamese matter
- to increase pressure on the GVN to make the necessary reforms and make the RVNAF fight harder
- to put the lid on bureaucratic and political pressures for increased US involvement in Vietnam.

a. The Geneva Conference on Laos (1961-62)

In the fall of 1961 and through the spring of 1962 the US, its goal of a free and independent Laos frustrated by Soviet-backed North Vietnamese subversion, had decided to salvage as much as possible by settling for neutralization. After lengthy and complex diplomatic maneuvering, an agreement on the critical Laotian issue was reached. On July 23, 1962, the 14-nation declaration and protocol 31/ establishing the neutrality of Laos was signed formally, ending the 15-month Geneva Conference on Laos. In the Declaration of Neutrality the North Vietnamese, together with all other participants, gave their word that:

- they would not introduce foreign troops or military personnel into Laos
- they would not use the territory as a military base
- they would not interfere in the internal affairs of Laos
- all foreign irregular and regular troops would be withdrawn from Laos in the shortest time possible. 32/

1) Outcomes of the Laotian Neutrality Treaty

The North Vietnamese never pulled their forces from Laos as they had promised to do. They did not stop sending men and war supplies to assist the Pathet Lao. More significant for the RVN, the DRV continued using the jungle trails and roads of eastern Laos and the panhandle to infiltrate fighting forces and war materiel into the South in support of its aggression there. The North Vietnamese also did not permit the coalition government of Laos or the International Control Commission (ICC) to exercise their functions in the communist-held areas of Laos. The

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failure to obtain North Vietnamese compliance with the neutrality accords of 1962 was a bitter disappointment to President Kennedy.<sup>33/</sup>

### 2) Impacts of the Laotian Neutrality Treaty

In July of 1962, with the Laotian problem apparently resolved, President Kennedy asked Secretary McNamara to re-examine the Vietnam problem. The Secretary of Defense did so at a conference held at Honolulu. The RVN situation depicted during the meeting was generally favorable; hence, the following decisions <sup>34/</sup> were made:

- to prepare plans for a scaling down of US units in RVN (a phased withdrawal over a 3-year period)
- to prepare long-range RVNAF officers and NCO's training programs
- to prepare a long-range materiel support program (with an eye towards reducing MAP funds).

In part, the phased withdrawal program was rooted both in false optimism about the strength of the Diem government and the impact of the newly created strategic hamlet program, and in the belief that the NLF would continue to pose only a minor threat to the GVN in the countryside. President Kennedy, it is said, believed that if any of these factors should change, the way to counter their effects was through diplomacy, not US military intervention.<sup>35/</sup> Senator Mike Mansfield, who traveled to Southeast Asia in October 1962 at Kennedy's request, agreed, suggesting that if the situation should change for the worse, "We may well discover that it is in our interests to do less rather than more than we are doing. If that is the case, we will do well to concentrate on a vigorous diplomacy without bringing about sudden and catastrophic upheavals in Southeast Asia."<sup>36/</sup>

With the Laotian treaty behind them, the North Vietnamese continued with the unrestricted use of that country as a sanctuary. Meanwhile, the US, trying to live by the letter of the agreement, found that its war was constrained to Vietnam. Therefore, to counter the DRV's "wider war", the US was forced to initiate a "secret war" in Laos (which was fought by CIA operatives).



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### b. The First Secret Contact

Recognizing that a Laotian settlement probably would not work unless some kind of agreement was developed for Vietnam, JFK authorized W. Averell Harriman to approach the North Vietnamese Delegates at the Geneva Conference on Laos with an offer of secret talks. The president was seeking to let the DRV know that he regarded the conflict in South Vietnam as an internal Vietnamese affair. Harriman was to suggest that the agreement on Laos could serve as a model for an accord guaranteeing Vietnam's neutrality. The diplomatic feeler was kept secret so as not to alarm President Diem, who was opposed to any such talks. The meeting and the site was arranged by a foreign minister of a neutral country attending the conference, and Ambassador Harriman took elaborate measures to avoid being seen by GVN negotiators. He and his deputy, William Sullivan, had a ninety-minute meeting with the DRV's foreign minister and the minister's military assistant.37/

Ambassador Harriman suggested that the US and DRV develop an agreement similar to the one developed for Laos. Hanoi's representative countered with the NLF Four Point Manifesto as the only basis for peace in Vietnam. Essentially, the NLF manifesto 38/ called for the following:

- the immediate and total withdrawal of US personnel
- the establishment of national coalition government
- the US end its support of the Diem regime
- the peaceful reunification of all of Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese Communists held that Diem's government was illegitimate and US support illegal; therefore, from their viewpoint there was nothing to negotiate. They felt it was only a matter of time before the Diem regime would collapse and they would move in and take over the South. The DRV attitude was characterized by a US representative, who attended that early meeting, as follows:

They thought then that South Vietnam would be theirs in a matter of months or years and that, therefore, there was no need to enter negotiations to get what would certainly come through our default.39/

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### 1) Outcome of the Early Initiatives

The US continued its low-keyed efforts over the next eighteen months to engage the DRV in a diplomatic dialogue, without notable success. Official positions remained far apart with each side unwilling to bend or compromise. American diplomats warned that if the DRV and the NLF did not stop disrupting the peace in the South, their aggression would be countered. The North Vietnamese, believing that the US would not stand firm or commit more troops to aid South Vietnam, persisted in their view that there was nothing to negotiate about.

### 2) Impact of the Early Initiatives

There were several significant aspects of the negotiations during the 1961-1963 timeframe which impacted on the conflict and on subsequent negotiations. They were:

- the treaty to neutralize Laos caused the US to limit the war to Vietnam while the DRV was allowed to fight an expanded war which included Laos.40/
- the failure of those early initiatives contributed, among others, to the US view that the only way to respond to DRV intransigence was to increase commitments to the GVN.41/
- the early secret diplomacy tended to reinforce misperceptions on both sides, which ultimately led to US combat involvement in the conflict.42/
- the stalemate in the early negotiations allowed time for the then sagging GVN to ride out a period of political chaos and social unrest and attain a degree of order and stability.

### 3) Analysis of the Early Initiatives

Early negotiations set the general pattern for subsequent peace talks. Ho Chi Minh learned his negotiating lessons well-- first, from his many dealings with the French and then, during the 1954 Geneva Conference. After Geneva, he resolved never to give up at the conference table what he and his followers had won on the field of battle. Ho and his colleagues came to see negotiations for their tactical value and used them to strengthen their stranglehold on Indochina. The Laotian

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Neutrality Treaty of 1962 (or their complete disregard of the treaty) allowed them to fight the "wider war" while the US found itself limiting the conflict to Vietnam.

Misperceptions of the DRV's goals on the part of US leadership eventually led to the belief that the only way to bring the DRV to the negotiating table was to demonstrate US resolve and counter force with force. Ultimately, this attitude led to massive US air and combat troop involvement in the Vietnam war.

c. Negotiations and Bombing: "Bomb-Talk-Bomb"  
or "Tit-For-Tat"

In 1964, shortly after assuming his responsibilities as President, Lyndon Johnson announced that the neutralization of RVN was unacceptable to the US, that it just was another name for a communist takeover. President Johnson, faced with a "Catch-22" dilemma, realized that using force to compel the DRV to negotiate would encourage them to continue fighting; yet, even if negotiations were started, the North Vietnamese would use them only to win concessions, and not to reach a compromise settlement. Consequently, he decided to talk to the North Vietnamese only when he was sure they had something to say.

Late in 1964, U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, made an abortive attempt at arranging for secret talks. The DRV supposedly agreed to the proposal in November, but the US showed no interest. Finally, some five months later American UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson responded that the US had been assured that the North Vietnamese were not interested in meeting. Later, North Vietnamese leaders denied they had told U Thant that they were willing to have secret talks with the US. This was the first occasion where they used the "whipsaw technique" of bargaining in which one DRV official would pass a message on to one intermediary and another DRV official would turn around and contradict the first.<sup>43/</sup>

Subsequent US diplomacy during this phase was intimately linked to the bombing program. The graduated "tit-for-tat" response coupled to the targeting limitations set by LBJ were supposed to elicit

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from the DRV some form of reciprocity or interest in accommodation. When that did not bring the desired results within a reasonable timeframe, the president's advisers began to debate the efficacy of adding bombing halts to the US strategy.

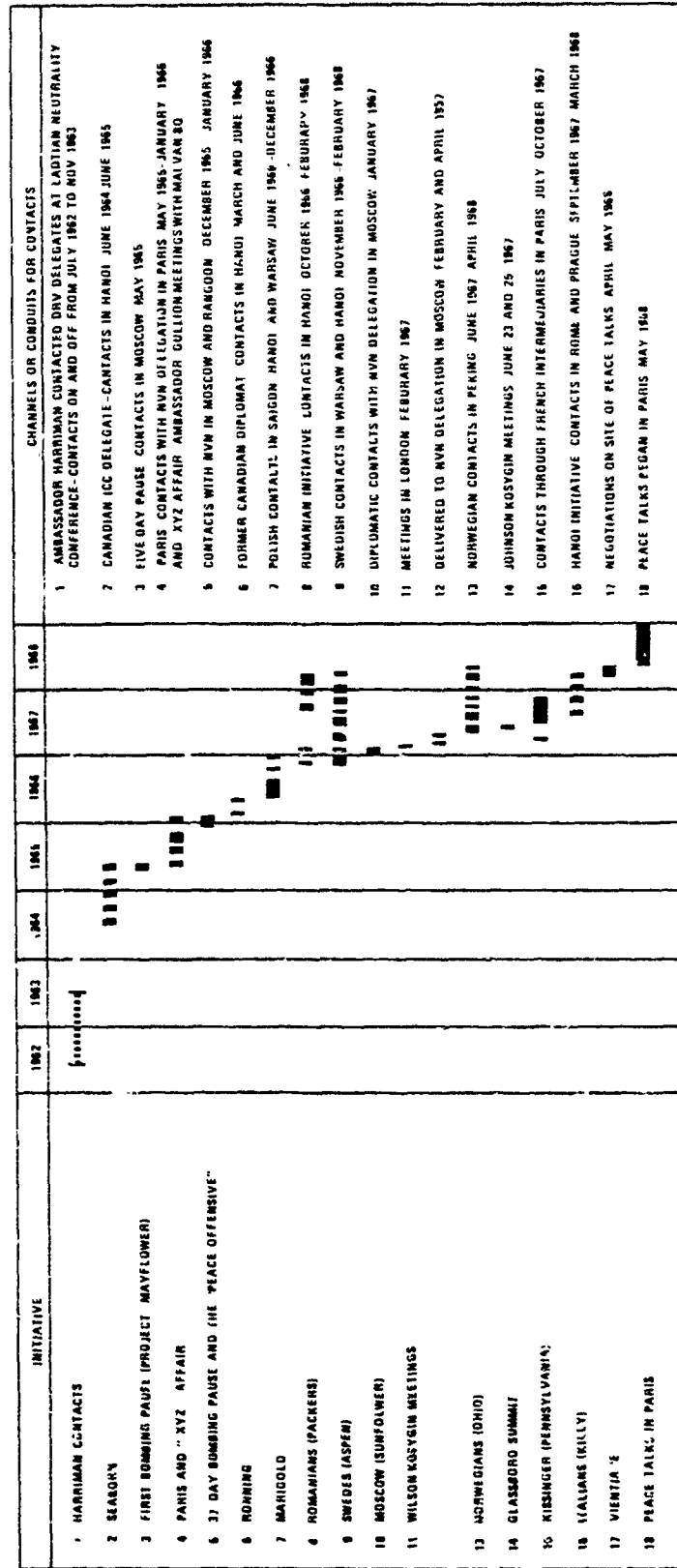
Several insiders 44/ placed the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with occasional support from the Department of State, in favor of using the unilateral bombing pauses to get the DRV to the negotiating table. The US military -- JCS, CINCPAC and MACV --with support from a few influential people in State (e.g., Ambassador Maxwell Taylor 45/), opposed bombing pauses in order "not to give the communists a free ride to the battlefield."46/

### 1) The Seaborn Initiative

Meanwhile, J. Blair Seaborn, head of the Canadian delegation to the International Control Commission (ICC), got into the peace talks picture. From June 1964 to June 1965, Seaborn served as a communications link between President Johnson and DRV Premier Pham Van Dong (see Figure 7-1 for a timeline representation of those and other contacts during this phase). Seaborn was to tell DRV leadership that the US had limited objectives in Vietnam. The US commitment was to the independence and territorial integrity of South Vietnam so that the people there could freely and peacefully choose their own form of government; and, that US military activities were not aimed at North Vietnam, only at northern infiltrators operating in the South. Seaborn was also instructed to say that the US believed Hanoi controlled the military operations of the NLF (evidenced by the nearly complete cease-fires that had occurred on the DRV's orders at Tet in both 1963 and 1964), and wanted them to stop the military and materiel support of the NLF.

Seaborn's efforts were unsuccessful. He was told by DRV leaders that there was nothing to negotiate about.

The wounding of over 100 American GI's during a well-coordinated VC attack on the US adviser's garrison and adjacent heliport at Pleiku on February 7, 1965, was a challenge that LBJ and his advisers could not "turn cheek to." The Pleiku incident gave the US reason to no longer



CHANNELS OR CONDUITS FOR CONTACTS

- 1 AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN CONTACTED DRV DELEGATES AT LAOTIAN NEUTRALITY CONFERENCE--CONTACTS ON AND OFF FROM JULY 1962 TO NOV 1963
- 2 CANADIAN ICC DELEGATE--CONTACTS IN HANOI JUNE 1964-JUNE 1965
- 3 FIVE DAY PAUSE CONTACTS IN MOSCOW MAY 1965
- 4 PARIS CONTACTS WITH NVN DELEGATION IN PARIS MAY 1965-JANUARY 1966 AND XYZ AFFAIR AMBASSADOR GULLION MEETINGS WITH MALVAN 30
- 5 CONTACTS WITH NVN IN MOSCOW AND RANGDON DECEMBER 1965-JANUARY 1966
- 6 FORMER CANADIAN DIPLOMAT CONTACTS IN HANOI MARCH AND JUNE 1966
- 7 POLISH CONTACTS IN SAIGON HANOI AND WARSAW JUNE 1966-DECEMBER 1966
- 8 ROMANIAN INITIATIVE CONTACTS IN HANOI OCTOBER 1966-FEBRUARY 1968
- 9 SWEDISH CONTACTS IN WARSAW AND HANOI NOVEMBER 1966-FEBRUARY 1968
- 10 DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH NVN DELEGATION IN MOSCOW JANUARY 1967
- 11 MEETINGS IN LONDON FEBRUARY 1967
- 12 DELIVERED TO NVN DELEGATION IN MOSCOW FEBRUARY AND APRIL 1967
- 13 NORWEGIAN CONTACTS IN PEKING JUNE 1967 APRIL 1968
- 14 JOHNSON KOSYGIN MEETINGS JUNE 23 AND 25 1967
- 15 CONTACTS THROUGH FRENCH INTERMEDIARIES IN PARIS JULY OCTOBER 1967
- 16 HANOI INITIATIVE CONTACTS IN ROME AND PRAGUE SEPTEMBER 1967 MARCH 1968
- 17 NEGOTIATIONS ON SITE OF PEACE TALKS APRIL MAY 1968
- 18 PEACE TALKS BEGAN IN PARIS MAY 1968

SOURCE: Adapted from Lyndon B. Johnson's The Vantage Point

Figure 7-1. US Contacts and Peace Initiatives with North Vietnam, 1962-1968

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hesitate to use military force in Vietnam. US dependents were evacuated from the South and a series of reprisal "tit-for-tat" air strikes were conducted over North Vietnam. "Flaming Dart," followed by "Rolling Thunder," (sustained bombing of the north) began under very strict limitations, controlled at the highest levels and approved on a week-to-week basis by the White House.

Faced with a lack of notable success, the first bombing pause, Project "Mayflower", was initiated in May 1965 (three months after "Rolling Thunder" began). Presidential advisers 47/ had reasoned that early reprisal raids hardened the DRV's position on negotiations as "tit-for-tat" gave way to a sustained air war. They also reasoned that the DRV position was unlikely to become more flexible unless the air attacks were stopped. After much dialogue, the Saigon Embassy gave in to the Washington push for a bombing pause. The embassy hoped to "link the intensity of the US bombing after the resumption closely to the level of VC activity during the pause. The purpose would be to make it clear to Hanoi that . . . a downward trend in VC activities would be 'rewarded' in a similar manner by decreasing US bombing." 48/ There was another small but vocal faction in Washington that was seeking an end to sustained raids and a return to the "tit-for-tat" response to VC/NVA actions. LBJ elected to try the bombing pause gambit.

The "Mayflower" bombing pause lasted for five days with no results or satisfactory response from the DRV. 49/ A note passed through the US Embassy in Moscow was returned by North Vietnamese diplomats without comment. The US responded by resuming the bombing attacks.

Shortly after the bombing was resumed, Mai Van Bo, Chief of the DRV Economic Delegation in Paris, approached French intermediaries with what appeared to be a softening of his country's position. But on further investigation US officials concluded that the Bo initiative had no new substance. 50/ The North Vietnamese employed the same technique (delaying their response to a US bombing pause until a few hours after it was resumed) again following a 37-day bombing halt at the end of January 1966. 51/ "The DRV probably used this gap for two purposes: propaganda and

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bargaining. The propaganda value was potentially high--couldn't the US wait a few hours before plunging back to the attack? More importantly it was a way of cancelling out the US negotiating blue chip."52/

### 3) The XYZ Affair

Between the two bombing pauses of 1965 (see Figure 7-2, Bombing Pauses over North Vietnam) another series of contacts with the DRV were initiated. These became known as the "XYZ Affair" when former Ambassador Edmund Gullion (called from retirement) and another former Foreign Service officer were dispatched to several meetings with Mai Van Bo. Those meetings were characterized as being the most serious mutual effort to resolve matters of substance between the two nations up to that time.53/ Without exception, no progress resulted from the contacts, which is indicative of the comparative lack of true seriousness of the majority of peace initiatives before 1968.

### 4) The Peace Offensive

The most energetic and ambitious US initiative during this phase was conducted during the 37-day bombing halt which began on Christmas Eve, 1965, and became known as the "peace offensive."54/ US Ambassador to Burma, Henry Byroade, was given a message to deliver to the DRV Consulate in Rangoon. The note was not well received by the DRV; it was considered an "ultimation" rather than conciliatory.55/ Other top level USG representatives joined in the peace offensive--Harriman flew on a ten-nation trip which began in Warsaw, Poland; McGeorge Bundy went to Canada; Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann flew to Mexico; UN Ambassador Goldberg visited the Vatican, the Italian government in Rome, and Paris; Vice President Humphrey went to Tokyo; and G. Mennen Williams toured fourteen African countries. At each stop the US attempted to sell its fourteen point program ("US contributions to the Basket of Peace") and to convince the world's leaders that the US was willing to talk to the DRV on almost any terms (as an addendum to the 14-points, the drafters added, "in other words, we have put everything into the basket of peace except the surrender of South Vietnam").56/

US BOMBING PAUSES OVER NORTH VIETNAM (1965-1968)

<u>DATA:</u>	<u>DURATION:</u>	<u>TYPE:</u>
May 12-18, 1965	5 days, 20 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
December 24, 1965- January 31, 1966	36 days, 15 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
December 23, 1966- March 1, 1967	78 days	Within 10 miles of center of Hanoi
December 24-26, 1966	2 days	A Complete Bombing Halt
December 31, 1966- January 2, 1967	2 days	A Complete Bombing Halt
February 8-12, 1967	5 days, 18 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
May 22-June 9, 1967	18 days	Within 10 miles of center of Hanoi
May 23-24, 1967	24 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
June 11-August 9, 1967	59 days	Within 10 miles of center of Hanoi
August 24- October 23, 1967	60 days	Within 10 miles of center of Hanoi
December 24-25, 1967	24 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
December 31, 1967- January 2, 1968	36 hours	A Complete Bombing Halt
January 3-March 31, 1968	88 days	Within 5 miles of center of Hanoi
January 16-March 31, 1968	75 days	Within 5 miles of center of Haiphong
March 31- November 1, 1968	214 days	North of 20th parallel
November 1, 1968	Until January 20, 1969	A Complete Bombing Halt

SOURCE: Adapted from Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 578

Figure 7-2. Bombing Pauses Over North Vietnam (1965-1968)



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The US effort received little more than lip service from other nations. It did, however, provoke a rather interesting move by the Soviet Union. A Soviet friendship delegation, which was in North Vietnam ostensibly to increase its military support to the DRV, reportedly attempted to exert some influence on Hanoi to seek a negotiated settlement with the US.<sup>57/</sup> The DRV would not budge, and on January 4 released the following statement:

The United States authorities' talks about peace are in complete contradiction with their war schemes and acts. While making noise about its "peace efforts", the United States is making feverish preparations to double the United States military strength in Vietnam.<sup>58/</sup>

President Johnson responded during his 12 January 1966, State of the Union Address, when he pledged that the US would stay in RVN "until the aggression has stopped." He added, "We will meet at any conference table, we will discuss any proposals--four points or fourteen or forty--and we will consider the views of any groups. We will work for a cease-fire now or once discussions have begun. . . . We may have to face long hard combat or a long, hard conference, or even both at once . . ." <sup>59/</sup> Furthermore, during the speech, Johnson noted that the bombing pause, then twenty days old, had not yet produced any response from the North Vietnamese.<sup>60/</sup>

The rush towards peace during the 37-day bombing halt was not a well-coordinated effort. US actions in the combat arena (where the decreased VC/NVA activity following the bombing pause gave the appearance of tacit reciprocity) served to mitigate against the peace gestures and pronouncements. Eleven thousand more US combat troops landed in RVN during the period and a large combined combat operation was launched in the so-called Iron Triangle, a VC stronghold near Saigon. Shortly thereafter, an even larger search and destroy operation was launched by the US First Cavalry Division and US Marines in the II Corps Tactical Zone. Whether intentionally or not--there is some evidence that US leaders knew what they were doing <sup>61/</sup>--the deployment hinted at a tendency that would

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arise again, to develop second thoughts about an initiative and then back away from it.

Ho Chi Minh ridiculed the US "peace offensive" in a January 28, 1966 letter. His acerbic note stated that "at the very moment when the US government puts forward the so-called new peace effort, it is frantically increasing US strength in South Vietnam", and he railed against "stepped-up" US combat operations and "scorched-earth policy."<sup>62</sup>/ Ho continued to get favorable propaganda coverage in the world media from the American's ambivalent, occasionally blundering, and sometimes uncoordinated peace initiatives.

On Monday, January 31st, after thirty-seven days of bombing pause, President Johnson ordered a renewal of the sustained air attacks on the North. The "peace offensive" had failed.

### 5) More Initiatives: Marigold, Sunflower, et al.

By 1966 the Americanization of the war was set. The decision to intervene with US combat forces had been made and the fundamental strategies for the ground and air wars had been set. There was little change until after Tet in 1968. Attempts to secure the elusive and secondary prize of negotiations continued to elude the Johnson administration.

LBJ continued his search--at times groping--for the right track to negotiations. At his direction, the US tried to:

- develop a channel to Hanoi through the Polish member of the International Control Commission (code name: "Marigold") in June 1966
- enlist the Soviet Union's help while attending funeral services for Indian Prime Minister Shastri and at the Glassboro summit meeting in 1967
- establish direct talks between US diplomats and North Vietnamese diplomats on station in Moscow
- use unofficial "volunteers" such as Italian professor Giorgio La Pira, American peace advocate Peter Weiss, Harvard professor Henry Kissinger; and several pacifist clerics

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- elicit the assistance of other nations such as Romania, Sweden, Norway and Italy.63/

Initially "Marigold" showed some promise. The Polish representative to the ICC relayed to Ambassador Lodge that Ho Chi Minh would enter into serious negotiations with the US if bombing was suspended. He also indicated that the DRV position was very flexible; that is:

- they would neither demand the establishment of a Socialist regime nor the neutralization in the South
- they would not interfere with the Saigon government
- they would consider a reasonable calendar for a US withdrawal from the South.64/

USG officials were suspicious about this initiative which was tagged with the code name of "Marigold" and given very "close hold" treatment on a "need to know basis."65/

During the early months of the "Marigold" initiative, the war grew hotter, which in all likelihood hampered real progress towards formal negotiations. At a critical point during the month of December 1966, when the US Ambassador to Poland was preparing for a particularly sensitive meeting with Polish emissaries, US bombers struck very sensitive targets in the vicinity of Hanoi. The target selection was cleared through the White House in mid-November, but bad weather delayed the strikes.66/ Knowledgeable observers 67/ have concluded that top US policy makers simply forgot that the planned raids had been delayed, and those working on "Marigold" at the lower levels of the government bureaucracy did not know about them. Subsequent raids were not cancelled, and as a result, contacts with the DRV representatives ceased. "Marigold" went the route of all previous initiatives--the dead end.

Apart from "Marigold," one major project--called "Sunflower"--produced brief hope, especially with mid-level government bureaucrats, that the DRV might respond. In January 1967, the US passed a message to the North Vietnamese embassy in Moscow proposing secret, face-to-face talks (the DRV wanted secrecy because of the PRC's opposition to negotiations of any kind).68/ DRV intransigence and US impatience led to

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the collapse of "Sunflower" and sowed the seeds of disillusionment in official Washington.

"Sunflower" was followed by LBJ's San Antonio Formula-- an offer to again stop the bombing if the action would lead to prompt productive talks. The president also sweetened the ante by acquiescing to the idea of direct contacts between the GVN and NLF, a move that might have done some good much earlier in the conflict. The DRV responded by brushing the US initiative aside. Australian communist journalist Wilfred Burchett described the DRV attitude when he wrote that "Hanoi was in no mood for concessions or bargaining," and that "there is an absolute refusal to offer anything except talks for the cessation of the bombardment."69/ The San Antonio Formula was soon forgotten when the Communist forces launched their suicidal Tet Offensive.

### 6) The Breakthrough: the Start of Talk About Talks

Tet led to the resolution of a year-long debate within the Johnson administration over deciding on a unilateral halt to the bombing of the north. Those in favor of a cessation argued that a bombing halt would promote negotiations; those against, that it would prove too great a risk to take with the lives of US GI's in RVN. LBJ's new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, after a thorough re-appraisal of the US role in the war, concluded that because the DRV was not interested in negotiations, a bombing halt would not produce them, and that in any case, the US would be hard pressed to enter such talks from a position of strength.70/ Nevertheless, President Johnson called off bombing north of the 20th parallel and stated that "even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end . . . if our restraint is matched in Hanoi."71/ Hanoi responded promptly (in 4 days), calling the US action "a perfidious trick", however, they made it quite clear that they wanted to establish contact with US representatives. The DRV, after suffering severe losses during Tet, was seeking an unconditional end to all bombing of the North (and other US "acts" of war), because the bombing was beginning to interfere with their ability to resupply NVA elements operating in the South. Hanoi was finally ready to talk, but only about talks and not about a cessation of hostilities.

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Ambassador Harriman got back into the peace talks picture by working out a plan for secret negotiations in Paris. Though formal talks were held, his efforts were frustrated by a DRV offensive in the South and a corresponding hardening of LBJ's position with regard to the risks involved in announcing a total bombing halt. On November 6, 1968, the talks finally got underway, only to be plagued by the GVN's unwillingness to sit at the same table with the NLF, among other issues. Other analysts have suggested that the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 also contributed to the eroding of the chance for a military settlement in the fall of that year.<sup>72/</sup>

### 7) Outcomes of the Mid-Phase Initiatives

This phase saw the level of US involvement in Vietnam increase to the point where the US was actually at war. Thereafter, the prospect of obtaining a negotiated settlement became less likely. There were some US officials who believed that the war could be "won"; others thought that the "US must give clear evidence that it intends to win in South Vietnam" before Hanoi would be willing to negotiate.<sup>73/</sup> Still others believed that the DRV would be sorely pressed by US/GVN combat forces in the South and US bombing in the North. Thus, they believed that by stages, the DRV would withdraw their support for the VC, and the war would subside and eventually disappear, leaving neither side faced with the knotty problem of face-to-face negotiations.<sup>74/</sup> Those official perceptions tended to stiffen US terms for a negotiated settlement during this phase.

### 8) Impact of the Mid-Phase Initiatives

The US soon discovered that limited military pressure on Hanoi was not having any impact on their attitude toward negotiating. Selective bombing, which was supposed to be a subtle diplomatic orchestration of signals and incentives--an exercise in carrots and sticks--gave way to sustained reprisals. It succeeded in neither signaling nor smashing the enemy.

As the war intensified in 1966 and 1967, the prospects for negotiations dimmed. Disagreement continued among USG officials on the appropriate minimum position that would be acceptable to Hanoi. The DRV

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remained adamant in refusing to enter into talks as long as the bombing of the North continued. And the efforts of allies of both sides to arrange talks tended to convince each that the other was insincere about negotiations in the first place. During these years, the search for a basis for negotiation was also complicated by the fact that, to both the US and the DRV, the war appeared winnable. That is, by 1967, in the view of the USG, the political and military situation in RVN had dramatically improved over what it had been in 1964 and 1965. And Hanoi saw victory because it was beginning to expand its political control to areas under the nominal authority of the GVN and it saw the US presence (and thereby the US impact on the long-term revolutionary struggle) as only temporary.<sup>75/</sup>

The shock of the DRV's Tet offensive led to a change in the US position on bombing. President Johnson, his policy of persistence in support of South Vietnam severely shaken, ordered a limitation of the bombing, withdrew from the election race and invited the DRV to negotiate. But as in Korea, the start of formal negotiations in Paris in 1968 did not signal the beginning of the end of the war.

### 9) Analysis of the Mid-Phase Initiatives

The search for negotiations with the DRV during this phase is probably one of the most fruitless chapters in the history of US diplomacy. White House sources <sup>76/</sup> reportedly estimated as many as 2,000 individual efforts were made to initiate talks. Or 432 of the over 800 days of the air war against the DRV, US aircraft were either restricted in their targets or completely prohibited from bombing in the hope of encouraging a favorable North Vietnamese response to a negotiating initiative. In his memoirs, President Johnson noted that there were some seventy-two negotiations initiatives which he personally followed (those listed in Figure 7-3 were considered by LBJ to be the most significant).<sup>77/</sup>

"As I look back," President Johnson said of the efforts to start negotiations, "I think that we perhaps tried too hard to spell out our honest desire for peace . . . These numerous appeals through so many channels may well have convinced the North Vietnamese that we wanted peace at any price."<sup>78/</sup> Johnson and his advisers were, in fact, pessimistic

DATE:	INITIATIVE:	PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S ASSESSMENT.
June 1964-June 1965 May 1965	Seaborn contacts Project Mayflower	Hanoi showed no interest in discussions Hanoi called the pause a trick. Just after the pause ended, North Vietnamese officials approached the French and discussed the DRV's position on a peace settlement. French officials said this could "not be regarded as a valid offer of negotiations."
August-September 1965 November 1965 January 1966	An official US representative met with Ma, Van Bo in Paris:	Hanoi was unresponsive.
December 24, 1965- January 30, 1966	The "Peace Offensive"	Prime Minister Pham Van Dong in Hanoi called the peace effort a campaign of lies.
March and June 1966	Running missions	DRV authorities were totally negative with regard to any response on their part to a halt in the bombing. The DRV repeated its insistence on its four points.
June-December 1966	The Government of Poland extends its good offices to arrange direct talks -- Project Marigold	Or December 13, the Poles informed the United States that the DRV was not willing to have talks, and on December 15, the Poles terminated conversations on the possibility of direct talks, allegedly at the DRV's insistence.
October 1966- February 1968	The Government of Rumania extends good offices to report Hanoi's attitude towards talks	The DRV's response was negative
February 8-13, 1967	Wilson-Kosygin talks on extending the Tet bombing pause	The DRV called the pause another trick.
July-October 1967	Four French friends of Dr Henry Kissinger traveled to Hanoi to present what later became known as the San Antonio formula: The US would stop bombing when this would promptly lead to productive negotiations	The DRV gave final rejection in Mid-October and increased offensive actions in Vietnam.

SOURCE: Adapted from Allen F. Goodman, The Lost Peace; and Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point, pp. 579-89  
 Figure 7-3 A Summary of President Lyndon Johnson's Assessment of the Major Initiatives in Search for Negotiations

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about a negotiated settlement from the start, believing that Hanoi would seek negotiations only to end the bombing and not the war. LBJ's characterizations 77/ of the search for negotiations were based on an increasingly embittering experience.

Several observers have noted 80/ that although President Johnson had a fundamentally sound understanding of how the North Vietnamese approached war and negotiations, he failed to grasp the fact that US goals--a successful outcome from a limited war and a political settlement--could be achieved neither by fighting nor by negotiating. Johnson's failure to get substantive talks underway and bring the war to a successful conclusion before the presidential primaries in 1968 cost him a second term of office.

Inconceivable as it may seem, the Johnson Administration failed to establish a set strategy for negotiations. There were no clear negotiating objectives. The 14-points offered in December 1965, served only as a point of departure. What the US wanted to do was to get the DRV to sit down and talk. The US was willing to talk on almost any terms.81/

The way the US was organized for peace left much to be desired. President Johnson's focal point for the peace operation was Ambassador Averell Harriman. He was given little authority to take or make new initiatives, which remained the domain of Secretary of State Rusk. Harriman had no mandate for peace from the President. He had no staff to speak of, only a seemingly endless number of well-intentioned contacts who wanted to be conduits for peace in Vietnam. By any standard, it was not a well organized effort.

In the public arena, between 1965 and 1968, the various parties publicly stated their positions in a variety of forums: the DRV announced Four Points, the NLF put forth Five Points, Saigon advanced Seven Points and the US promulgated its own Fourteen Points (see Figure 7-4 A and B for a graphic portrayal of each). These pronouncements produced a fairly wide area of apparent agreement on some general principles--that the Geneva accords could form the basis of a settlement, that American troops



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## NORTH VIETNAM'S FOUR POINTS

NLF's

1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people--peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must withdraw from South Vietnam US troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all US military bases there, and cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam and completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam].

2. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected. The two zones must refrain from entering into any military alliance with foreign countries and there must be no foreign military bases, troops, or military personnel in their respective territory.

3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NLFV [National Liberation Front of South Vietnam] without any foreign interference.

4. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

SOURCE: From report of Premier Pham Van Dong, April 8, 1965, as transmitted by Radio Hanoi, April 13, 1965 (The New York Times, April 14, 1965).

1. The US imperialists' military aggression and the Geneva Agreements, the most brazen violation of the sworn enemy of the Vi

2. The heroic South Vietnamese people's drive out the US imperialist troops from South Vietnam, achieve peace and national reunification.

3. The valiant South Vietnamese liberation army's sacred duty to drive out the US imperialists and liberate South Vietnam and

4. The South Vietnamese people's gratitude to peace and justice and their wholehearted readiness to receive all the aid and all other war materiel from the five continents.

5. To unite the entire Vietnamese people to continue to march forward and defeat the US imperialist traitors.

SOURCE: Premier Pham Van Dong, National Assembly of the DRV, Studies, pp. 167-168.

\*ANALYSIS: The above pronouncement is an apparent agreement on some general principles that could form the basis of a settlement drawn ultimately that the reunification of Vietnam was the desire of both North and South Vietnam, and that there should be no foreign bases. As a result of the DRV's four Point Program, the stumbling blocks developed from the US government's rejection of a separate settlement for South Vietnam as set forth in the DRV's four Point Program. The Communist's contention that the GVN's disagreement surfaced over the settlement indeed. Hanoi never admitted that the settlement was toward peace.)

### FIVE POINTS\*

are the saboteur of the Geneva  
zen warmonger and aggressor and  
Vietnamese people.

Vietnamese people are resolved to  
imperialists in order to liberate  
an independent, democratic,  
South Vietnam, with a view to

Vietnamese people and the South  
are resolved to fulfill their  
the US imperialists so as to  
defend North Vietnam.

people express their profound  
justice-loving people the world  
pled support and declare their  
assistance including weapons  
als from their friends on the

people, arm the entire people,  
heroically and be resolved to  
aggressors and the Vietnamese

excerpts from his report delivered to the  
the DRV on April 8, 1965, The Vietnamese

ments produced a fairly wide area of  
al principles--that the Geneva accords  
ent, that American troops would be with-  
fication of Vietnam should come (if that  
South) about through direct negotiations  
(after a settlement) Vietnam would not  
matter of fact, the US indicated that  
were acceptable. Regardless, major  
the US rejection of any internal arrange-  
led on the basis of the NLF program;  
political role for the NLF; and, the  
was a puppet regime of the US. Further  
atus of the DRV's forces in the South;  
it had forces in the South. (See Steps

### UNITED STATES' FOURTEEN POINTS\*

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an  
adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia;

2. We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or  
any part thereof;

3. We would welcome "negotiations without precon-  
ditions" as the 17 nations put it;

4. We would welcome unconditional discussions as  
President Johnson put it;

5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first  
order of business at a conference or could be the  
subject of preliminary discussions;

6. Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with  
other points which others might wish to propose;

7. We want no US bases in South Asia;

8. We do not desire to retain US troops in South  
Vietnam after peace is assured;

9. We support free elections in South Vietnam to give  
the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice;

10. The question of reunification of Vietnam should be  
determined by the Vietnamese through their own free  
decision;

11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be non-aligned  
or neutral if that be their option;

12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the  
economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war.  
If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a  
regional effort to which we would be prepared to con-  
tribute at least one billion dollars;

13. The President has said, "The Vietcong would not  
have difficulty being represented and having their  
views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she  
wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would  
be an insurmountable problem."

14. We have said publicly and privately that we could  
stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward  
peace although there has not been the slightest hint or  
suggestion from the other side as to what they would do  
if the bombing stopped.

SOURCE: From Department of State Bulletin, January  
24, 1966, p. 116.

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## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BY SECRETARY OF STATE RUSK OF THE PROPOSED FIRST STEPS TOWARD PEACE

1. A reconvening of the Geneva conference of 1954 and a return to the agreements of 1954.
2. A reconvening of the Geneva conference of 1962 on Laos and a return to the agreements of 1962.
3. A conference on Cambodia.
4. An all-Asian peace conference.
5. A special effort by the two cochairmen, Britain and the Soviet Union, to approach the two sides for a peaceful settlement.
6. A special effort by the International Control Commission - India, Canada, Poland - to probe the two sides for a peaceful settlement.
7. A role for the US, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General.
8. Talks through intermediaries, either singly or as a group.
9. Direct talks either with the Government of South Vietnam or with the US.
10. An exchange of prisoners of war (POW).
11. The supervision of the treatment of POWs by the International Red Cross.
12. Demilitarize the DMZ.
13. Or widen and demilitarize the DMZ.
14. The interposition of international forces between the combatants.
15. The mutual withdrawal of foreign forces including the forces of North Vietnam from South Vietnam.
16. Assistance to Cambodia to assure its neutrality and territory.
17. The cessation of bombing linked with the stop of infiltration.
18. A cessation of the augmentation of US forces.
19. Three suspensions of bombings in order to permit serious talks.
20. The discussion of the DRV's Four Points along with whatever points others might raise, such as Saigon's Four Points and our own Fourteen Points.
21. Or discussion of an agreed four points as a basis for negotiation.
22. A willingness to find the means to have the views of the Liberation Front heard in peace discussions.
23. Negotiations without conditions, negotiations about conditions, or private discussions about a final settlement.
24. If peace, then the inclusion of North Vietnam in a large development program for all of Southeast Asia, including North Vietnam.
25. The Government of South Vietnam to be determined by free elections among the people of South Vietnam.
26. The question of reunification to be determined by free elections among the peoples of both South Vietnam and North Vietnam.
27. Reconciliation with the Vietcong and readmission of its members to the body politic of South Vietnam.
28. And South Vietnam's ability to be neutral in the future, if it so chooses.

NOTE: Adapted from Secretary Rusk's remarks at a White House luncheon for General Westmoreland on April 28, 1967. Rusk introduced the list as representing "the proposals which we and other governments have made pointing toward peace in Southeast Asia during the past 2 or 3 years. . . . [O]n each of these we have said yes, and on each of these Hanoi has said no."

SOURCE: Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967, Book I, pp. 475-6.

Figure 7-4B. A Comparative Analysis by Secretary of State Rusk of the Proposed First Steps Toward Peace

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would be withdrawn ultimately, that the reunification of Vietnam should come (if that was the desire of both North and South) about through direct negotiations between the Vietnamese, and that (after a settlement) Vietnam would not contain any foreign bases. As a matter of fact, the US indicated that three of the DRV's Four Points were acceptable.<sup>82/</sup> Regardless, major stumbling blocks developed from the US rejection of any internal arrangements for South Vietnam as settled on the basis of the NLF program; Saigon's rejection of a separate political role for the NLF; and the Communist's contention that the GVN was a puppet regime of the US. Further disagreement surfaced over the status of the DRV's forces in the South; indeed, Hanoi never admitted that it had forces in the South.

There are several conclusions that one might draw from the material developed heretofore with respect to negotiations in this phase; they are that:

- the US had no set negotiating strategy
- the US was poorly organized for negotiations
- the US lacked imagination in its negotiating efforts
- there was a failure of coordination within the USG with respect to negotiations
- the incompatibility of the US and DRV styles of diplomacy produced a breakdown of communication--especially in the preliminary phases of the negotiations.
- the symbolic and incentive (carrots and sticks) rationales for bombing backfired (and GVN officials viewed the 1968 bombing halt as signaling a withdrawal of US spirit, soon to be followed by a withdrawal of US forces)
- the DRV used negotiations as a means to get the bombing stopped in 1968 (they needed an end to the bombing because they were preparing to fight a conventional war, which required long supply lines free from aerial attack and a secure near base in the North where supplies could be marshalled)
- the DRV carefully played out the negotiations according to the timing of the US presidential elections.<sup>83/</sup>

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A completely fair assessment of the above conclusions is difficult, at best, to make with the limited material available, and it may not be possible to do it thoroughly for many years. But it is clear that many critics have tended to oversimplify the problem. Given the conditions at the time, the means for motivating all sides into taking rapid and dramatic action were not always present. All parties involved faced enormous difficulties. Indeed, the tendency of each side to overestimate the freedom of maneuver of the other certainly contributed to the distrust that developed over time. It caused the DRV to appear perversely obstinate and deceitful to the US, and the US to seem devious and obtuse to the DRV.

Washington's hope for ending the war depended on success on the battlefield. Achieving a position of strength became an essential prerequisite for negotiations. LBJ quickly realized that such a position was not likely to be achieved by merely strengthening the GVN. It became essential to increase military pressure on the DRV and thus compel Hanoi to negotiate.

The DRV's leaders on the other hand, chose to refuse to negotiate because they were convinced that:

- the US could not "win" the war as long as the NVA/VC could choose the time and place of the major battles (therefore control their own battlefield attrition)
- the GVN would not make the internal reforms necessary to compete politically with the NLF
- the US and world public opinion would eventually force LBJ to call an end to the bombing of the North in return for the promise of negotiations.

As a consequence of the foregoing, when the US or intermediaries made proposals, the DRV assessed each in terms of whether or not the immediate situation on the battlefield permitted the offer to be rejected.

In the twilight of President Johnson's Administration, the US involvement in Vietnam began to level off and start its decline.

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Johnson ordered a limitation on bombing, withdrew from the election race, and invited the DRV to "talk" about initiating formal negotiations. He did not regard those decisions as irreversible at the time, but they rapidly came to be seen that way, and little serious consideration was given during the remainder of the administration to raising the US troop level or renewing full-scale bombing. After much haggling and diplomatic maneuvering, followed by a prolonged harangue over procedures for the talks in Paris and a total bombing halt in November 1968, negotiations began at the end of the year. The initial talks may have been unproductive, but they were symbolic. The Nixon Administration brought with it the hope of a speedy settlement.

### 3. Phase 3: The Paris Negotiations--The Nixon and Kissinger Years

The Nixon Administration entered office determined to end the US involvement in the Vietnam Conflict, but they soon found themselves facing the same realities that had bedeviled President Johnson's administration. It did not take long for the President and his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, to rule out a precipitous withdrawal of US forces from the war. They believed that such a withdrawal would have:

- demoralized the GVN
- encouraged communist aggression elsewhere
- caused allies to question the credibility of US commitments.<sup>84/</sup>

Kissinger later stated that President Nixon viewed the abandonment of the RVN to the "tyranny of the communists" to be immoral as well as potentially destructive of US efforts to build a new pattern of international relations in the world.<sup>85/</sup> Another factor which had an impact on early withdrawal was that the administration would be vulnerable to charges from its conservative supporters that it was not hard enough in its dealings with communists. And unless the administration could appear tough, it would be practically impossible for President Nixon to transform relations with the USSR and the PRC from confrontation to cooperation and detente.

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a. NSSM-1: Developing Objectives and Searching For a Strategy

As part of his search for the best strategy to pursue in Vietnam, Nixon ordered Kissinger to give him all possible alternatives. Kissinger responded by circulating National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) Number 1, in which he asked various government agencies to give him their separate views about the conduct of the war and the negotiating environment. The consensus was that it was time to get out.86/

In addition, there was general agreement by the respondents to NSSM 1 that the DRV was in Paris to negotiate for a variety of motives, but not primarily out of weakness. All USG agencies agreed that it was unlikely that the DRV had gone to Paris either to accept a face-saving formula for defeat or to give the US a face-saving way to withdraw. They concluded that the communists had been subjected to heavy military pressure, and therefore a desire to end the losses and costs of the war was an element in their decision to negotiate. Further, there was a consensus opinion that Hanoi believed it could persist long enough to:

- obtain a favorable negotiated settlement
- undermine GVN and US relations
- provide a better chance for PAVN victory in the South
- attain its ultimate goal of a unified Vietnam under communist control<sup>187/</sup>

There was sharp debate, however, between and within USG agencies about the effect of the possible outcome of a Vietnam settlement on the other Southeast Asian nations.

A key reference document, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 50-68, which was used to formulate various agency views, tended to downgrade the once highly regarded "domino theory." It stated that a settlement would permit the communists to take over the government of South Vietnam, and, though not immediately, would be likely to bring Cambodia and Laos into the DRV's orbit, but that such developments would not necessarily unhinge the rest of Asia.88/ Notably, the assessments in the NIE were supported by OSD, Department of Defense and DIA (Defense Intelligence

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Agency) while the Army, Navy, and Air Force Intelligence dissented. Within the Department of State, the Bureau of Intelligence supported the NIE while the East Asian Bureau dissented. Interestingly enough, both the majority and the dissenters rejected the view that an unfavorable settlement in Vietnam would invariably be followed by communist takeovers outside of Indochina.89/

With respect to Hanoi's allies, it was the view of the NSSM-1 respondent agencies that Peking opposed negotiations with the US, while Moscow preferred an early negotiated settlement on terms as favorable as possible to Hanoi. Neither the PRC nor the USSR were able (and apparently not very desirous) to exert heavy pressure on the DRV, although their military and economic assistance gave them important leverage--the CIA noted that in competing for influence the Chinese and Russians tended to cancel out each other. Some respondents felt that Hanoi was tending to follow the USSR's lead; however, for the long term they thought that the DRV's leadership was charting an independent course.90/

Other "bottom line" conclusions of the NSSM were:

- that the GVN and allied position had been strengthened
- that the GVN had improved its political position, but was still vulnerable
- that the RVNAF was not yet able to stand up alone to the VC/PAVN threat
- that the enemy had suffered reverses although their essential objectives and strength to pursue them had not changed significantly.

In his own assessment of the negotiating environment, Mr. Kissinger pointed out that the US had "lost sight of one of the cardinal maxims of guerrilla war: the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win."91/ Kissinger was inclined to seek a negotiated agreement "that would end the US involvement."92/ In contrast, aides reported President Nixon believed at that time that "the only way to end the war by negotiations was to prove to Hanoi and Saigon that Saigon could win it."93/



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Notwithstanding the differences in views between the President, Kissinger and the various key governmental agencies, there was general agreement on the necessity for forcefulness and decisiveness in the search for a negotiated agreement that would permit the US to withdraw its combat troops and get back its POWs.

Rooted behind the Nixon-Kissinger views on the Vietnam problem was the desire to establish and maintain a great-power equilibrium with the USSR and PRC. The reasons for the US involvement in Vietnam no longer seemed as compelling as they once were. Moreover, the need to seek equilibrium and improved relations with the previously hostile major nuclear powers through detente and rapprochement, became very real and important.

### 1) The Goal and Objectives

After a brief period of gestation and assessment, President Nixon opted to actively seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam.<sup>94/</sup> In reaching that decision, President Nixon was convinced that the only "trump card" the US had left was its preponderant military power. This was evidenced by the following quote from Mr. Kissinger:

No matter how irrelevant some of our political conceptions or how insensitive our strategy, we are so powerful that Hanoi is simply unable to defeat us militarily. By its own efforts, Hanoi cannot force the withdrawal of American forces from South Vietnam. Indeed, a substantial improvement in the American military position seems to have taken place. As a result, we have achieved our minimum objective: Hanoi is unable to gain a military victory. Since it cannot force our withdrawal, it must negotiate about it.<sup>95/</sup>

President Nixon had come to grips with the basic challenge that faced his administration (very similar to the one France's de Gaulle faced in Algeria)--to withdraw from battle as an expression of policy and not as a collapse. The principal opposition at home came from those who wanted a rapid withdrawal and immediate disengagement. Even though public opinion polls showed the majority of Americans eager for an honorable solution and firmly against capitulation, a sentiment Nixon was able to rally skillfully on several occasions, the momentum of American politics was moving in the direction of unilateral concessions.<sup>96/</sup>

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In arriving at the negotiating strategy, Nixon and Kissinger accepted a recommendation contained in NSSM-1 which was that any peace agreement should be delayed for as long as possible to allow the GVN to strengthen its position. Mr. Nixon feared, however, that if the negotiations were allowed to drag on too long, all parties (Hanoi, Saigon and official Washington) would grow more intransigent. Obstacles to the negotiations as Mr. Nixon viewed them were:

- the DRV had to have a reason to sign
- the GVN wanted the communists out of the South and to be left alone
- the US military establishment would not have accepted a compromise (at least at that time).

Mr. Kissinger felt the key to a negotiated agreement was for the US to avoid seeking to win at the conference table what could possibly be won on the field of battle.<sup>97/</sup>

After the deliberations, the following negotiating objectives were set

- a mutual cease-fire
- staged mutual withdrawals of external forces
- an early release of prisoners of war (POWs)
- internationally supervised elections (to improve the political environment).<sup>98/</sup>

To complement those objectives, the US launched the Vietnamization Program and renewed its support of the GVN's Pacification effort. Respectively, each was designed to strengthen the RVNAF and pacify the countryside as well as allow the US to reduce its military presence and strengthen the popular support of the GVN.

Those in the US who advocated keeping maximum pressure on the DRV saw the Vietnamization Program as the only domestically acceptable way of winding down the war. They argued that it was the appropriate US counter to the communist tactic of fighting while negotiating. Others believed Vietnamization was acceptable but that the US should have begun

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unilaterally withdrawing its troops immediately, that is until no more than 100,000 or so men remained. As one advocate of unilateral withdrawal put it,

At least we have separated the goal of reducing the American presence from factors we cannot ourselves control, namely, the level of combat in South Vietnam initiated by North Vietnam and Hanoi's intransigence in the Paris talks.99/

Nearly everyone in the Nixon Administration saw Vietnamization as the most feasible way to facilitate secret negotiations with the DRV--negotiations aimed at mutual troop withdrawals that would not involve loss of face for Hanoi and would ultimately pressure the GVN into reaching a political settlement with the NLF/PRG.

While Vietnamization and US withdrawals proved to be responsive to the needs of the RVNAF as well as to US domestic criticism of the costs of the war, they ultimately proved counterproductive to what the US was seeking from the negotiations. The more the US would draw down the numbers of troops in Vietnam without making progress in negotiations, the less incentive the DRV had to reach any agreement at all. Just as the US had given up a bargaining "blue chip" by halting the bombing of the DRV when it did, it gave up another by withdrawing its troops without gaining concessions from the enemy.100/

### 2) Getting Support: Involving the Soviets and Buying Time at Home.

In May 1969, President Nixon delivered a major speech on Vietnam in which he proposed a mutual withdrawal and cessation of hostilities and announced the withdrawal of 25,000 US troops. Mr. Kissinger showed an advance copy of the text to the Soviet Ambassador to the US, Anatoli Dobrynin, and explained that if the Russians didn't help produce a settlement the US would "escalate the war."101/ The President was seeking to pull-off a public relations "coup" at home--trying to weaken the enemy to the maximum extent possible, speed up the strengthening of the RVNAF and begin withdrawals--while reinforcing a perception held by Soviet leadership that he was a dangerous, hardline adversary.102/

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The pieces all seemed to be falling into place for President Nixon's first gambit. During the June 1969 Midway Island meeting with President Thieu, the South Vietnamese leader agreed to the idea of a US troop withdrawal and to private contacts between the US and the DRV at the presidential level. One month later, when Mr. Nixon made a surprise visit to Saigon, he told President Thieu that continued US withdrawals were necessary to maintain America's public support. For that reason, he argued it was important that the reductions appear to be on a systematic timetable and at the US's initiative.<sup>103/</sup>

In October of 1969, Mr. Nixon met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in an attempt to involve the Soviets further in bringing the war to an "honorable conclusion". Though not successful, the meeting did serve to draw the Soviets into the negotiations picture a little more, especially since agreement on a Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT) began to play an increasingly important role between the two superpowers.

President Nixon spoke to the nation on November 3, a speech characterized by some as one of his strongest public performances. The President successfully took his case to the American people, thereby gaining the maneuvering room he needed in his search for "peace with honor."<sup>104/</sup>

The speech had a shock effect since it defied the protesters, the North Vietnamese, and all expectations by announcing no spectacular shift in our negotiating position and no troop withdrawals. It appealed to the "great silent majority" of Americans to support their Commander-in-Chief. For the first time in a Presidential Statement it spelled out clearly what the President meant when he said he had "a plan to end the war"--namely, the dual-track strategy of Vietnamization and negotiations. And it made the point that Vietnamization offered a prospect of honorable disengagement that was not hostage to the other side's cooperation.<sup>105/</sup>

Having settled on a strategy which was to be increasingly contested by a growing vocal minority of Americans, President Nixon bought some time for Vietnamization as well as for negotiations. Given the respite, Mr. Kissinger set about probing the prospects for negotiations--the process where both sides tested their respective assessments of each

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other and began to shape a settlement from a seemingly intractable stalemate.

### b. A Return to Secret Negotiations

The situation in the winter of 1969 was looking up for the new administration: there was a lull in the combat, the president had taken his case to the people and the US public responded to the president's call with substantial support. The time appeared ripe for serious negotiations; however, the North Vietnamese, who had stalemated the Paris Peace Talks for over a year, remained as intransigent and obstinate as ever. Mr. Kissinger, with the President's approval, thought the time right for secret negotiations, and through the efforts of General Vernon Walters, then Defense Attache in France, secret talks were arranged in January, 1970.106/ And so Mr. Kissinger began what was to become an almost three-year secret search for a negotiated settlement to the war. The meetings in a small house situated in the Paris suburbs were attended by Le Duc Tho and his Special Adviser, Le Duc Tho, high ranking DRV Politburo member. Le Duc Tho, a strict Leninist whose "profession was revolution" and "vocation guerrilla warfare," directed the efforts of the DRV negotiating delegation.107/

Le Duc Tho considered negotiations as another battle. His idea of a negotiation was to put forward his unilateral demands. Their essence was for the US to withdraw on a deadline so short that the collapse of Saigon would be inevitable. On the way out we were being asked to dismantle an allied government and establish an alternative whose composition would be prescribed by Hanoi. Any proposition that failed to agree with this he rejected as 'not concrete'.108/

During a February, 1970, secret session, Mr. Kissinger, in a prepared statement, made the following points to the DRV negotiators:

- the US was seeking a settlement which would resolve the issues, once and for all.
- Hanoi's combat position had not improved since the August 1969 meetings (especially with respect to the balance of forces in RVN).

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- the international situation had changed, which could impact on the undivided support from their communist benefactors (reference was to the Sino-Soviet dispute).
- the US was prepared to withdraw all its forces and retain no bases in Vietnam.
- the US, in arranging for a mutual withdrawal, would not insist that the DRV's troops be placed in the same legal basis as American forces.<sup>109/</sup>

The DRV representatives courted by demanding total withdrawal of US forces and the replacement of the Thieu government before they would "negotiate" with the VC. In an attack on the US view of the military situation in RVN, Le Duc Tho cut to the very heart of the US dilemma over Vietnamization. "Before, there were over a million VC and puppet troops, and you failed. How can you succeed when you let the puppet troops do the fighting? Now, with only US support, how can you win?"<sup>110/</sup> Le Duc Tho concluded that the military and political problems should be dealt with simultaneously--a position from which he never deviated until October 1972. Accordingly, the only military subject for discussion was the unconditional liquidation of the US involvement in the conflict.<sup>111/</sup>

The first round of secret negotiations with Le Duc Tho collapsed, much to Mr. Kissinger's disappointment. DRV diplomacy once again had correctly assessed the balance of forces in South Vietnam. Le Duc Tho had developed an accurate sense of public opinion in the US. The dilemmas of Vietnamization were very real. Philosophical disagreements within the Nixon administration began to leak to the press. Given these circumstances, Le Duc Tho could see no reason to modify his demands for the unconditional withdrawal of US troops and the overthrow of the Thieu government. Le Duc Tho would see no reasons "until two and a half years later, when the military situation left him no other choice."<sup>112/</sup>

c. A Wider War: The Cambodian "Sideshow" and the Secret War in Laos.

1) The "Menu" Strikes - 1969

Mr. Nixon had been in office hardly thirty days before the North Vietnamese launched a countrywide offensive in South Vietnam.

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The only contingency plan on hand was for the renewal of bombing of the North, an action backed strongly by the JCS. Though unpopular to practically all concerned, there were few alternatives to the bombing of the North left to pursue. The President and his National Security Adviser resisted such a decision, and instead they began to examine benefits to be derived from the bombing of the North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia (see the sanctuaries shown in Map 7-1).

President Nixon, who had been in communication with DRV officials during his administration's transition period, was angered over the enemy's offensive, which had produced a large number of US casualties. After brief deliberations, he opted to secretly bomb Cambodian sanctuaries within five miles of the Vietnamese border.

Critics 113/ subsequently saw the secret expansion of the war into Cambodia during that period as setting in train a course of events that was to destroy that "neutral" and "peaceful" country. In his memoirs, Mr. Kissinger 114/ pointed out that Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia did not protest the bombings. Hanoi did not protest them; in fact, its delegation in Paris accepted a US proposal for private talks on March 22 within seventy-two hours of the request. And the PRC and USSR made no public protestations to the bombing raids.

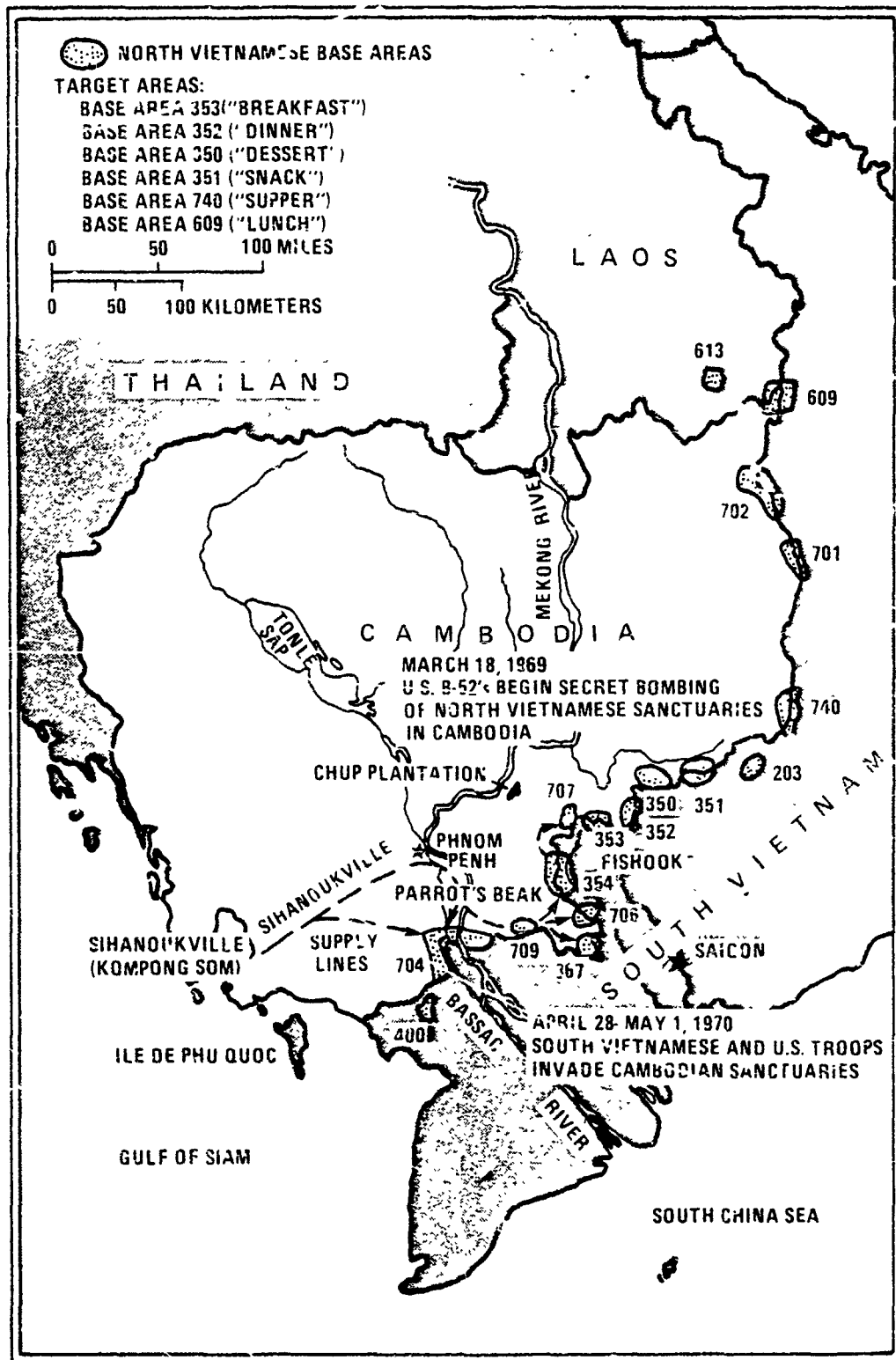
Secretary of Defense Laird reported that MACV Commander General Abrams credited the bombing of the Cambodian sanctuaries by US B-52 bombers (code name "Menu") "as one of the most telling operations in the entire war."115/ It disrupted enemy logistics, aborted several enemy offensives and reduced the enemy threat to Saigon.116/

### 2) The Fight For the Plain of Jars-1970

In early 1970, Laos briefly became the focus of US concerns during a North Vietnamese offensive which threatened to overrun northern Laos. The prospect of this happening portended grave implications for the security of neighboring Thailand as well as South Vietnam.

Hanoi was fighting essentially two wars in Laos, both for the purpose of hegemony in Indochina. In the South the DRV fought to maintain the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was their key link to the battlefields of South Vietnam (see Map 7-2). And in the North, they supported

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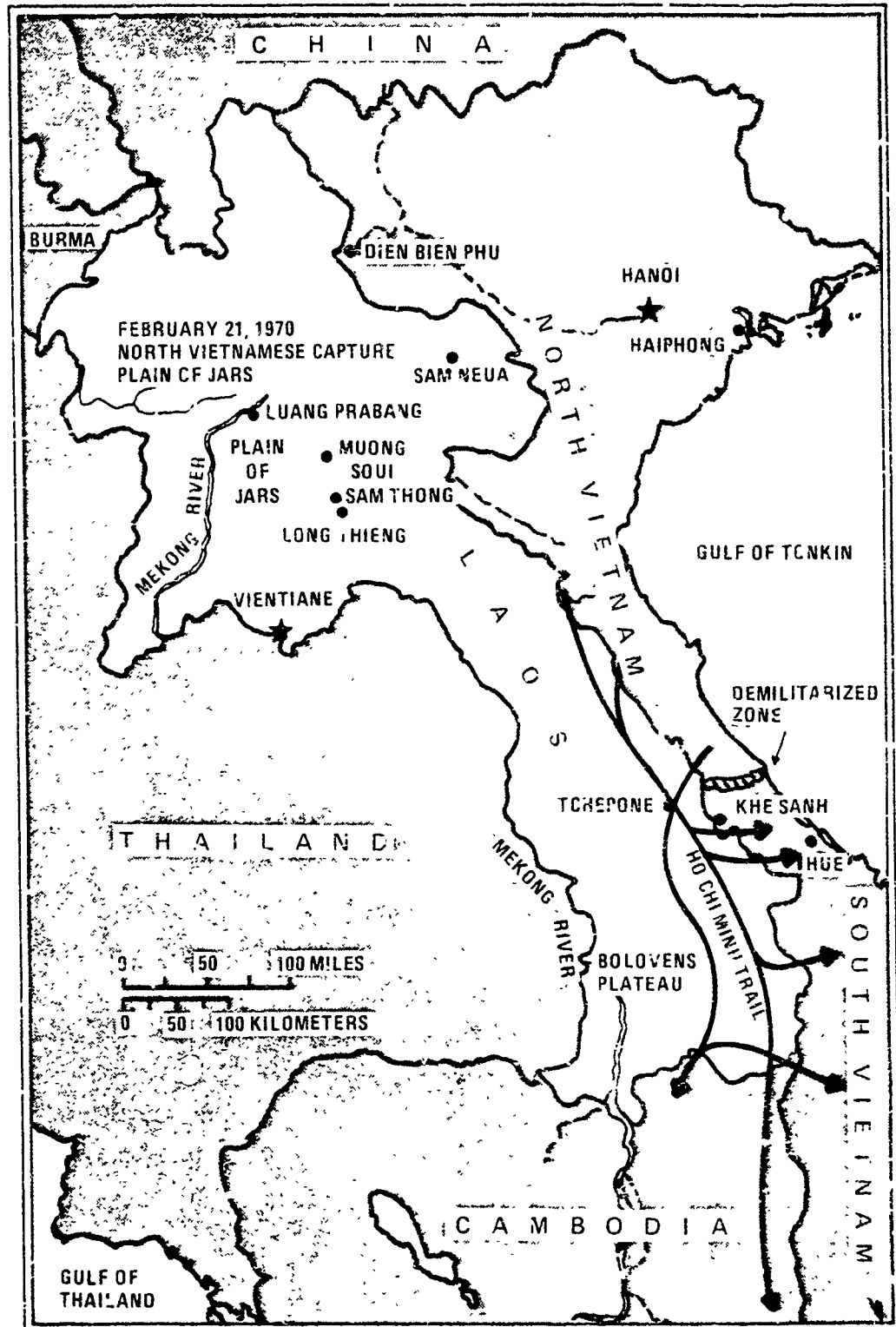


4541/78W

SOURCE: Adapted from Kissinger, White House Years, p. 248

Map 7-1. Cambodia North Vietnamese Base Areas and "Menu" Strikes, 1969





4541/78W

SOURCE: Adapted from Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 449

Map 7-2. Laos in 1970

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the Communist Pathet Lao in their fight to overthrow Premier Souvanna Phouma's Royal Laotian Army and CIA-supported Meo tribesmen led by General Vang Pao.

President Nixon approved B-52 air strikes against DRV forces operating in northern Laos, and those coupled with successful counteroffensives launched by Laotian forces (supported by Thai volunteers), were enough to thwart the North Vietnamese attack and drive them from the strategic plains. The Laos crisis subsided for the year and the military equilibrium in northern Laos was maintained.

Throughout this "war widening" period President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger pursued a military strategy that sought to persuade Hanoi to compromise and negotiate. Reflecting on that period, a key official wrote:

There was no purely diplomatic alternative. Unless military and political efforts were kept in tandem, both would prove sterile. Until 1972 Hanoi never gave us a political option: its negotiating position was to demand our unilateral withdrawal on a short deadline and the overthrow of the Saigon government. It did so because it believed itself to be winning; it chose compromise only after a military stalemate had become apparent.117/

### 3) The Cambodian Incursion

The situation in Indochina began to deteriorate drastically in March and April of 1970. Mr. Kissinger's secret talks with Le Duc Tho were going nowhere; there was a significant communist offensive beginning in Laos, and the coup which had overthrown Sihanouk in Cambodia was followed by North Vietnamese attacks throughout the country.

The first weeks in April saw numerous communist attacks on Cambodian towns and lines of communications. Intense enemy pressure was put on the capital city of Phnom Penh, whose collapse seemed imminent. Further, the US faced the prospect of Sihanouk being returned to power by his newly cultivated communist benefactors. After deliberations and consultations with Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams, the NSC presented President Nixon with the following three tactical options:118/

- doing nothing (preferred by State and DOD)

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- attacking Cambodian Sanctuaries with RVNAF forces only (preferred by Kissinger)
- utilizing forces necessary -- to include US -- to neutralize all sanctuaries and bases (preferred by Bunker, Abrams and JCS)

Notwithstanding the anticipated domestic reaction, President Nixon ordered an attack on all sanctuaries and the use of American combat forces. The incursions into Cambodia were seen by the President as the only tactical course compatible with the US's controlled withdrawal from Indochina and the US's hope of preventing Hanoi's domination of the region. He reasoned that the US could not proceed with Vietnamization if the entire Cambodian frontier opened up to massive infiltration.

He acted decisively, against the advice of most of his senior advisors, and his decision rendered the desired tactical results -- Cambodia did not fall, enemy sanctuaries were disrupted and destroyed, and negotiating leverage was maintained. However, the tidal wave of media and domestic protest against the incursions created unusual pressure on his administration. Security leaks also plagued the embattled Chief Executive.

Later in 1970, the DRV agreed to a new round of diplomacy. They continued to insist on both public and private talks; therefore, a new senior negotiator, Ambassador David Bruce, was named by the President to represent the US at the public sessions while Mr. Kissinger continued to explore the secret channel. Neither proved successful.

#### 4) Breaking the Deadlock: Forcing a Military Stalemate

By 1971, the Nixon-Kissinger global strategy began to show results: Atlantic relationships had improved, an opening to China had been developed, and Moscow's attitude toward serious negotiations and detente had changed significantly. The Vietnam conflict remained, however, as the Administration's one recurring nightmare. The quote below stated the official dilemma quite clearly:

We could not end it [the war] on terms acceptable to Hanoi without jeopardizing everything else we were doing abroad; we could not pursue it to a decisive military result without risking all cohesion at home. 119/

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Nixon walked the tightrope -- posing sufficient risk to the DRV to induce a settlement compatible with American international responsibilities and national honor while holding out hope to the US public that the end was in sight.

Mr. Nixon, sensing the growing war-weariness in America, gave serious consideration to the following measures:

- a standstill cease-fire (to be followed by a formal diplomatic conference to settle the war), or
- combine an all-out bombing with total withdrawal, or
- blockade the North, resume bombing and simultaneously withdraw all forces.

It was decided to continue the drawdown of US combat troops and again test the DRV's will at both the public and private peace talks. In the secret talks, Mr. Kissinger offered some minor concessions (one important--after agreement, US would totally withdraw from RVN--and the other cosmetic) to see if the effects of the Cambodian incursion had caused movement in the DRV's position.<sup>120/</sup>

There was little change in the DRV's position. They wanted:

- an immutable deadline set for the withdrawal of US forces
- all known non-communist leaders excluded from political participation
- an overthrow of the Thieu government

The DRV maintained this negotiating position until October 1972.<sup>121/</sup>

In an attempt at breaking the negotiating deadlock, Mr Nixon offered a standstill cease-fire, including a halt to US bombing throughout Indochina, in a speech on October 7, 1970. He proposed a peace conference to bring an end to the war in the countries of Indochina. He expressed a readiness to negotiate an agreed timetable for the total withdrawal of US troops (in the language or context of a mutual withdrawal). He invited Hanoi to join with the US in a political settlement based on the will of the South Vietnamese people. He offered to abide by the outcome of the agreed political process but rejected as unreasonable the demand

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that the US dismantle the organized non-communists. And, finally, he called for the release by both sides of all POW's.122/

The Nixon proposal was rejected out of hand by the DRV's negotiators. In response, the President ordered a brief two-day return to bombing of the North.

There were three reasons for the brief return to bombing, which were:

- to divert Hanoi's defenses from the Son Tay Raid (a raid to rescue US POWs)
- to retaliate for the abrupt rejection of Mr. Nixon's peace proposal
- to slow down the DRV's dry-season supply effort into the South.123/

Under tremendous domestic pressure to announce a unilateral withdrawal, Mr. Nixon announced the withdrawal of additional combat troops. He began to give consideration to an almost total withdrawal, and he decided to couple that with a quarantine of the DRV and a resumption of heavy bombing. Mr. Kissinger cautioned against such a move early in 1972, on the grounds that it might hurt the prospects for Vietnamization succeeding and lead to the eventual collapse of the GVN.124/

Meanwhile, Mr. Kissinger had developed a more practical strategy -- make substantial reductions in US forces until reaching a residual force of about 50,000 men (volunteers) by the summer of 1972, who would remain until a settlement was reached. As an added inducement for a settlement, he proposed to offer the DRV a more rapid withdrawal program if they agreed to a cease-fire. If rejected, the US knew they would be facing some kind of a DRV offensive in 1972 (during US presidential election year for maximum impact) and the outcome of the war would then depend on whether or not the RVNAF, aided only by US airpower, would be able to blunt the attack.125/ The strategy also called for the US to announce, sometime in 1971, an end to US participation in ground combat operations.

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For the new strategy to work, it was necessary to punish and weaken the North Vietnamese as much as possible during the interval. Therefore the following actions were pursued:

- a dry-season offensive was conducted in Laos in 1971 (by RVNAF forces with US air support)
- improved support to Lon Nol's forces in Cambodia and continue bombings
- increased deliveries of equipment in support of Vietnamization

The RVNAF was only partially successful with their 1971 offensive into Laos; however they acquitted themselves later (when supported by US air-power) during the DRV's 1972 Easter Offensive.

After Laos, the NSC staff began to assess the balance of forces in the conflict arena. They assessed the impact of the earlier operations in Cambodia and Laos on the DRV capacity to launch an offensive in the 1972 dry-season. Because of setbacks, the consensus opinion was that the DRV would probably have to wait until the latter half of the 1972 dry-season for staging their attack. The NSC estimate missed by only three weeks -- the US showed a much improved capability to assess the balance of forces in the conflict. 126/

At that juncture, Mr. Kissinger had developed a seven-point plan which sought to bring the US's negotiating proposals into line with its actions. The plan included:

- an offer to set a date for total withdrawal (with no demand for mutual withdrawals)
- a proviso that the political future of South Vietnam be left up to the South Vietnamese people
- that the DRV would stop its infiltration of RVN and neighboring countries
- a prohibition against reinforcement
- an internationally-monitored cease-fire in-place throughout Indochina
- guarantees for the independence, neutrality and integrity of Laos and Cambodia.

- a point calling for the immediate release by both sides of POWs and innocent civilians.127/

The new proposal marked a turning point for American diplomacy in Vietnam, and in essence it was accepted by the DRV about sixteen months later. It also served to isolate the military issues for separate solution: US withdrawal, cease-fire and return of POWs. It was accepted by in-country personnel and blessed by President Thieu (who changed his mind after the RVNAF's success in 1972, when he felt he was winning).128/

Eventually the DRV's negotiators responded to the seven points with a demand that the US pay reparations for the damage caused in the "war zones" of Vietnam, which the US rejected out of hand. However, the DRV would not countenance the withdrawal-for-prisoners exchange that was the staple of an on-going public American debate. Meanwhile, an eight-point "peace" plan, submitted earlier by Madame Nguyen Thi Binh (Foreign Minister of the PRG) was receiving big play in the US Congress and the press. The administration found itself constrained from publically demonstrating the bogus aspects of Madame Binh's plan because of a desire to maintain secrecy. The USG's eagerness to make a breakthrough forced them to preserve a secrecy which enabled the DRV to whipsaw the administration between a public position they dared not rebut and a private record which they could not publish.

President Nixon believed that the war had to be ended by mid-1972 (end of that year's dry-season).129/ To have waited until the next dry season would have taken the issue into the President's second term. Both the President and Mr. Kissinger believed that Hanoi was orchestrating its military actions with the US elections in mind. If Mr. Nixon showed any sign of weakness in his handling of the war, he faced the possibility of defeat at the polls or of being forced to make major concessions to growing anti-war elements. Consequently, he decided on a policy of applying maximum diplomatic and military pressure on the DRV to reach an agreement. With his domestic position greatly strengthened by his twin

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summits in Peking and Moscow, President Nixon signalled the following to Hanoi:

- increased communist aggression would be countered swiftly
- the US was ready to sign an agreement to end the war before the next dry season (after the dry season and US elections, US terms would harden)
- Hanoi's allies (USSR & PRC) saw the benefits of detente so they were no longer willing to risk it for the sake of the DRV's struggle.130/

A presidential aide observed at the time that, "it was the first time in the entire war that our use of force against Hanoi and our diplomacy with the Soviets and Chinese were coordinated solely for its effect on the negotiations. The President no longer wanted to win the war, he wanted to end it."131/

The "detente" diplomacy which met with success in Peking and Moscow had little effect on Hanoi. On May 2, 1972, (the day before the northern-most province of RVN fell to the PAVN), Mr. Kissinger met secretly with Le Duc Tho for the thirteenth time. The loss of Quang Tri was a major test of Vietnamization and at that time was a major defeat for Saigon. It could not have come at a worse time in the negotiations; if anything, it suggested to the DRV that Quang Tri might have been to the US in 1972 what Dien Bien Phu had been to the French in 1954.132/

The secret talks with Le Duc Tho again got nowhere. Two days later, on 4 May, the plenary sessions of the public Paris talks were suspended because of a complete lack of progress on all channels. A week later, President Nixon announced to the nation that the secret talks had broken down, and that he had ordered Haiphong Harbor to be mined along with other bombing and interdiction measures to be taken against the DRV. Nixon added that those measures would remain in effect until the day a Paris Agreement was signed. What the US sought, he said, was an internationally supervised "cease-fire in-place" throughout Indochina plus a POW exchange. He emphasized that after those terms were accepted by the DRV, US forces would begin their final withdrawal and complete it within four months.133/



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At last, or so it seemed, the US was no longer fearful of Soviet or Chinese intervention in the conflict, and therefore could use the force necessary to bring about an acceptable end to US involvement. The DRV, sensing possible isolation and stalemate on the battlefield, began to make sounds like they wanted to get down to discussing matters of substance.

d. An Agreement at Last

By July 1972 with negotiations again underway in earnest, there was apparent agreement on the following issues:

- the principle of a total US withdrawal
- the release of POWs
- the reaffirmation of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements
- an internationally supervised cease-fire in-place at the end.

However, two basic disputes remained. They were:

- the demand for reparations, and
- the DRV's insistence that the US overthrow the GVN.<sup>134/</sup>

Mr. Kissinger noted significant movement on the part of the DRV throughout the summer. Hanoi, probably convinced that President Nixon would be much stronger after the November presidential elections, began to press for quick settlement. The bombing and mining was having their impact. Kissinger saw this as "a great opportunity; unless it was grasped the US mood was such that even with an overwhelming mandate, Nixon would quickly be pushed against the grindstone of congressional pressures to end the war on almost any terms."<sup>135/</sup>

In October 1972, after an unprecedented four-day secret session in Paris, Le Duc Tho presented the DRV's new proposals. Included was a military settlement -- withdrawal, POWs, cease-fire -- and a separate political solution -- dropping demands for a coalition government and accepting only an "Administration of National Concord,"<sup>137/</sup> They no longer insisted on an end to US military aid to RVN after an agreement. Moreover, the DRV agreed to cease their infiltration into RVN, which if observed would have guaranteed the erosion of North Vietnamese stay-behind ("leopard spots") elements in the South.

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Mr. Kissinger, feeling that "peace was at hand", traveled to Saigon to gain the concurrence of President Thieu. Thieu, strengthened by recent country-wide elections, scuttled the proposed agreements. He accused the US of "conniving to sell him out."<sup>137/</sup> Mr. Kissinger, forced to return to Washington empty-handed, was barely back when the DRV, hoping to force Mr. Nixon's hand, went public and broadcast the terms of the new proposal. They then accused the US of stalling on its implementation.

Mr. Kissinger held a press conference shortly thereafter in order to state the American position. He also used the conference as a forum to let Hanoi know the US was still standing by the basic understanding, and to let Saigon know that the US was determined to proceed on its course. An unfortunate display of optimism by Kissinger at the news briefing caused the administration some embarrassment. Some accused the Nixon people of playing politics with the peace negotiations;<sup>138/</sup> others complained that the terms had been available four years before but were not acceptable to the US at that time.

The President found himself in a bind. He was reluctant to impose terms on President Thieu, but he did not want to lose the concessions gained through long hard talks with the DRV. Mr. Kissinger returned to Paris in November 1972, and found the DRV less eager for an agreement when President Thieu's reservations were brought up. Meetings in November and December led nowhere, and on December 13th a discouraged Kissinger returned to the US. He was convinced that the DRV had been determined not to allow the agreement to be completed.<sup>139/</sup>

Administration advisers recommended a military response to the DRV's new intransigence. President Nixon ordered a resumption of the bombing (known as the Christmas bombing) on December 18th, which lasted for twelve days. On the day the bombing was resumed, the US proposed that talks be resumed. Hanoi agreed on December 30th to begin again on January 9, 1973. Kissinger was positive "we had won our gamble and the the next round of negotiations would succeed."<sup>140/</sup>

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The January 8, 1973 meeting produced agreement on the remaining issues, which were:

- to designate the DMZ as a provisional military demarcation between two parts of Vietnam -- thus recognizing the separate entity of South Vietnam
- to restrict military movement across the DMZ
- to develop a formula whereby the PRG and GVN per se, were not mentioned in the agreements document.

Shortly thereafter, General Alexander Haig was given the mission of flying to Saigon with an ultimatum that the US would sign the peace agreements, if necessary, without President Thieu's concurrence. General Haig delivered a scorching letter from President Nixon to Thieu on January 16th. Its crucial paragraph read: "I have irrevocably decided to initial the Agreement on January 27, 1973, in Paris. I will do so, if necessary, alone. In that case I shall have to explain publicly that your government obstructs peace. The result will be an inevitable and immediate termination of US economic and military assistance."<sup>141/</sup> On January 21st, Thieu relented.

On January 23, 1973, Mr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met for the last time in Paris. Prior to signing the agreements, Le Duc Tho was reported to have insisted on ironclad assurances of American economic aid to North Vietnam. Mr. Kissinger told him that this could not be discussed further until after the agreement was signed; also that it depended on congressional approval and on observance of the agreement.<sup>142/</sup> The Paris Peace Agreements were initialed then by Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, both of whom were to become recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize for a peace that never came to Vietnam and Indochina.

### e. Outcomes of the Third Phase

When he assumed office, President Nixon recognized that the war was not winable. Conversely, the DRV was unable to gain a military victory while US troops were engaged in the combat arena. Under those circumstances, Nixon and his special assistant, Mr. Kissinger, devised a strategy which would allow the US to withdraw from the war as an expression of policy and not as of collapse.

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The Nixon-Kissinger tandem orchestrated a global strategy -- detente with the Soviet Union, and rapprochement with China -- which eventually isolated the DRV. They applied sufficient military pressure on Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries to help create a stalemate between the balance of forces in RVN. In addition, they promoted unilateral US withdrawals, applied in conjunction with Vietnamization (and Pacification support) to insure a maintenance of stalemate conditions on the battlefield.

Notwithstanding Congressional and media pressures as well as public outcries, Nixon persisted and the strategy and tactics finally paid off. The DRV was brought to the table, and when they exhibited intransigence, they were brought back in line with massive, effective bombing and a mining of their ports. Many agree that militarily, the Christmas bombing (Linebacker-2) was one of the most successful US operations of the war 143/ The B-52's evasion tactics had decisively defeated the DRV's SAM (surface-to-air missile) defense system in the North, and not a single SAM was left. The bombing destroyed the vital military supplies that it had taken Hanoi months to get because of the naval blockade.

In the end, the US got back its POWs and disengaged itself from the war. However, officially it was forced to recognize that from a political, spiritual and legal standpoint it could no longer demand a withdrawal of the northern (leopard spot) forces from the South.

The negotiations provided the US with a legitimate vehicle through which it ended a decade of direct involvement in Vietnam. What happened later would depend on whether the military stalemate, that allowed the political solution to develop and made an agreement possible, would last. It did not last, and in 1975, after committing numerous treaty violations, the DRV crushed South Vietnam.

### f. Impacts of the Third Phase

Nixon's global and military strategy isolated the DRV from its allies and forced a stalemate on the battlefield. President Thieu was forced to accept an agreement to which he had not been a party to. The American public, traumatized by over a decade of war, got back its POWs and

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a "peace with honor." And the DRV was allowed to leave its leopard spot strongholds in the South.

Probably the most significant impact during this period was in the relationships between the White House and Congress. The President, beleaguered by the Watergate break-in scandal, lost continued congressional support for his Vietnam policy. In August 1973, the Congress made it impossible to further use any military forces in Southeast Asia, thus giving the DRV a free hand to do whatever they pleased in violation of the Paris agreements. Moreover, the Congress withheld the military assistance funds needed to keep the South Vietnamese supplied with munitions.

Furthermore, in 1973, the President had his powers to make war severely restricted. The Congress passed the War Powers Act over his veto. This act drastically limits the President's traditional freedom of action in strategic decisionmaking in that it prevents him from sending armed forces into action or into an area where hostilities are indicated except in a national emergency created by an attack on the US, its territories, possessions, or its armed forces. Even then he must withdraw such forces in 60 days unless Congress acts to declare war.

### g. Analysis of the Third Phase

On humanitarian grounds, some 144/ have argued that an agreement with Hanoi was probably possible in December 1972, without the final paroxysms of the Christmas bombings. Others 145/ claim that an agreement could have been had in 1971 (i.e., before the DRV launched their Easter Offensive in 1972) if the US had done a better job of articulating the "in-place" aspects of its cease-fire proposal. Still others 146/ hold that a treaty was available much earlier, and that the expansion of the war into Cambodia and Laos through incursions and bombings in 1970 and 1971 set in train a course of events which destroyed those countries. All tend to overlook the realities of the negotiating environment. Hanoi did not view the war and negotiations as separate processes. They sought to negotiate from strength. Throughout the period, they continued to use all of Indochina to strengthen their military hand in the South and gain the advantage in the balance of forces.

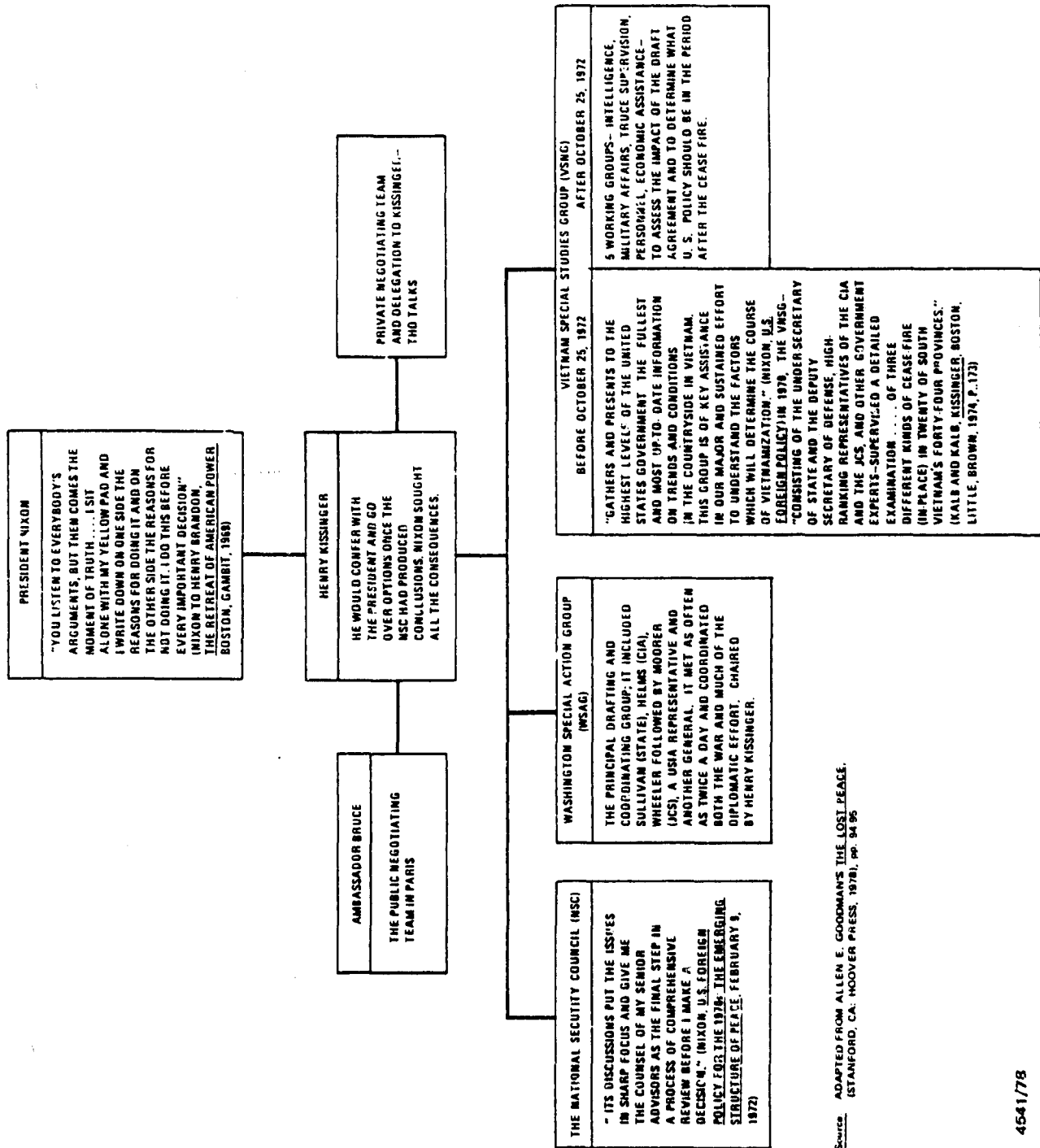
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One cannot argue with the success of the Nixon and Kissinger negotiating strategy. They recognized that a military solution to Vietnam was not possible. They decided, therefore, to set their negotiating strategy and withdraw from the conflict on American terms. In response to public and congressional pressure at home, they initiated a unilateral withdrawal of US forces. They beefed up the RVNAF through an accelerated Vietnamization program and stepped up efforts to improve pacification in the RVN. Thereafter, they successfully exploited detente with the Soviet Union and the opening with China in order to isolate the DRV from their benefactors. Then, through incursions, denial operations and bombings of DRV sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos, they effectively isolated the enemy's forces in the South. Confronted with a stalemate in the South, punished by accurate "smart" bombs and waves of B-52s, and its harbors closed by lethal mines, the DRV decided to negotiate (see Figure 7-5 for President Nixon's Negotiations Decision Tree).

The unfortunate aspect of the process was that one of the principal parties, the South Vietnamese, were not brought into the "talks" until the agreement had been finalized.

The US got its "peace with honor," its POWs back, a "safe" withdrawal from battle, and a "decent interval." The DRV got to keep their forces in-place in the South and another agreement which they could violate with impunity and regularity. The GVN got little more than solace. Forced to accept US terms, President Thieu tried to rally his people around what was to become a losing cause.

Throughout the negotiations, the US set about to convince the GVN that by accepting an agreement it could lose nothing it already had and to convince Hanoi that unless it accepted an agreement it would have no chance of winning politically. Each had to believe that a negotiated agreement was an interim step toward victory.<sup>147/</sup> Implementing this negotiating strategy required both time to allow the GVN to get accustomed to fighting the war without US forces, and continued warfare so that the DRV could not be certain that simply by waiting out US withdrawal the war would wind down, and with it, the need to negotiate anything at all.



Source: ADAPTED FROM ALLEN E. GOODMAN'S THE LOST PEACE. (STAMFORD, CA: HOOVER PRESS, 1978), pp. 94-95

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Figure 7-5. The Principal Inputs to President Nixon's Decisions on Negotiations

What Nixon and Kissinger most wanted to avoid in the negotiations with the DRV was the mistake that had been made in Korea --the restriction of military action to defensive operations while armistice talks continued. By stopping military operations in Korea, the UN forces removed the only incentive for a settlement that the enemy had. That miscalculation produced the frustration of two years of inconclusive negotiations. Kissinger observed that divorcing force from diplomacy caused "our power to lack purpose and our negotiations to lack force" in Korea.<sup>148/</sup> Consequently, Mr. Kissinger believed that, unless the US showed the DRV it was willing to threaten the absolute destruction of North Vietnam, they would never negotiate.

A comparative analysis of the minimum and maximum positions of all parties involved in the negotiations is presented in Figure 7-6 and 7-7. The most unusual aspect of both is the fact that after successfully carrying out their strategy and isolating the DRV, the US settled for what is depicted as its minimum negotiating position with respect to the DRV and the GVN.

#### 4. Insights

The following insights have been distilled from the information presented in the chapter:

- During President Johnson's Administration, the hope for ending the war depended on being successful on the battlefield. Achieving a position of military strength became an essential US prerequisite for negotiations. This strategy suffered from two disabilities: (a) the nature of guerrilla warfare; and, (b) the asymmetry in the definition of what constituted acceptable losses. As a result, American/FWMAF military successes could not be translated into permanent political advantage
- President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger recognized that a military solution to the war was not available; therefore they set about to attain a stalemate on the battlefield, to cause the DRV to be isolated from their communist benefactors and to arrive at a political solution in the negotiations.



FOR NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT ON:		
FOR TALKS/NEGOTIATIONS:	CEASE-FIRE.	
POLITICAL SETTLEMENT:		
<p>The DRV's maximum</p>	<p>For negotiations: Stop bombing permanently and unconditionally; accept four points.</p> <p>U.S. withdrawal; end to GVN aid, release of all prisoners-POWs and political; cease-fire thereafter*</p>	<p>Replacement of Thieu with a coalition</p>
<p>US's maximum</p>	<p>Bombing will be stopped in return for an end of NVA infiltration and attacks against urban centers.</p> <p>Cease-fire, mutual troop withdrawal, and POW return</p>	<p>Status quo ante, pending plebisrite</p>
<p>The DRV's minimum</p>	<p>For talks: Stop bombing permanently and unconditionally.</p> <p>U.S. withdrawal; cease-fire-in-place (revealed in October 1972)</p>	<p>Assurance that freedom of political organization and other democratic liberties would be respected by the GVN, National Council of Reconciliation and Concord (NCR) to serve as coalition government of the transition</p>
<p>US's minimum</p>	<p>Bombing will be suspended if serious talks follow U.S. decision to suspend bombing, and if rocket attacks against Saigon cease.</p> <p>Cease-fire-in-place; prisoner exchange</p>	<p>Status quo ante pending NCR formation.</p>

\*A cease-fire was not separable from a political settlement.

SOURCES: Adapted from Allen Goodman, The Lost Peace, p. 97; It is substantially supported by Henry Kissinger's, The White House Years.

Figure 7-6. The DRV vs. US: Minimum and Maximum Positions on Key Issues in the Negotiations

	<u>FOR TALKS/NEGOTIATIONS:</u>	<u>FOR NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT ON: CEASE-FIRE:</u>	<u>POLITICAL SETTLEMENT:</u>
GVN's maximum	For negotiations: Withdrawal of all NVA forces	Withdrawal of all NVA forces	Elections organized by a mixed electoral commission in which Viet Cong could participate if they renounced violence
US's maximum	Bombing will be stopped in return for end of NVA infiltration and attacks against urban centers	Cease-fire, mutual troop withdrawal, and POW return	Status quo ante, pending plebiscite
GVN's minimum	For talks: Withdrawal of all NVA forces	Withdrawal of all NVA forces	National reconciliation for, and integration of, Viet Cong into political system once war ends and NVA withdraws
US's minimum	Bombing will be suspended if serious talks follow U.S. decision to suspend bombing, and if rocket attacks against Saigon cease	Cease-fire-in-place; POW exchange	Status quo ante, pending NCRC formation

SOURCES: Adapted from Allen Goodman, The Lost Peace, p. 98; It is substantially supported by Henry Kissinger's, The White House Years.

Figure 7-7. US vs. GVN: Minimum and Maximum Positions on Key Issues in the Negotiations

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- As a venture in strategic persuasion, the early bombing of North Vietnam did not work. Limited and graduated air attacks met with little success. The symbolic rationale for bombing halts backfired and the DRV used negotiations as a means to get the bombing stopped. Only when the president decided to go with a heavy bombardment of Hanoi/Haiphong in December 1972, did US airpower prove its effectiveness in getting the DRV to negotiate in earnest.
- The DRV carefully played out the negotiations according to the timing of US presidential elections.
- When negotiating a settlement on behalf of our allies and ourselves, the US must not only be actively cognizant of their established negotiating positions, but also of their input and reactions to alternatives.
- The utility of public negotiations is great, particularly in concealing secret talks. They clearly provide opportunity to keep the press and public feeling informed, without compromising the saliency of secret negotiating points.
- Early on, American leadership mistakenly believed Vietnam to be vital not for itself, but for what they thought its "loss" would mean internationally and domestically. It also meant that US leaders wanted a negotiated settlement without fully realizing (though probably more than their critics) that a civil war cannot be ended by political compromise alone. The attainment of a stalemate on the battlefield and the effective isolation of the enemy from their suppliers were the keys to bringing the negotiations to a conclusion. It was unfortunate that US military strength had no political corollary in RVN. The fact that the agreement failed to stop the DRV and the PRG from eventually pursuing their ultimate goal -- military victory over the South--reinforces this insight.

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- The last insight is drawn from a statement by Mr. Kissinger which was made in response to a question as to whether he believed that the Paris Agreements would precipitate movement toward a political settlement. He said:

...it is not easy to achieve through negotiations what has not been achieved on the battlefield, and if you look at the settlements that have been made in the postwar period, the lines of demarcation have almost always followed the lines of actual control...we have taken the position throughout that the agreement cannot be analyzed in terms of any one of its provisions, but it has to be seen in its totality and in terms of the evolution that it starts. 149/

In this case, that "evolution" was a continuation of the war, proving that signatures on a cease fire agreement do not necessarily end a war.

### C. LESSONS

The following lessons are drawn from the information presented in this chapter.

- An incremental military strategy and conciliatory negotiating strategy with a communist adversary who equates restraint with weakness and with whom compromise is inconceivable will make a meaningful settlement unlikely.
- Communist nations do not view war and negotiations as separate processes, but consider them one and the same. What the DRV sought in direct talks with the US was a way to improve its chances of winning the war, not a way of preventing or ending one.
- Before engaging in talks or negotiations with a communist nation, key negotiators must give careful thought to strategy, objectives and the "balance of forces" on the battlefield, always keeping in

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mind the fact that communist negotiators will be intransigent and unyielding if they perceive a military, political, psychological or economic edge over their adversaries.

- Other peoples are not as time-conscious as Americans. Our adversaries are likely to take advantage of this fact by attempting to outlast rather than outfight the US. As long as they can avoid defeat, therefore, they can hope to force the US to give up.

### Recommendations on How the US Should Approach and Conduct Negotiations in the Future

Should the US find itself facing negotiations in the future, it is recommended that they be approached and conducted as follows:

- Top caliber career diplomats and military personnel should be selected for alternate specialty training in the planning, protocols, and conduct of negotiations. Special emphasis should be placed on lessons learned from negotiating with the communists since WWII.
- The Department of State should reassess the extent to which diplomatic linguistics have been devaluated in this century and should train its diplomats to deal linguistically with monolithic authoritarian negotiating positions.
- Negotiations should employ the technique so successfully used in Paris of maintaining open talks concurrent with secret sessions.
- For any given specific negotiation, it is recommended that the USG:
  - choose a principal negotiator who has the President's confidence
  - carefully select a special team of well-trained negotiators (including personnel who are familiar with the language, philosophy, history and culture of the enemy they will be facing).
  - make maximum use of private sessions
  - make a maximum effort to gain the initiative in the talks

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- make liberal use of military personnel in the sessions, since the communists have historically clothed their negotiators in military uniform for negotiations with free world countries (there is a need to have a cadre of US military personnel trained in negotiations).

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APPENDIX

FRENCH VIETNAMESE NEGOTIATING EVENTS

(1946 - 1954)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Accord of 6 March 1946	<p>Agreement signed by Ho Chi Minh with French provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● France recognized DRV as: "Free State ... forming part of the Indochina Federation and the French Union."</li> <li>● DRV welcomed French Army into Tonkin for 5 years.</li> <li>● Further negotiations were to spell out details for DRV independence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Led to French occupation of Tonkin Delta.</li> <li>● No significant step taken by France toward DRV autonomy.</li> </ul>
First Dalat Conference, 19 April - 11 May 1946	<p>French and DRV delegates attempted to negotiate differences, but were able to enact only minor agreements on cultural and educational matters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overshadowed by continuing guerrilla war in Cochinchina.</li> <li>● The commission set up to arrange an armistice was ineffective.</li> </ul>
Establishment of Provisional Government of Cochinchina, 1 June 1946	<p>French announced formation of an independent Cochinchina within the Indochina Federation and the French Union.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Touched off new wave of guerrilla war in South Vietnam.</li> <li>● Possibility of divided Vietnam pressured DRV in negotiations with France; stiffened DRV attitudes.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Adapted from DoD US-VN Relations, Book 1 of 12, "French-Vietnamese Negotiations", pp. B-1 through B-6.

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<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Fontainbleau Conference, 6 July - 10 September 1946	Formal negotiations in France between DRV delegation headed by Ho Chi Minh and second-rank French officials led to no agreement on any substantive issue.	DRV delegation withdrew in protest over convening of Second Dalat Conference (below), resumed talks, then acceded to adjournment without progress.
Second Dalat Conference, 1 August 1946	Conference among French, Cochinchinese, Laotians, Cambodians, Montagnards of Annam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Announced formation of "federal states" under French High Commissioner.</li> <li>● Denounced DRV delegation at Fontainbleau as unrepresentative.</li> <li>● Cambodians and Cochinchinese moved for direct representation in French Union and abroad, but French refused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Caused breakdown of Fontainbleau Conference.</li> <li>● Erected new facade of federation, but led to no significant political concessions by French.</li> </ul>
<u>Franco-DRV Modus Vivendi</u> , 14 September 1946	After DRV delegation departed from Fontainbleau, Ho Chi Minh signed agreement with France which provided, effective 30 October 1946: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reciprocal rights for citizens.</li> <li>● Reciprocal property rights and restoration of seized French property in Vietnam.</li> <li>● Piastre related to franc.</li> <li>● Customs union and free trade within Indochina Federation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Led to some release of prisoners, and lull in guerrilla operations.</li> <li>● No substantial French political concessions eventuated.</li> </ul>



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<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Franco-DRV Modus Vivendi (Continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armistice Commission to deal with guerrilla war in Cochinchina.</li> <li>• Referendum to decide Cochinchina's relationship to DRV.</li> <li>• France-DRV talks to resume in January, 1947.</li> </ul>	
Declaration of the Freedom of Cochinchina, 4 February 1947	<p>French High Commissioner extended powers of the Saigon Government to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative and executive action on all internal affairs.</li> <li>• Universal suffrage for election of legislature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President Le Van Hoach of Cochinchina admitted Viet Minh controlled greater part of Cochinchina.</li> <li>• Elections repeatedly postponed because of civil disorder.</li> </ul>
First Ha Long Bay Agreement, 7 December 1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bao Dai associated himself with French-sponsored nationalist movement.</li> <li>• French promised, in vague terms, national independence for Vietnam.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French took no action toward releasing their control in Vietnam.</li> <li>• Bao Dai withdrew to Europe.</li> <li>• Agreement condemned by non-Viet Minh nationalists, e.g., Ngo Dinh Diem.</li> </ul>

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<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Second Ha Long Bay Agreement, 5 June 1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● France solemnly recognized the independence of Vietnam within the French Union.</li> <li>● Bao Dai reassociated himself with the attempt to form a nationalist government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● France transferred no significant political power to Vietnamese.</li> <li>● Led only to further negotiations between Bao Dai and France.</li> </ul>
Elysee Agreement, 8 March 1949	<p>In an exchange of letters between Bao Dai and President Auriol, France:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reconfirmed Vietnam's status as an independent Associated State within the French Union.</li> <li>● Agreed to unifying Vietnam, and placing it under Vietnamese administration, under terms to be negotiated subsequently.</li> <li>● Retained control of Vietnamese armed forces and foreign relations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● French economic and political primacy remained unchanged, even in principle.</li> <li>● Cochinchina formally merged with Annam and Tonkin in State of Vietnam in June, 1949.</li> <li>● Plans for internal administrative transfer announced 30 December 1949</li> <li>● Practical matters of transfer of administrative functions. In principle, external affairs were deferred to Pau Negotiations of 1950.</li> </ul>

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<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Recognition of the Independence of the State of Vietnam, 14 June 1949	French High Commissioner for Indochina and Emperor Bao Dai exchanged letters in Saigon formalizing Elysee Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cochinchina government tendered resignation to Bao Dai, merging in principle with new State of Vietnam.</li> <li>● No actual transfer of political power occurred.</li> </ul>
French Ratification of the Independence of Vietnam, 2 February 1950	Following National Assembly approval (29 January 1950), France announced ratification of the status for Vietnam described in the Elysee Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● US Recognized State of Vietnam (3 February 1950).</li> <li>● Details of transfer of powers awaited Pau Negotiations (March-November, 1950).</li> </ul>
The Pau Negotiations, June-November 1950	Bao Dai pressed the French in a series of conferences for the transfer of immigration, communications, and finance services to Vietnam.	The French eventually granted significant concessions to the Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians in each area, preserving rights of French "observation and intervention." They were considered a success by the Vietnamese negotiators.

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<u>Event</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
The Geneva Conference 1954 (April-July)	Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the French sought to negotiate a cease-fire with the DRV and arrange for an end to hostilities in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Besides France and the DRV, the conference included English, Russian, Chinese, Laotian and Cambodian negotiators. The US and the GVN attended as observers.	The primary objective of the Geneva conference was accomplished -- a cease-fire. The key provisions of the Accords were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DMZ established with DRV Army regrouped to the North and French Union forces to the South (at 17th parallel)</li><li>• Creation of the International Control Commission (ICC) to supervise compliance.</li><li>• General Elections to be held within 2 years (by 20 July 1956)-which were never accomplished.</li></ul>

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51. DoD US-VN Relations, Book 12, VI. C.1., "Histories of Contacts", p. 1.
52. Ibid., Book 12 VI. C.1., "Histories of Contacts", pp. 1-3.
53. Ibid., Book 12 VI. C.1., "XYZ.", (Summary) p. 1, also pp. 3-4, 6-8, and (Text), pp. 8-9, 12-15, 18-19, and 21-22.
54. Gelb, p. 141.
55. Kraslow and Loory, p. 139.
56. Ibid., pp. 140-141. The fourteen points were:
  1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia;
  2. We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or on any part thereof;
  3. We would welcome "negotiations without preconditions" as the 17 nations put it;
  4. We would welcome unconditional discussions as President Johnson put it;
  5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions;



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6. Hanoi's Four Points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose;
7. We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia;
8. We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured;
9. We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice;
10. The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision;
11. The countries of Southeast Asia can be non-aligned or neutral if that be their option;
12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least one billion dollars;
13. The President has said "The Viet Cong would not have difficulty being presented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would be an unsurmountable problem."
14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace, although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

Washington's Fourteen Points, January 7, 1966, Department of State Bulletin (Washington, February 14, 1966).

57. Kraslow and Loory, p. 145.
58. Ibid., p. 146.
59. Johnson, p. 239.
60. Ibid.
61. Geib on p. 142, refers to a William Bundy note to Secretary of State Rusk, entitled: "Last Thoughts on the 'Four Proposals'," dated December 17, 1965. Bundy refers to a luncheon with a Soviet Diplomat during which he inferred that Hanoi would denounce the bombing pause "unless we do something major with respect to the South--which I take to imply the suspension of reinforcements.

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This I most emphatically do not feel we should do." ("PINTA: RANGCON," Text, p. 1a). It should also be noted that some in the administration had expected the pause would fail but saw it as a necessary last-chance offer before undertaking planned escalation. See Pentagon Papers Vol. 4, Gravel Edition, pp. 303, 623.

62. Kraslow and Loory, p. 151.
63. Johnson, pp. 590-591 and Gelb pp. 162-163. See Figure 7-1 for a graphic portrayal of the various initiatives and contacts during the period.
64. Gelb p. 151, and Henry Cabot Lodge, As It Was: An Inside View of Politics and Power in the 50's and 60's (New York: Norton, 1976), pp. 171-173.
65. Kraslow and Loory, pp. 18-22.
66. DoD US-VN Relations, Book 12 VI. C.2. (Dissension), p. 16.
67. Kraslow and Loory, p. 5.
68. DoD US-VN Relations, Book 12 of 12, VI. C.4. (Negotiations), p.8.
69. Quoted in Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1970), p. 381.
70. Goodman, pp. 63-64.
71. Quoted in Goodman, p. 65.
72. Ibid., p. 71.
73. See Consultation Memos for Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, Washington, D.C., April 1965, History Back-up File (27 March - 7 May 1965), Private Papers of General William Westmoreland, on file at the Office of the Army Chief of Military History (OCMH).
74. See a memo by General De Puy, MACV J-3, of his meeting with ARVN General Thang, Saigon, August 1965, History Back-up File (July - August 1965), General Westmoreland's Private Papers, on file at CCMH, Washington, D. C.
75. Goodman, p. 3.
76. Quoted in Goodman, p. 24.
77. Johnson, pp. 579-589.

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78. Jonnson, p. 250.
79. Ibid., pp. 232-269.
80. Goodman, p. 24; Kraslow and Loory, p. 53; and, Gelb pp. 165-167.
81. Kraslow and Loory, p. 140.
82. Kissinger, Foreign Affairs, p. 217.
83. Kissinger, Foreign Affairs, p. 217; Kraslow and Loory, p. 53; Goodman, pp. 69-72; and, Gelb with Betts, p. 153.
84. Goodman, p. 85.
85. Henry Kissinger, "There was no Alternative: The White House Years," Time, Vol. 114, No. 15 (October 8, 1979): 33.
86. Kissinger, Foreign Affairs, p. 214.
87. William R. Corson, Consequences of Failure (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), pp. 185-186.
88. Corson, pp. 186-187.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid, p. 187.
91. Kissinger, Foreign Affairs, p. 214.
92. Goodman, p. 81.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., p. 85.
95. Kissinger, Foreign Affairs p. 230.
96. Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 293.
97. Goodman, p. 91.
98. G. Warren Nutter, Selected Readings: The Vietnam War Elective, Academic Year 1977, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA., 17013 (15 March 1977 - 31 May 1977), p. VI 9-14.

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99. Goodman, p. 88.
100. Ibid., p. 89.
101. Quoted from Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 134.
102. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 271.
103. Ibid., p. 277.
104. Ibid., p. 306.
105. Ibid.
106. BDM Interview with General Vernon A. Walters, June 8, 1979.
107. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 441.
108. Henry Kissinger, "White House Years: Part 2 - The Agony of Vietnam," Time, Vol. 114, No. 15 (October 8, 1979): 35.
109. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 443.
110. Ibid p. 444.
111. Ibid, p. 444-445.
112. Ibid. p. 448.
113. William Shawcross, Sideshow (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1979), pp. 1-35; the Transcript of Unedited Tape Interview with David Frost and Henry Kissinger for NBC News Special Program Broadcast, Thursday, Oct. 11, (10-11 pm NYT) on NBC-TV, p. 3-3-3; also see the Letters Section, William Shawcross, "Cambodia and Kissinger," The Economist, September 8, 1979, p. 6.
114. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 250.
115. Ibid. p. 249.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid. p. 478.
118. Ibid. p. 490
119. Ibid. p. 968.

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120. Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," Foreign Policy, Summer 1974, pp. 29-33.
121. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 979.
122. Ibid. pp. 980-981
123. Ibid. p. 983
124. Ibid. p. 985
125. Ibid. p. 986
126. Ibid. p. 1017
127. Ibid. p. 1018
128. Ibid. pp. 1018-1019
129. Goodman, pp. 119-120
130. Ibid. p. 120
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid. pp. 121-122
133. Ibid. pp. 125-126
134. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1028.
135. Kissinger, "The Agony of Viet Nam," Time, p. 44.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid. p. 45
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid. p. 46
140. Ibid. pp. 48-49
141. Ibid. p. 49
142. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 1472
143. Goodman, p. 161, and General Vogt, during the Vietnam Study Senior Review Panel, at the BDM Corporation, McLean, Va., Feb 8, 1979.

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144. Szulc, p. 69 and Goodman, pp 162-163
145. See William Shawcross', Sideshow; Gareth Porter's, A Peace Denied: The US, Vietnam and the Paris Agreements (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 357 pp; and, the transcript of Frost-Kissinger Interview, NBC-TV, Oct 11, 1979.
147. Goodman, p. 96
148. Ibid.
149. From a Kissinger press conference held on June 13, 1973, as quoted in Goodman, p. 167.

CHAPTER 8  
FOLLOW-ON EFFORT

It should be recognized that in most of the current conflicts Russian allies and client states (and communist supported revolutionary movements) are now in a can-win can't-lose position because their rear bases are secure while those of America's allies are threatened. What is more, the latter only have to lose once. This is a matter of attitude, credibility, will and stamina - all very important weapons in anyone's armoury but in rather short supply. If, through lack of them, the American Congress under pressure from vocal elements in American society reduces aid to South Vietnam below an adequate level (on the military side such aid is already well below the permitted one-for-one replacement), there could be only one real lesson to be learnt from the Vietnam war: - do not rely on the United States as an ally.1/

Sir Robert Thompson, "Military Victory: Political Defeat - The Failure of US Strategy in Vietnam," 1974.

After millions of words about the lessons of Vietnam, we ignore the most important lesson, that political battles cannot be resolved by force of arms.

We learned this lesson at great sacrifice to our nation. Yet our policy-makers now are engaged in a course of action which does not recognize this basic reality of Indochina. The United States has embarked upon a course of encouraging the funding of maximum military confrontation, hoping that somehow those we are supporting can prevail.

...How can the policy of military confrontation be sustained when it is clear that neither the Congress nor the American public is willing to fund the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia at high levels for the indefinite future?2/

The Late Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, in a speech on US aid appropriations to Vietnam, 1974.

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## A. INTRODUCTION

The nature and efficacy of the US follow-on effort to South Vietnam was determined by a myriad of complex military and political factors, both in the United States and in South Vietnam. This chapter examines the most salient of these factors, assessing their impact on the overall viability of the United States' follow-on effort to the GVN and, concurrently, South Vietnam's ability to endure, militarily, politically, and, perhaps most important, psychologically. A topical approach is undertaken: this chapter examines the nature of the US commitment to South Vietnam as perceived by the US and GVN after the Paris Accords came into force; the US attempts to enhance South Vietnam's military capabilities and the effectiveness of these efforts; the impact of US congressional legislation on the (US-) GVN war effort during the 1973-1975 time period; and the physical and psychological problems which confronted both the GVN and the US during these years.

## B. POST-TREATY/POST-WITHDRAWAL: THE BASIS FOR AND NATURE OF THE US COMMITMENT TO SOUTH VIETNAM

### 1. Commitments Based on Private Presidential Assurances

The US follow-on effort to South Vietnam grew out of commitments made by Washington to the GVN both prior to and after the finalization of the 1973 Peace Accords and in the treaty itself, as interpreted by the US government. During the negotiation process, President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger secured GVN President Thieu's final acceptance of the treaty through threats and pressure tactics, but, more important for this particular discussion, through private US presidential assurances that the US would reintervene in Vietnam if Hanoi were to violate the Peace Accords. These assurances, outgrowths of America's already immense physical and spiritual commitment to South Vietnam, of Washington's intense desire to finalize a peace treaty and terminate hostilities in the area, and of the US executive's impatience and eagerness to pursue detente with the USSR and



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PRC, not only prompted Thieu ultimately to accept the Accords but perpetrated a degree of false security within both the military and political ranks of South Vietnam. In response to a letter from GVN President Thieu, Nixon wrote in November 1972,

... far more important than what we say in the agreement on this issue is what we do in the event the enemy renews its aggression. You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action.3/

And again, on January 5, 1973, just prior to the finalization of the Accords, President Nixon sent the following private communique to the Presidential Palace in Saigon:

Should you decide, as I trust you will, to go with us, you have my assurance of continued assistance in the post-settlement period and that we will respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam.4/

Finally, during President Thieu's April 2-3, 1973, San Clemente consultations with President Nixon, additional verbal reassurances were proffered the GVN: the phrases "The US will meet all contingencies in case the agreement is grossly violated" and "You can count on us," (interpreted by Thieu as a binding US national commitment,) substantially contributed to Saigon's belief in and reliance on the United States for follow-on support, including reintervention if deemed necessary.5/ In retrospect, however, these US executive assurances were offered at a time when the US legislative branch could hardly have been expected to condone US reintervention in Indochina. Apparently the Nixon administration had not counted on congressional bans on US military operations in the area nor on the legislature's limitations on presidential authority to enforce the peace agreement.6/ The US Congress was, indeed, the vital player that would ultimately decide if the Nixon (and later Ford) promises to Thieu were reasonable and/or realistic. As Leslie Gelb explains, the US executive's commitment depended on two "ifs:" if Congress would continue to approve

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substantial amounts of military and economic aid to South Vietnam, and if Congress would do nothing to jeopardize the threat of US military reinvolvement should Hanoi violate the agreement.7/ These issues are more fully explored in the section below dealing with congressional legislation during this period.

### 2. Commitments Based on the US Interpretation of the Paris Peace Accords

While the Paris Peace Agreement of January 27, 1973, called for the cessation of hostilities in South Vietnam and the withdrawal of all US military personnel from the country, 8/ it also allowed the US a certain degree of freedom and flexibility in fashioning its follow-on effort to South Vietnam. The US government's interpretation of the treaty allowed for a certain degree of breadth in its follow-on support to the GVN and with regards continued assistance to Laos and Cambodia. From the US perspective, the treaty allowed for a number of provisions, including:9/

- The continuation of US air operations over Cambodia and Laos until such time as a cease-fire and troop-withdrawal arrangements had been concluded for these countries between those parties involved. No particular timetable was stipulated by the Accords.
- The transfer of US armaments, munitions, and war material to South Vietnam prior to the Agreement's entry into force; no transfer was allowed subsequent to this point in time. The treaty did not, however, stipulate whether the critical act was transfer of title or transfer of possession. The US viewed this provision to mean the transfer of title, thereby allowing for the transfer of US equipment to South Vietnam after the Agreement had entered into force.
- While all US military personnel were to be withdrawn from South Vietnam within 60 days from the time the Treaty came into force, US civilian advisers attached to military units or concerned with supply or maintenance of military equipment could remain in-country.

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- On aircraft replacement and transfer, the US interpreted the Treaty to allow for the US replacement of GVN F-5A aircraft (borrowed originally from the ROK, ROC, and Iran) with F-5E aircraft if the F-5A crafts had already been returned to their countries of origin. In these instances, such aircraft could be considered "used up" and could therefore be replaced under the terms of the Treaty.
- While the dismantling of all US and allied military bases in South Vietnam was required by the Agreement, the US interpreted this to mean those bases owned by the US. Hence, the US transferred the titles for all its military bases in South Vietnam to the GVN prior to the conclusion of the Treaty.

In addition, the US also interpreted the treaty as allowing for a one-to-one replacement of equipment destroyed or no longer operable, as well as for the supply of spare parts to the armed forces of South Vietnam. Hence, the US government's interpretation of the Paris Peace Accords created a number of avenues for the US to offer military assistance to the GVN subsequent to the Treaty's conclusion. These avenues were, however, gradually constricted and eventually eliminated as the US Congress legislated restrictions on US aid to and military activities in Indochina in opposition to the Nixon administration's (and, later, Ford's) Vietnam-related policies. This issue is discussed more fully in a following section.

### 3. US Aid Commitments to South Vietnam: "Operation Enhance"/ "Enhance Plus"

In 1972, the US government initiated an intensive supply program to upgrade the armed forces of South Vietnam. There were two, perhaps equally important, reasons for this US undertaking. First, as the conclusion of a peace agreement neared fruition, the US military sought to infuse South Vietnam with great quantities of equipment which could ultimately be exchanged on a one-to-one basis as provided for by the cease-fire. Second, the effort was initiated as a good will gesture to underscore the United States' reliability as an ally and, concurrently, to promote Saigon's acceptance of the peace treaty.<sup>10/</sup>

Through "Operation Enhance" (and, later, "Enhance Plus") the US provided RVNAF with a vast array of equipment, the majority of which was designated for military use. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery pieces, communications equipment, and tons of ammunition and spare parts were sent to South Vietnam on US military and commercial chartered cargo flights.<sup>11/</sup> Table 8-1 provides a summary of the type and quantity of items contributed by the US as part of this effort.<sup>12/</sup> It is interesting to note that the influx of additional aircraft to South Vietnam during "Enhance Plus" was so great that, by the end of 1972, South Vietnam's Air Force ranked fourth largest in the world.<sup>13/</sup>

After the Peace Accords were concluded and US-allied forces withdrawn from South Vietnam, Washington continued its follow-on assistance efforts as provided for by the (US interpretation of the) treaty. (The level of these efforts was, of course, affected by congressional legislative activities throughout the remainder of this period.) In March 1974, for example, the US began delivering the first of 150 F-5E jet aircraft to South Vietnam.<sup>14/</sup> A special ("covert") section in the US Embassy Defense Attache Office (DAO) in Saigon coordinated this and other US post-settlement assistance efforts to Saigon.<sup>15/</sup> Figure 8-1 provides a schematic overview of the US DAO in Saigon and the major offices under its supervision.<sup>16/</sup>

The United States' efforts to enhance RVNAF served to augment Saigon's military stockpiles; however, they also further increased Saigon's dependence on the US, ultimately undermining the GVN's attempts at self-defense and self-reliance, particularly in the wake of congressional aid reductions during the years 1974-1975. These problems are addressed in the following sections of this chapter

4. US Commitments To Aid and Defend South Vietnam: The US Congress and Its Effect on the US Follow-On Effort

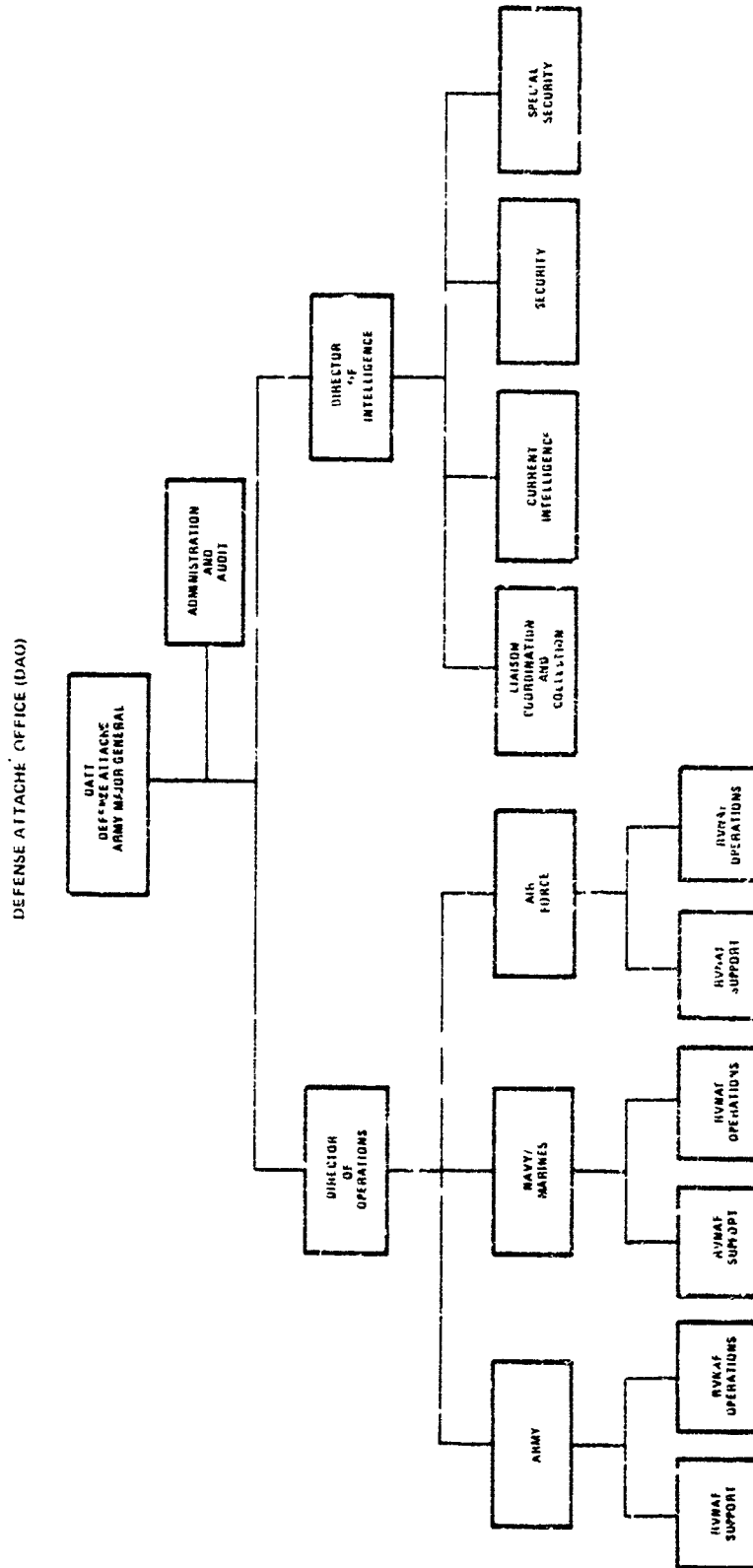
It would not be an understatement to cite Capitol Hill as one of the most crucial battlegrounds for Vietnam during the final two and one-half years of the US follow-on effort, January 1973 - April 1975.<sup>17/</sup> During this period, congressional legislation forced the termination of US

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TABLE 8-1. FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: SUMMARY OF SELECTED ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT APPROVED IN SUPPORT OF RVNAF IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION PROGRAM (AS OF 15 DECEMBER 1972)

ITEMS	QUANTITIES
GRENADE LAUNCHER, M-79	62,621
HOWITZER, LT, 105-mm, M-101 A1	1,624
RIFLE, M-16 A1	895,308
MACHINE GUN, M-60	17,465
GUN, SP, 175-mm, M-107	85
HOWITZER, MED, 155-mm, M-114 A1	474
GUN, SP TWIN, 40-mm	108
RADIO SET, AN/PRC-25	51,371
RADIO SET, AN/VRC-12, -46, -47	8,866
TRUCK, UTILITY, 1/4-t M-151 A1, A2	25,693
TRUCK, 1-t, M-601; 3/4-t M-37, SERIES	16,063
TRUCK, CARGO, 2 1/2-t, M-35A2	19,339
TRUCK, CARGO, 5-t, M-54A2	1,240
TRACTOR, FT, L-5, MED.	810
SEMI-TRAILER, STAKE, 12-t, M-127A2C	1,517
ARMOR PERSONNEL CARRIER, M-125A1	1,973
CARRIER, MORTAR, 87-mm, M-125A1	219
TANK, LT, M-41A3	580
TANK, MED., M-48A3	329
HELICOPTER, UH-1H	1,152
HELICOPTER, CH-47 A	79

SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF, p. 281



SOURCE: Adapted from Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung, Intelligence

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Figure 8-1. In-Country Personnel: Follow-On Effort

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military activities in and over Indochina, the elimination of any possibility of US reinvolvement in the area, and the reduction of US military and economic aid to South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to levels considered appropriate by the US legislative branch.<sup>18/</sup>

### a. Congressional Aid Reductions, 1973-1975

Congressional reductions in US military appropriations for Vietnam impinged on RVNAF's ability to defend South Vietnam for a number of reasons, the most significant of which can be summarized as follows: RVNAF's exposure to the US military's mode of conducting military operations led it to rely increasingly on a well-established logistics system and heavy fire power, both ground and air; to expend ammunition at an exceedingly liberal rate, with little concern for conservation; and, finally, to depend on the ready accessibility and availability of replacement equipment and spare parts for the maintenance of military material.<sup>19/</sup> The impact of the US Congress' aid reductions was particularly significant in light of the extreme inflation and fuel shortages faced by the world's nations during this period.<sup>20/</sup> Table 8-2 provides a summary of US military aid requests between 1973 and 1975, and the respective US legislative response;<sup>21/</sup> Table 8-3 depicts US economic relief to South Vietnam during the same fiscal year time span.<sup>22/</sup>

After having negotiated a treaty that allowed the United States a certain leeway in replacing South Vietnam's military equipment on a one-to-one basis, such reductions in aid were particularly disheartening for the US executive branch. One-to-one replacement was no longer a viable option. By 1974, RVNAF faced severe supply shortages, particularly of ammunition, and a scarcity of fuel needed for operating military equipment. Table 8-4 assesses these congressional aid reductions for FY '75 and their impact on RVNAF's overall combat level, its ability to replace equipment, and South Vietnam's capacity to operate and maintain a variety of systems and/or efforts necessary for its self-defense.<sup>23/</sup> It therefore becomes apparent that because of these aid reductions, South Vietnam was hard pressed to maintain the level of self-defense to which it had become

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TABLE 8-2. FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: US MILITARY AID REQUESTS FOR VIETNAM, 1973-1975 (US \$ BILLIONS)

<u>LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>
Requested by DoD/Administration	2.924	1.185	1.450
Appropriated by Congress	2.562	.907	.700
Amount Cut by Congress	.362	.278	.750
Percentage Appropriated	88%	77%	48%

SOURCE Kinnard, The War Managers, p. 131

TABLE 8-3. FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: US ECONOMIC AID AND IMPORT SUPPORT, 1973-1975. (OBLIGATION BASIS: \$ MILLION)

Year	Commercial Import Program	Food for Peace Program	Refugee Funding	Piaster Purchase	Project Aid	Total
1973	226.2	188.3	33	96	56.2	501.7
1974	335.1	269.9	26	97	22.3	653.3
1975	143.2	48.6	29.3	0	15.7	237.8

SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 13



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TABLE 8-4. FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: ANALYSIS OF FY-75 FUNDING IMPACTS

	1,450 MILLION	1,126 MILLION	900 MILLION	750 MILLION	600 MILLION
<b>A. COMBAT LEVEL</b>					
FY74 Level	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Siagon Delta Only
Country-wide Hot Spots Offensive	Yes ?	Yes No	? No	No No	No No
<b>B. EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT</b>					
ARVN	1 for 1	<1 for 1	Essential Weapons	None	None
VNN	<1 for 1	None	None	None	None
VNAF	<. for 1	Essential Aircraft	None	None	None
<b>C. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE</b>					
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 35%
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. Materiel	Reduced 50% All Construction Materiel	Eliminate U.S Support For LUC	Road And Facilities Deteriorate
Offshore Training	Full	Full	Full	Curtail	Further Curtail

\* Reduced Procurement due to inflation.

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accustomed during the years of direct US involvement and upon which it had grown dependent.

b. Congress Reasserts Itself: Restrictions on US Armed Intervention - The Impact of the War Powers Resolution and Other Congressional Limitations on the US Follow-On Effort

In the late spring of 1973, concurrent with the rumblings of the advancing Watergate scandal and Congress' concern over the Nixon administration's apparent attempt to reinvolve the US in Southeast Asia, the US legislative branch began actively to assert itself in the making of US foreign policy. In May 1973, the House recommended that all supporting funds for the bombing of Cambodia be terminated. In July, both the House and Senate passed this recommendation, and prohibited US military activity after 15 August 1973, in, over, or off the shores of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam without explicit congressional approval.<sup>24/</sup> These restrictions, occurring when they did, had as much psychological impact on the GVN as physical: from Saigon's perspective, actions on the Capitol Hill battlefield, the Nixon administration's problems with Watergate, the GVN's own difficulties with inflation and shortages, and the increased activities of Hanoi were all perplexing developments that called into question the United States' earlier assurances to GVN President Thieu.

On 7 November 1973, the US Congress passed Public Law 93-148, commonly referred to as the War Powers Resolution. Its passage marked the culmination of four years of congressional effort to provide for more ample future participation of the legislative branch in decisions regarding US force commitments abroad. Figure 8-2, "The War Powers Resolution and Its Antecedents," illustrates the progression of congressional legislation during these years as it moved towards its climax in the War Powers Resolution.<sup>25/</sup>

After the resolution's passage, questions regarding its constitutionality arose; an assessment of this issue is not undertaken here, both because such an effort is beyond the intended scope of this

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DATE PASSED	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	VOTE
June 25, 1979	National Commitments Resolution SRES 85, 91st Congress	Provided for future Congressional participation in decisions regarding commitment of armed forces abroad	Senate 70-16
November 16, 1970	H. J. Res 1355, 91st Congress	Did not recognize US commitment in Vietnam  Required the President to consult "whenever feasible" before involving troops in hostilities  Required reports of such actions after the fact	House 288-39
April 13, 1972	Javits, Stennis S 2956, 92nd Congress	President could commit armed forces without specific authorization from Congress if there was:  1) an attack on US  2) an attack on US armed forces stationed abroad  3) an evacuation of American citizens abroad under "a direct and imminent threat to their lives"  Armed forces could be committed for no more than 30 days without specific authorization by Congress  Congress could terminate commitment before 30 days had elapsed by an act or joint resolution	Senate 68-16
August 1, 1972	H. J. Res 1, 92nd Congress	Substitute for S 2956, 92nd Congress	House 344-13
July 20, 1973	S 440, 93rd Congress	Identical to S.2956, 92nd Congress	Senate 72-18

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Figure 8-2. Follow-on Effort: The War Powers Resolution and Its Antecedents

DATE PASSED	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	VOTE
July 18, 1973	H. J. Res. 542, 93rd Congress	<p>Withdrawal of American forces from hostilities within 120 days unless Congress approved involvement</p> <p>Termination of armed force commitments equipped for combat "except for deployments which relate solely to supply, replacement, repair or training"</p> <p>Forces could be ordered to withdraw from hostilities by concurrent resolution</p> <p>US Armed Forces may be introduced when there is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a declaration of war</li> <li>2) specific statutory authorization</li> <li>3) a national emergency created by attack upon the US, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces</li> </ol> <p>President must consult Congress before introducing American troops</p> <p>In the absence of a declaration of war, President must submit a report to Congress within 48 hours of the introduction of troops</p> <p>Involvement of troops to be terminated in 60 days (or in special circumstances 90 days) unless Congress approves armed force commitment</p> <p>Congress can terminate troop involvement before 60 days have elapsed by passing a concurrent resolution</p>	House 244-170
November 7, 1973	Conference Report WAR POWERS RESOLUTION	<p>US Armed Forces may be introduced when there is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a declaration of war</li> <li>2) specific statutory authorization</li> <li>3) a national emergency created by attack upon the US, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces</li> </ol> <p>President must consult Congress before introducing American troops</p> <p>In the absence of a declaration of war, President must submit a report to Congress within 48 hours of the introduction of troops</p> <p>Involvement of troops to be terminated in 60 days (or in special circumstances 90 days) unless Congress approves armed force commitment</p> <p>Congress can terminate troop involvement before 60 days have elapsed by passing a concurrent resolution</p>	Senate 75-18  House 284-135

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SOURCE: Adapted from Pat M. Holt, The War Powers Resolution: The Role of Congress in US Armed Intervention, pp. 3-8

Figure 8-2. Follow-On Effort: The War Powers Resolution and Its Antecedents (Continued)

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chapter and because the question has yet to be resolved by the US government. To date, the US executive has chosen not to challenge the resolution's constitutionality in court, opting rather to live with the law.26/

The issue in this discussion is, rather, how the resolution affected the US follow-on effort, especially in view of Nixon's private assurances to Thieu. First, while it is obvious that both Mr. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger opposed the resolution,27/ the record indicates (and should have indicated to them at the time) that Congress was intent on assuring itself a greater level of participation in foreign policy decision making, particularly vis-à-vis troop commitments and war-making decisions (see Figure 8-2). Hence, the passage of the resolution should not have come as a surprise to the administration nor should the administration "not have counted on" Congress' questioning of Nixon's authority to give SVN President Thieu private assurances.28/

But the legality of President Nixon's actions is not the issue here; the problem lies, rather, with perceptions held by the President, the Congress, and the GVN regarding the actual nature of the US commitment to provide military assistance to Vietnam during the follow-on period, including reintervention if deemed necessary. As has been seen above, President Thieu regarded these assurances as a US national commitment and, perhaps, as a blanket guarantee for America's continued support.29/ The Nixon administration also seemed to consider these assurances in such a light; at minimum it regarded US assistance as a moral obligation based on America's prior, massive investment in South Vietnam.30/ From the congressional perspective, however, shaped as it was by Watergate and its displeasure with the administration's extreme secrecy in conducting foreign affairs, the US commitment required at least a degree of congressional participation in its formation. Hence - the War Powers Resolution. South Vietnam, unfortunately, found itself a prisoner of the US executive and legislative's divisiveness, compelled to defend itself while simultaneously pondering the real nature of the United States' commitment as an ally. The impact of this is more fully explored in the following section.

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Since passage of the War Powers Resolution in November 1973, the president has been obliged on several occasions, to fulfill the requirements of the law. (See Figure 8-2, final entry on the resolution, its stipulations, and the required reporting procedure.) Figure 8-3, "Presidential Use of and Compliance with the War Powers Resolution," summarizes five instances during the Ford administration when presidential compliance with the law was expected by Congress. <sup>30/</sup> Four of these instances occurred during the US follow-on support effort to the GVN; three directly related to the US evacuation effort in April 1975 when US military support was required for completion of the evacuation. The War Powers Resolution did not diminish the efficacy nor complicate the evacuation process to a great extent; rather, the Ford administration's decision to pursue its lobbying efforts with Congress for supplemental aid for Vietnam at the peak of the crisis contributed greatly to the evacuation's complexity and disorganization.<sup>32/</sup>

In summary, US congressional aid reductions and limits on presidential war-making authority (and Congress's overall success in asserting its decision-making option) reflected the American public's distress over the executive's Vietnam-related policies, the legislature's own displeasure with these policies and with the White House's exclusionary foreign policy practices, and, finally, the low level of effectiveness and esteem to which the presidency had fallen as a result of Watergate. The effects of this on South Vietnam and the US follow-on effort are addressed below.

### C. EVALUATION OF THE US FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: PROBLEMS, EFFECTIVENESS, AND RESULTS

In evaluating the US follow-on effort to South Vietnam, it is important to recognize that its deficiencies (and merits) stem not from one or even several underlying causes, but rather from a complex network of interconnected variables, domestic, international, and war-related -- in Saigon, Washington, and the international-political arena. Therefore, while the

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LOCATION	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF US OPERATION	PRESIDENTIAL COMPLIANCE AND SECTION OF WAR POWERS RESOLUTION CITED
Dinh (VC, North Vietnamese invasion of the area)	April 3-April 11, 1973	Sealift evacuation of 65,000 refugees from the vicinity of DaNang by US Navy amphibious task force to points farther south	President submitted report to Congress on April 4, 1975 "taking note" of Section 4 (a)(2) - provision for the introduction of combat-equipped forces into a non-hostile environment (does not require Congressional consultation)
Phnom Penh (collapse of Lon Nol Government)	April 11, 1975	Airlift evacuation of Americans, Cambodians and nationals of other countries involving US helicopters, fighter air cover, command and control elements, and 350 marines to protect the helicopter landing zone near the American Embassy	President submitted report to Congress April 12, 1975 "taking note" of Section 4 forces were "equipped for combat within the meaning of Section 4 (a)(2)
Saigon (collapse of GVN)	April 28-April 30, 1975	Air and sealift evacuation of Americans, Vietnamese and of other countries involving US helicopters and 865 marines	President reported to Congress on April 30, 1975 "taking note" of Section 4 Evacuation took place in a hostile environment - use of funds for military activity in Vietnam in violation of War Powers Resolution
Mayaguez (capture by Cambodians)	May 12-May 14, 1975	Rescue of ship and crew involving US reconnaissance aircraft from Utapao, Thailand, marine attack of Koh Tang Island, boarding of the Mayaguez, attack against airfields and other military targets on the Cambodian mainland, and movement of 1100 marines from Okinawa and the Philippines to Utapao	President reported to Congress on May 15, 1975 "taking note" of Section 4 (a)(1) (no mention of movement of troops to Thailand) Congress charges President with failure of Consultation
Lebanon (Civil War, US Ambassador and Counselor killed)	June 20, 1976 July 27, 1979	Airlift evacuation of Americans and nationals of other countries	US military personnel who went to beach at Beirut to pick up Americans, etc, were unarmed - operation beyond the scope of War Powers Resolution provisions

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SOURCE: Adapted from Pat M. Holt, The War Powers Resolution: The Role of Congress in US Armed Intervention, pp. 12-20

Figure 8-3. Follow-On Effort: US Presidential Use of and Compliance with the War Powers Resolution

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following discussion assesses those factors which had the most appreciable impact on the follow-on effort, it is helpful to remember that each factor is just one of many which, together, constitute an extremely complex (and unique) facet of America's involvement in Vietnam.

The overall viability of the US follow-on effort was greatly dependent upon the GVN/RVNAF ability to exploit adequately US military assistance (including skills and training passed on to GVN/RVNAF prior to US force withdrawal) and to develop a level of political stability and national self-reliance sufficient to sustain the country politically, militarily, and psychologically. The ability (or inability) of the GVN/RVNAF to fulfill these necessary tasks was, in turn, dependent upon and shaped by a decade or more of intensive interaction between the political and military branches of both countries.

Throughout the duration of US combat involvement in South Vietnam, both the RVNAF and the GVN grew increasingly dependent upon US expertise and strength, while the Americans willingly assumed a disproportionate share of wartime responsibilities. Hence, even while skills were very often successfully transferred by the US to GVN military and civilian personnel (see Chapter 5 for an assessment of Vietnamization), an attitude of "why fight? ... the US will do it for us" permeated the RVNAF.<sup>33/</sup> South Vietnam's over-dependency on the United States, therefore, greatly impinged on the US follow-on effort.

A unique and pervasive psychosis developed in the minds of both GVN/RVNAF leaders and the rank and file. Having received the United States' private assurance that the treaty would be upheld if violated by Hanoi, and convinced that the United States' own self-interest would never allow Hanoi's conquest of RVN, a sense of "reliance without reservation" burgeoned throughout the country.<sup>34/</sup> Consequently, from the South Vietnamese perspective,

... the US couldn't afford losing Vietnam because, as a superpower, the US would lose face ... . Second, losing Vietnam would mean that the free world lost the first country to the Communists by war ... . Third, [if it had not been in the US



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interest to intervene] the US would not have poured so much resources and sacrificed so many American lives in Vietnam in the first place. The discovery of oil off the Vietnamese coast gave us one more reason to believe the US wouldn't abandon Vietnam ... Fourth, the government of South Vietnam had the solid pledge from the US government that the US would react strongly in case of Communist renewed aggression.35/

Reliance on the US, thus, came to be a (false) panacea for the GVN's own lack of self-reliance.

The problem of over-dependency was compounded by a variety of other problems, some stemming from GVN internal difficulties, others arising as a result of external stimuli. After the US withdrawal and particularly after the US Congress banned American military operations in and over Southeast Asia, the GVN found it exceedingly difficult to imbue the country with the requisite morale and national spirit to withstand Hanoi's offensive.

The Enchance and Enhance-Plus operations directly contributed to South Vietnam's loss of morale. From the South Vietnamese perspective, the United States' crash supply program was indicative of the cease-fire's deficiencies and America's low level of confidence in South Vietnam's ability to defend itself. The equipment itself caused a large percentage of RVNAF leaders to doubt the sincerity of the United States' follow-on effort. A variety of complaints regarding the material sent into Vietnam during this period surfaced: the equipment was of dubious quality; much of it was either too sophisticated for RVNAF to operate or was obsolete, secondhand hardware that was too difficult to maintain if and when spare parts were available.36/ The lack of skilled RVNAF technicians and Vietnamese language technical manuals, coupled with RVNAF's poor understanding of preventive maintenance fueled and compounded these complaints.37/ Waste was also an extreme problem, and the GVN call for rationing and stockpiling were generally unheeded, owing, respectively, to bad habits and US aid reductions.38/

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Decreases in the country's firepower capacity (concurrent with Hanoi's heightened aggression) only further exacerbated moral and discipline problems in the RVNAF. As General Cao Van Vien explains,

For the first time in the war ... the RVNAF were in the decided position of underdog. Gone was their superiority in firepower and mobility, the very things that helped them maintain tactical balance in the face of an enemy who held the initiative.<sup>39/</sup>

Table 8-5 illustrates the comparative decrease in (US) RVNAF firepower for the period 1969 through January 1975.<sup>40/</sup> Partially as a result of this decrease, RVNAF casualty and desertion rates increased, contributing further to the country's rapid loss of morale.

But perhaps the most significant (and, hence, debilitating) problem that faced South Vietnam, (directly impinging on the US follow-on effort,) was the GVN's own political fragility. As Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker Aultly noted in 1972, "They [the Saigon leadership] fear that they are not yet well enough organized to compete politically with such a tough, disciplined organization".<sup>41/</sup> Corruption, inefficiency, and the South Vietnamese public distrust of its government's leaders and programs made it extraordinarily difficult for the GVN to mobilize national resources to meet the requirements of the period, to complement the US follow-on support effort, and, most important, to compensate for the gradual elimination of US physical and moral support.

### D. INSIGHTS

The foregoing discussion gives rise to a number of important insights regarding the nature and efficacy of the US follow-on effort to South Vietnam

- President Nixon failed to ensure or establish congressional support for his post-war military-economic aid program for the GVN, and the success of the US follow-on effort in SVN depended

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TABLE 8-5. FOLLOW-ON EFFORT: COMPARATIVE FIREPOWER  
1969-JANUARY 1975.

COMPARATIVE FIREPOWER (DAILY SHORT TONS ON TARGET ALL SOURCES)			
	1969	1972 General Offensive	January 1975
US-Free World ground	2.484	-	-
US air	2.942	-	-
ARVN ground	783	1.750	694
VNAF air	<u>200</u>	<u>450</u>	<u>114</u>
	6.409 S/T	2.200 S/T	808 S/T

SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The Final Collapse, p. 240.

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on the continuing ability and willingness of the US government to meet the private commitments made by the administration. Public and congressional distaste for the war, and, in particular, for the Thieu regime, made it unlikely that the administration's program could be maintained for an extended period of time, a situation that was apparent at the time to many interested observers.

- While secret diplomacy has its merits, the US executive's refusal to more amply brief congressional leadership on the specifics of the negotiations, (including the executive branch's expectations regarding future US commitments to Vietnam), gave rise to South Vietnam's false security, diminished US credibility as an ally in the long run, and caused an extreme degree of confusion in both Saigon and Washington concerning the actual nature of the US commitment.
- While the US effort to enhance RVNAF in 1972-1973 did augment Saigon's hardware stockpiles for a period of time, the crash supply program had a decided negative impact on RVNAF morale and contributed further to the GVN (false) reliance on the United States. Equipment deficiencies also diminished the effectiveness of American efforts to enhance South Vietnam's military capabilities.
- The divisive nature of Watergate severely constrained the US follow-on effort and further complicated Saigon's perspective on and understanding of the US commitment to support GVN. Moreover, the US desire to get on with detente (and its subsequent impatience with the Saigon leadership) gave rise to the impression that South Vietnam was no longer of importance to the US--merely a "sideshow"--and, hence, further demoralized the GVN.
- The RVNAF's inability to adjust to a more austere style of fighting after the US withdrawal intensified the impact of US congressional aid cuts in military appropriations for South

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Vietnam at a time when the PAVN forces were completing their modernization program with Soviet assistance.

### E. LESSONS

The collapse of South Vietnam less than three years after the US withdrawal is only partially attributable to the failure of the follow-on effort. Seeds for the collapse were sown by the errors made during US active involvement, and by the terms of the cease-fire. Nonetheless, a more comprehensive and sustained follow-on effort would certainly have postponed the collapse of the RVN -- perhaps indefinitely. Put simply, the key lesson to emerge from the follow-on effort in Vietnam is as follows:

The US public and Congress must perceive a recipient nation as sufficiently important to US national interests to merit continued aid and support; otherwise, no follow-on effort will last long enough to enable an ally to build-up the strength to stand alone.

On the subject of foreign aid in general, the former chief of RVNAF's Joint General Staff, General Cao Van Vien, provides some penetrating lessons:

To a developing nation, foreign aid is essential in the nascent phase. However, its receipt must not preclude every effort to strive for self-sufficiency in the shortest time possible, for to all aid - economic or military - is usually attached a political string. It is an ideal thing if the political system and foreign policy of the two nations involved - donor and recipient - go hand in hand, but if they don't, a serious breakdown is bound to happen.

When a recipient nation is ravaged by war, as South Vietnam, naturally it needs all the aid it can get for a longer time than is usually required. In such a case, foreign aid should be

made the object of a long-range plan determining among other things the duration of the aid, the amounts to be made available each year, the types of commodities or equipment to be delivered, etc. This is the only effective way to help a recipient nation know what it can do in its yearly planning and what it can expect and must do in the long-term when the aid will inevitably come to an end. By all means, aid should not be reduced sharply and suddenly because of the serious material and moral impact on the recipient nation. The ideal aid policy should be a sincere desire to help a recipient nation become self-sufficient and self-supporting in all aspects in the shortest time possible. This is the kind of policy that will likely be long remembered and appreciated by the recipient nation which in turn will likely become an ally deeply loyal to the donor nation without intimidation or any strings whatsoever.42/

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2. Allan E. Goodman, The Lost Peace (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), pp. 177-178; quoting the late Hubert H. Humphrey.
3. Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 1462.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1462.
5. Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian M. Jenkins, The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders. Report prepared for Historian, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Santa Monica, California: The RAND Corporation, 1978, R-2208-OSD (HIST), p. 11; and General Cao Van Vien, The Final Collapse, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, Virginia: General Research Corporation, 1976), p. 5.
6. Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It. Behind the Cease-Fire Agreement," Foreign Policy 16 (Summer 1974), p. 23; and Kissinger, p. 1373.
7. Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 350.
8. Goodman, pp. 188-189.
9. Department of State Briefing Paper ("Aldridge Memo.") "Interpretations of the Agreement On Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam, (U)," pp. 1-13; see also Szulc, pp. 64-66.
10. Vien, p. 24; and Hosmer, et al., p. 7.
11. Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 206.
12. Figure 8-1 Doug Van Khuyen, The RVNAF. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, Virginia: General Research Corporation, 1978), p. 281.
13. Lewy, p. 206.

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14. Szulc, p. 64.
15. Ibid., p. 22.
16. Graphic compiled from information appearing in Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung, Intelligence. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, Virginia: General Research Corporation, 1976), p. 131 and interview with Michel Costino, LTC USA (Ret) a former Defense Attache. It should be noted that although the section coordinating the aid effort was attached to the DAO in Saigon, it reported to a JS military headquarters in Thailand; See also Szulc, pp. 22-23.
17. Lewy, p. 206.
18. For a detailed discussion of the US Congress and its reassertive role in US foreign policy making, see Volume III, Chapter 3 - "Washington and Vietnam: US National Level Policy Making and The Policy Making Process," and Appendix A - "Significant US National Policy Decisions which Influenced US Military Involvement in Vietnam," (Decisions #16-17). See also Volume IV, Chapter 5 - "Domestic Political Factors Influencing Vietnam War Decision Making."
19. Lewy, p. 207; Cao Van Vien, p. 4; and Douglas Kinnard, The War Managers (Hanover New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1977), pp. 154-155.
20. Ibid.
21. Kinnard, p. 131.
22. Lieutenant General Doug Van Khuyen, RVNAF Logistics. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, Virginia: General Research Corporation, 1976), p. 13.
23. Doug Van Khuyen, The RVNAF, p. 285.
24. Lewy, p. 204.
25. Figure 8-2 is adapted from Pat M. Holt, The War Powers Resolution: The Role of Congress in US Armed Intervention. American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Studies in Foreign Policy, (Washington, D.C.: AEI, 1978), pp. 3-8.
26. A number of excellent works have been written which discuss this issue. See, for example, Holt (above); R. Gordon Hoxie, Command Decision and the Presidency (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977); Leonard C. Meeker, "The Legality of United States Participation in the



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27. President Nixon vetoed the War Powers Resolution but his veto was overridden. For Dr. Kissinger's views, see Kissinger, p. 1372.
28. Kissinger, p. 1372.
29. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker personally delivered two letters from President Nixon to President Thieu in December 1972 and January 1973 giving assurances that the United States would intervene if the North Vietnamese seriously violated the terms of the Paris agreement. The GVN was also assured of continuing military and economic aid, but those assurances proved to be hollow. Ambassador Bunker described the situation in these terms:

Each side could replace, on a one-for-one basis, equipment used up, lost, or destroyed. By July or August 1973, Congress made it impossible for us to carry out that commitment by refusing to appropriate money. The result was that as each day went by, the South Vietnamese had less and less to fight with. They had fewer guns, fewer tanks, fewer planes -- while at the same time the Soviets and Chinese were supplying Hanoi and keeping their supplies up, so that they were completely equipped and our side, as each day went by, was less well equipped to continue the struggle. Well it seems to me the result was inevitable in that situation. Now one may argue that the President shouldn't have made that commitment -- that he hadn't consulted Congress adequately ... but the fact is that Thieu had the right to rely on the commitment, the written commitment, of the President of the United States. That he did. So I think it was a very sad chapter in American history. I think the Vietnamese, to put it baldly, I think they were betrayed.

BDM interview with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at The BDM Corporation  
8 November 1979. Also see Cao Van Vien, p. 5.

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30. See Lewy, p. 207; and Kissinger, p. 1372.
31. Figure 8-3 is adapted from Holt, pp. 12-20.
32. See, for example, Frank Snepp, Decent Interval (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), Part 3, "The Collapse."
33. See, for example, Hosmer, et al., pp. 4-10 on the South Vietnamese attitude. Also, Kinnard, p. 155.
34. Hosmer, et al., pp. 10-11.
35. Ibid., p. 13.
36. Ibid., pp. 7-10, 65-67.
37. Ibid., also Lewy, pp. 207-221; and Kinnard, p. 155.
38. Lewy, pp. 208-209.
39. Cao Van Vien, p. 6.
40. Table 8-5 is taken from (check back of original [in Pubs] for Source).
41. Kissinger, quoting Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Honolulu meeting, August 31, 1972, p. 1324. (Emphasis added).
42. General Cao Van Vien's remarks are so insightful that it is appropriate to cite them as lessons regarding the US follow-on effort to South Vietnam. Their applicability for future US interactions with third world nations is obvious. Vien, The Final Collapse, p. 216.

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#### PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The following persons participated in the BDM Senior Review Panel meeting on September 7 and 8, 1979 at The BDM Westbranch Conference Center. Members of the panel provided a critique of the original drafts for portions of this volume and offered detailed comments during the panel discussions.

Braestrup, Peter. Editor, Wilson Quarterly. Former Saigon Bureau Chief for The Washington Post and author of Big Story.

Colby, William E. LLB Former Ambassador and Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, and former Director of Central Intelligence.

Davis, Vincent, Dr. Professor and Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, The University of Kentucky.

Greene, Fred, Dr. Professor, Williams College. Former Director, Office of Research for East Asian Affairs, Department of State.

Hallowell, John H., Dr. James B. Duke Professor of Political Science, Duke University.

Hughes, Thomas L., LL.D. President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Former Director for Intelligence and Research, US Department of State with rank of Assistant Secretary of State.

Johnson, U. Alexis, Chairman of the Senior Review Panel. Career Ambassador. Former Under Secretary of State and former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Thailand, and Japan, and (in 1964-65) Deputy Ambassador to Maxwell Taylor in the Republic of Vietnam.

Sapin, Burton M., Dr. Dean, School of Public and International Affairs, The George Washington University. Former Foreign Service Officer.

Thompson, Kenneth W., Dr. Director, White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

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INTERVIEWS

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Cao Van Vien, Gen.	<u>The Final Collapse</u>
_____	<u>The US Advisor</u>
_____	<u>Leadership</u>
_____ and Dong Van Khuyen, LG	<u>Reflections on the Vietnam War</u>
Dong Van Khuyen, LG	<u>RVNAF Logistics</u>
_____	<u>RVNAF</u>
Hoang Ngoc Lung, Col.	<u>Intelligence</u>
_____	<u>General Offensives 1968-1969</u>
_____	<u>Strategy and Tactics</u>
Ngo Quang Truong, LG	<u>RVNAF and US Operational Cooperation and Coordination</u>
_____	<u>The Easter Offensive of 1972</u>
_____	<u>Territorial Forces</u>
Nguyen Duy Hinh, MG ARVN	<u>Lamson 719</u>
_____	<u>Vietnamization and the Ceasefire</u>
_____	<u>South Vietnamese Society</u>
Sak Sutsakhan, LTG	<u>Khmer Republic at War and Final Collapse</u>
Sananikone Oudone, Gen.	<u>Royal Lao Army and the US Army Advice and Support</u>
Soutchay Vongsavanh, BG RLA	<u>RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle</u>
Tran Dinh Tho, BG	<u>Pacification</u>
_____	<u>Cambodian Incursion</u>

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