

THE CHANGING WAR--3

# Pacification Is Vital for S

By DONALD KIRK  
Asia Correspondent of The Star

HOA DA, South Vietnam—This fishing district on the central coast 130 miles northeast of Saigon could hardly be categorized as a "pacification showcase."

One American adviser was transferred for failure to get along with the district chief. Another was skinned alive by some Viet Cong whom he had approached on a sand dune under the impression they were "friendly" South Vietnamese troops. A third was killed in an ambush.

The province chief, in the provincial capital of Phan Thiet, on the coast 15 miles to the west, contented himself with signing papers and attending ceremonies.

His underlings in the district spent most of the time in their compounds and rarely visited units or projects outside the main villages.

And, according to the province senior adviser, Daniel Leaty, the Viet Cong "have a damn good infrastructure" here.

"The attitude of some officials is negative. They don't seem to grasp



—Associated Press

Boys play in a South Vietnamese refugee village.

their duties and responsibilities. They need strong leadership," said Leaty, a veteran of nearly eight years in Vietnam.

THE PROBLEM of Hoa Da district—and the province as a whole—seems typical of some of those confronting the pacification program in

## saigon

The United States, as President Nixon noted in his Nov. 3 address, is yielding "primary responsibility" for the war to the Saigon government. This is the third of four articles on problems encountered in fulfilling that goal.

almost all South Vietnamese towns and villages.

The only difference, perhaps, was one of degree. Officials claimed Hoa Da was below the standards of most other districts. Hoa Da, they said, might be comparable to the situation in a typical Vietnamese district after the Tet and May offensives in 1968.

Since then, the United States has engaged in one of the most intensive pacification efforts in history. For the first time, in fact, senior American military officers reluctantly admit this aspect of the war might prove more important than combat operations.

for this change in attitude is that American commanders feel they have no chance of winning a "military victory" as long as the

United States is committed to a policy of withdrawal of its combat forces.

The hope for anti-Communist forces in Vietnam appears to lie in strengthening the will and resources of the populated regions before the enemy again is able to mount a large-scale military offensive.

The pacification program, inaugurated as an integral part of the American military command in 1967, combines political and military, civilian and guerrilla efforts in a concentrated drive to put 99 percent of the population of South Vietnam under control of the government before American combat troops have withdrawn.

"The regular military units have to keep the government in such a position that the enemy cannot win a military victory," said a senior official in the vast American pacification program called CORDS or Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support.

"That means the enemy must wage a war of protraction," he went on.

AMERICAN OFFICIALS admit, perhaps more frankly than they ever have, the problem of pacification, but they seem more hopeful now than a year ago of the program's eventual success.

They cite an array of statistics to support this point:

- The People's Self-Defense Force, a civilian militia organization, has grown from almost nothing to nearly 3 million members, half of whom have received a week or so of training. Almost 400,000 of them are armed with cast-off weapons, ranging from shotguns to carbines.

- The regional and popular forces, full-time territorial troops, now total nearly 500,000 men, up 200,000 from before the Tet 1968 offensive.

- More than 40,000 enemy operatives, most of them low-level guerrillas, porters, messengers and the like, have "rallied" to the government side under the Open Arms program this year as opposed to 18,171 in 1968 and 27,178 in 1967.

- The number of those classified as refugees has declined from 1.4 million early this year to 500,000. Approximately 400,000 were dropped from the refugee rolls after they returned to their homes once rendered uninhabitable by war.

- Nine-tenths of the country's villages and hamlets have held elections for chiefs and councils. An election was a prerequisite for a village to receive a fund of a million piasters—roughly \$7,000—for investing on its own in local community projects.

No responsible American official, however, would deny that the facts behind these statistics were sometimes disillusioning.

ADVISERS CITE countless cases in which self-defense force members have vanished at the approach of the enemy. These part-time troops, ranging from teen-agers to old men, are improving, they say, but the main value of the program is more political than military.

Regional and popular forces still are lax at setting up ambushes at night or thoroughly patrolling their areas. Advisers here reported one case in which an RF patrol had killed several guerrillas but another in which RF soldiers had run away in the face of what they thought was a larger enemy force.

Enemy "ralliers" to the government side rarely are important figures in the Viet Cong organization. They generally "rally" after the government has established some degree of control or influence and the Red leaders have fled.

Some 350,000 of those no longer considered refugees still live in the same refugee camps—merely renamed "resettlement areas." And thousands of others stay in towns with relatives or friends but would gladly return to their old homes if they thought they could live in them safely.

The most bitter disappointment—and the sharpest sign of latent enemy strength—has been the lack of success of the "Phoenix" program, an effort at coordinating all intelligence activities on both the provincial and district levels.

AMERICANS CLAIM the program has "neutralized"—killed, captured or persuaded to defect—some 16,000 enemy agents.

But intelligence analysts doubt if the program has substantially damaged the top of the VC "infrastructure" on which the enemy bases its efforts. They estimate the manpower of this "infrastructure" at approximately 75,000.

The inadequacies of Phoenix are manifest in this district, where the Viet Cong have long maintained an effective network even in the populated "secure" areas.

"The people actually are very uncooperative in reporting enemy activity," said a lieutenant in charge of advising the District Intelligence Coordinating Center. "In incidents where the VC come right into a village it's hard to get any information."

Even in Hoa Da, however, officials saw hopeful signs.

Military assistance teams were training RF and PF troops on the use of M16 rifles. Roads, although not secure at night, were generally open in the daytime. An American could wander unarmed through the main fishing village of small shops and homes.

ON A RIDE through the twisting roads of one of Hoa Da's hamlets, advisers pointed to a long low wall protecting a row of houses from a canal leading into the sea.

"This place was just a junkyard beside the stream," said one of the advisers. "The villagers built this wall out of the one million piasters the government has allotted each village for local construction."

On the negative side, advisers note that village funds often are spent on small dams, storage rooms and the like that benefit only an "in-group" of merchants and officials—or the funds are deliberately misappropriated or not spent at all.

One difficulty here, as in almost every other district in the country, is communicating the aims of the government to the people.

The Vietnamese Information Service, a government agency designed to spread propaganda, functions sporadically or not at all in many areas.

"Information officials don't go to the villages for very long," explained an American charged with studying overall problems in CORDS.

"They talk on loudspeakers for a few minutes and then leave," he said. "There's no follow-up. It's the same problem you have in other programs of relating the central government to the countryside."

THE FLAWS in the Phoenix and information programs to some degree epitomize the basic weakness of the entire pacification effort.

"It is all much too thin and far-spread," said an American who has lived here a number of years. "You get the feeling one good crisis could wipe it out."

Pacification officials hope that by stressing village development they can solidify the gains made since the Tet offensive.

The emphasis on the village is a belated effort at persuading the farmers to contest Viet Cong influence without direct support from remote, often corrupted, officials in Saigon or some provincial capital.

"The object is not just to build 'things,' such as dams and schools, but to build a community," explained the deputy American ambassador, William E. Colby, a former CIA agent in charge of the over-all pacification effort.

"The war is about people. The more people you get, the more likely you are to win."

Tomorrow: Politics—Talk of "Coalition" and "Neutrality."

Vietnam

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NEW YORK TIMES

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## Infiltration Dips Again, Rogers Reports

By TAD SZULC

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23—

Secretary of State William P. Rogers reported today that North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam had tapered off in the last three weeks and that over all it was down by 60 per cent compared with last year.

Speaking at a news conference, Mr. Rogers cautioned, however, that it was still too early to assess the significance of the drop.

He said that while there was "a rather significant increase" in infiltration in November, the North Vietnamese movement of troops and supplies had "tapered off again, so that it is more comparable to the rate in October."

"I think it is fair to say that the infiltration this year compared to last year is significantly down," he said. "On a conservative basis, I would say it is down by 60 per cent. That includes the increase in November."

Over the weekend White House officials had let it be known that while the rate of infiltration was dropping, more time was required to assess the North Vietnamese movements. It was left to Mr. Rogers to place the information on the record.

The Secretary's estimate on the infiltration — the principal yardstick used by the United States Government in attempting to predict Hanoi's battlefield intentions — was based on the latest intelligence data.

### 'Too Early to Tell'

Mr. Rogers made it clear that the current observations could not answer the question whether Hanoi had simply been replenishing its forces in South Vietnam or preparing for a new offensive.

"I think it is too early to tell

what the significance of it is," he said. "It could be either."

Intelligence sources had been reporting a step-up in North Vietnamese infiltration since the end of the monsoon season early last month.

Although it is impossible to produce precise figures, Administration experts said, the accepted view is that 5,000 to 10,000 main-force North Vietnamese troops have entered South Vietnam in the last two or three months over the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. There had been lesser movements on other routes before the end of the monsoon period.

It takes one to four months for units to reach their destination. The belief here is that most of the troops moving late this year have gone to the Mekong Delta and, to a lesser extent, to the Central Highlands.

### Saigon Has Delta Role

Under the Nixon Administration's "Vietnamization" program—the gradual turning of combat responsibilities over to the South Vietnamese forces—the rice-rich delta is entirely defended by the Saigon Government's troops, with United States air and logistic support.

The infiltration rate and, consequently, the intensity of fighting, are key elements in President Nixon's judgment of the wisdom of further withdrawals of United States troops.

In this sense, then, the drop appeared to United States officials to be an encouraging element in the whole equation, which includes Mr. Nixon's recently announced plans to pull out an additional 50,000 combat troops next April 15. Sixty thousand troops have already been withdrawn.

Intelligence experts said Hanoi might be shifting to a

strategy of limited but sharp engagements, especially with South Vietnamese troops. If that is the case, they said, then the reduction in infiltrations may be illusory.

In general, Mr. Rogers said, the Administration is encouraged by the evolution of the Vietnamization plan and "by the fact that the South Vietnamese have accepted the program by carrying out their responsibilities quite adequately."

He said it was particularly encouraging that young South Vietnamese officers were "supporting the program very enthusiastically," especially in the delta area.

"One of the most dramatic changes that has occurred during these last 11 months has been the change of attitude of other governments toward our Vietnam policy," Mr. Rogers asserted.

When President Nixon visited Europe last spring, the Secretary said, most of the discussion of policy in Vietnam was critical in tone. But, he added, "as a result of the President's statements and the Vietnamization program, the other nations in the world that I have talked to have, I think, approved the policies that we are following, so that the climate, as far as foreign policy is concerned, has been greatly improved because of our change of policy in Vietnam."

### Progress in Negotiations

The Secretary of State, in referring to what he described as a greatly improved international climate on the Vietnam issue, listed a series of achievements of United States foreign policy in 1969.

# Operation Phoenix Enters My Lai Row

By ROBERT WALTERS  
Star Staff Writer

BALTIMORE—Operation Phoenix, a major counter-insurgency program being conducted jointly in Vietnam by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Department, has been swept into the growing controversy stemming from the alleged My Lai massacre.

Col. Marshall Fallwell, commandant of the Army's Intelligence School, held a rare press conference here today to deny a persistent report that his instructors teach terror tactics and assassination techniques to Vietnam-bound intelligence officers.

That allegation stems principally from a court document submitted early this year by a Baltimore attorney representing former Army Lt. Francis T. Reitemeyer, who had attended Fallwell's intelligence school at Ft. Holabird here.

That court document alleged that the intelligence school instructors told their students about hiring mercenaries to kill Viet Cong sympathizers, "male or female civilians of any age," and that the students also were told that frequent "resort to the most extreme forms of torture was necessary."

## No Relation to My Lai

The Reitemeyer case is no way related to the alleged massacre of at least 109 Vietnamese civilians at My Lai, but it may add new fire to the controversy over whether the Army generally teaches or encourages its men to resort to terror tactics, assassination and similar forms of violence.

In the document filed in U.S. District Court here last Feb. 14, Reitemeyer was quoted as saying he was assigned to the "Phoenix program," established several years ago, under the control of the CIA and the Defense Department in an effort to "eliminate the Communist 'infrastructure' in South Vietnam through the use of sophisticated intelligence techniques."

Reitemeyer was quoted by his lawyer, William H. Zinman, as saying he was told that Operation Phoenix "sought to accomplish through capture, intimidation, elimination and assassination what the United States up to his time was unable to accomplish through the conventional use of military power, i.e., to win the war."

Fallwell confirmed that Reitemeyer went through a six-week "combat intelligence staff officers course" which included "three hours of instruction on

the Phoenix program and South Vietnamese intelligence."

The commandant also acknowledged that most of Reitemeyer's intelligence school class of 49 second lieutenants, now in Vietnam, had been assigned to Operation Phoenix.

But, he said, only a small percentage of the school's students go into the Phoenix program. The school currently has 1,735 students and trains approximately 9,000 students annually at Ft. Holabird and an equal number through extension courses, Fallwell said.

The charges about the intelligence training, which Reitemeyer raised in conjunction with a successful appeal to the federal court for the granting of conscientious objector status and discharge from the Army, were described by the school commandant as "wild allegations."

Fallwell said Reitemeyer "alleged that he had been taught terror tactics, that he had been taught to assassinate people." However, the school official added, an "informal review" of Reitemeyer's charges had shown them to be false.

"It just isn't done," added Fallwell. "We know precisely what the individual instructor is supposed to get across and how he is supposed to get it across. He is supposed to follow that script."

Earlier Quiz Recalled  
Fallwell acknowledged that some instructors might have diverged from the standard course material to tell "war stories" to their classes, but emphasized that such terrorism and assassination techniques are "completely against the Geneva Convention, the Universal Code of Military Justice and Department of the Army regulations."

Fallwell further said that Reitemeyer was questioned on Dec. 6, 1968—months before the legal paper was filed on his behalf—about similar statements "that he had made in a social gathering." Asked at that time where he had heard of the atrocities, Reitemeyer "said he got it out of the newspapers," Fallwell told the press conference.

information from the platform; he said no," the colonel added. Fallwell referred to the platform used by instructors presiding over classes at the school.

**Dismissals Reported**  
A Pentagon spokesman said today that both lieutenants had been dismissed from the intelligence school for academic failure last December.

It also said that Reitemeyer had denied under oath that he had told a friend he was being trained to carry out assassinations.

"I am not being trained in any political assassinations . . . I never told (the name of the friend was deleted by the Pentagon) . . . that I was being trained to be an assassin nor that I was to be in charge of a group of assassins," he was quoted as having said.

Fallwell acknowledged that Vietnam-bound intelligence officers received some field training at a mock Vietnam village on the ground of nearby Ft. Howard, but said, "Almost every Army post has a Vietnam village."

Reitemeyer is currently on a

trip through the West and could not be reached for comment.

His case was heard by the federal court in conjunction with a similar successful appeal for conscientious objector status from another student at the intelligence school, Michael J. Cohn.

Cohn did not sign the controversial court document, but won discharge for the same reasons.

Reitemeyer and Cohn, both about 25 years old, were not called to testify under oath on their allegations of hiring killers because Judge Frank A. Kaufman decided they had supported their conscientious objector claims without it.

Zinman said that since the case no longer is pending and in light of the recent alleged massacre of Vietnam civilians he felt public attention should be directed to the proffer by the two former lieutenants.

He said he is having a copy delivered to Sens. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark., Edmund S. Muskie, D-Maine, Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., John C. Stennis, D-Miss., and Charles McC. Mathias, R-Md., in hopes they will "be inclined to take a hard look" at it.

The statement to the judge said:

"Your petitioner was informed that he would be one of many Army officers designated as an adviser whose function it was to supervise and to pay with funds from an undisclosed source 18 mercenaries (probably Chinese, none of whom would be officers or enlisted men of the U.S. military) who would be explicitly directed to find, capture, and/or kill as many Viet Cong and Viet

Cong sympathizers within a given number of small villages as was possible under the circumstances.

"Viet Cong sympathizers were meant to include any male or female civilians of any age in a position of authority or influence in the village who were politically loyal or simply in agreement with the Viet Cong or their objectives.

"The petitioner was officially advised by the lecturing United States Army officers, who actually recounted from their own experiences in the field, that the petitioner as an American adviser, might actually be required to maintain a 'kill quota' of 50 bodies a month.

"Your petitioner was further informed at this intelligence school that he was authorized to adopt any technique or employ any means through his mercenaries, which was calculated to find and ferret out the Viet Cong or the Viet Cong sympathizers. "Frequently, as related by the lecturing officers, resort to the most extreme forms of torture was necessary."

The proffer claimed a lecturer told of an occasion where a civilian "suspected of being a sympathizer was killed, decapitated and dismembered and parts of the body prominently displayed on the front lawn as a warning . . ."

"Another field technique," according to the court paper, "designed to glean information from a captured Viet Cong soldier, who was wounded and bleeding, was to promise medical assistance only after the soldier disclosed the information sought by interrogators."

"After the interrogation had terminated, and the mercenaries and advisers were satisfied that no further information could be obtained from the prisoner, he was left to die in the middle of the village, still bleeding, and without any medical attention whatsoever."

"On the following morning, when his screams for medical attention reminded the interrogators of his presence, he was unsuccessfully poisoned and finally killed by decapitation with a rusty bayonet."

"The American advisers, who were having breakfast 40 feet away, acquiesced in these actions, and the death of this soldier was officially reported 'shot while trying to escape.'"

The court paper relates what a field instructor described as an incident on the "lighter side."

He recounted that a group of advisers and South Vietnamese surrounded a pool where Viet Cong soldiers were hiding by submerging and breathing through reeds.

"The advisers joined the South Vietnamese soldiers in saturating the pool with hand grenades.

At this juncture, instructor remarked to students, which included petitioner, "that although you might appear sonorous, while you listen to it in classroom, it was actually of fun to watch the bodies of Cong soldiers fly into the air fish," the proffer related.

Judge Kaufman filed an opinion July 14 ordering the charge of Reitemeyer and Cohn. The Army filed notice of appeal but withdrew it in October.

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# Senate Votes to Bar Role in Asia Wars

By Spencer Rich  
 Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate yesterday unanimously adopted an amendment to prevent the United States from "sliding into war" in Laos or Thailand without the consent of Congress, but three hours of wrangling over the language left the precise legal effect unclear.

Sen. John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.), who sponsored the

language, gave it a broad interpretation, saying it would bar U.S. troops from engaging in "combat, hostility or war in support of local forces in Laos or Thailand." Asked the meaning of "local forces," he said in Thailand it would mean "Thai forces fighting in Thailand against insurgents."

However, Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), floor manager of the military procurement bill to which the amendment was attached by an 86-to-0 vote, said the language of the amendment did not actually go nearly as far as Cooper wished. He said it was only on the basis of much more restricted interpretation that he accepted it and voted for it.

Stennis indicated that the Cooper language, in his opinion, simply prevented any money in the category of military assistance—for which the bill provided \$2.5 billion—being used to finance combat operations in Laos or Thailand. Reading from a Sept. 15 Pentagon memorandum, he said the Defense Department took the same view of the amendment's language as he did.

Stennis added that in his view, the language would not achieve Cooper's aim to block the armed forces from using money provided under other budget headings to support U.S. troops if they became engaged in combat in the two Southeast Asian countries.

See SENATE, A15, Col. 1

Cooper insisted that as sponsor, it was his right to interpret the meaning of the amendment, and that what he wanted to do, "in bluntest terms," was to prevent "if possible, the U.S. from moving step by step into war in Laos or Thailand as it did in Vietnam."

He added that his amendment would not prevent use of

U.S. forces in Thailand for bombing and other operations against the enemy in Vietnam. Nor would it prevent the U.S. troops from defending themselves if U.S. bases in the two countries were directly attacked (he accepted a floor amendment to cover the latter point).

But he said any participation in a Vietnam-type internal war would be absolutely barred.

Stennis would not yield to Cooper's broad reading, remarking that before he or the Senate could accept any interpretation of such broad consequence—to which, he hinted, he might ultimately be sympathetic—extensive hearings and committee consideration should be undertaken.

Several senators who voted for the Cooper amendment said later they did so on the assumption that Stennis' narrow reading was correct. One told a reporter, "The legislative intent of this thing has been so muddled that the amendment is next to meaningless."

But one who favored Cooper's broader interpretation said, "Even if we accept the thing on Stennis' terms, it means the Senate has gone on record against spending any of the \$2.5 billion in military assistance to commit U.S. troops to local combat in Laos or Thailand. The assistance money can now only be used for materiel, supplies and the like for the local country forces."

After the Cooper amendment, the Senate, with Stennis' agreement, adopted two other amendments:

- By a vote of 85 to 0, the Senate approved an amendment by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) directing the comptroller general to conduct a study of profits on defense contracts and report back by Dec. 31, 1970. Proxmire said it was time we "get some notion of what defense profits really are."

- By a 71 to 10 vote, the Senate agreed to an amendment by Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) to put a ceiling of 3,461,000 on the number of men in the armed forces and to require that this figure be reduced on a one-to-one basis by the number of men withdrawn from Vietnam hereafter. (If 60,000 are withdrawn, total armed forces strength must drop by 60,000). Stennis said actual overall troop strength on July 1 was 3,461,190, and the Pentagon was expecting to reduce overall levels anyhow.

# Rise in Infiltration in Delta Said to Follow U.S. Pullout

By TERENCE SMITH  
Special to The New York Times

CANTHO, South Vietnam, Sept. 14—United States military authorities here report that North Vietnam has sharply intensified the infiltration of regular army units into the Mekong Delta in the four weeks since the last American troops left the region as part of President Nixon's withdrawal plan.

At least four and possibly seven battalions of predominantly North Vietnamese regulars have crossed the border from Cambodia and slipped into the heart of the delta, according to the United States military authorities.

Three to four more battalions—1,800 to 2,400 men—have been spotted maneuvering on the Cambodian side of the frontier opposite Chaudoc Province. Intelligence analysts believe one battalion slipped across last Thursday under cover of the series of attacks that followed the 72-hour cease-fire proclaimed by the Vietcong in memory of Ho Chi Minh, President of North Vietnam.

The infiltration of regular

units was first spotted last May, but it was intensified sharply in the four weeks since the American units left as part of the initial withdrawal of 25,000 United States troops.

South Vietnamese Army troops have replaced the Americans in Dinh Tuong and Kienhoa Provinces, and some officers suspect that the South Vietnamese may well be the target of the North Vietnamese regulars.

"I frankly don't know what they are up to," said Maj. Gen. Roderick Wetherill, senior American military adviser in the delta, in an interview at his headquarters in this delta town 80 miles southwest of Saigon. He continued:

"But it is possible that they are planning some sort of mini-Tet offensive in the area that was previously protected by the United States Ninth Division. It is one of the things they could do to cause a major political splash in the United States. If they sustained an at-

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tack for ten days and managed to take some district towns from the South Vietnamese, it would have quite an effect back in the States."

Before this summer, the enemy in the delta consisted mostly of indigenous Vietcong units and guerrillas, many of whom worked during the day in the rice fields and fought at night. The only North Vietnamese were troops and officers who led some of the guerrilla units: They numbered about 800 as against an estimated total of 49,000 Vietcong soldiers and support troops.

## Vietcong Division Appeared

In early May, the first elements of the 273d Regiment of the Vietcong Ninth Division appeared in the delta. Allied intel-



The New York Times Sept. 15, 1969

**North Vietnamese troops are reported moving into delta (arrows) as the U.S. quits 2 provinces (shaded).**

ligence officers believe that a result of manpower losses the division is now about 80 per cent North Vietnamese, despite its designation as a Vietcong unit.

In late August, as the last of the American infantry units were being withdrawn, elements of the North Vietnamese Army's First Division entered the delta from Cambodia. Several battalions of the 18th Regiment of the division are said to have been located and identified. At least two battalions are believed to be hiding in caves in a group of hills in Western Chaudoc Province known as the Seven Sisters Mountains.

In the main, the North Vietnamese have been avoiding contact as much as possible and concentrating on moving their supplies and troops south into the U Minh forest in the Camau Peninsula, which is dominated by the Vietcong. General Wetherill believes they will rest there until they are up to strength and ready to strike out at a target.

## Establishing a Presence

Although the goal remains a mystery, many military observers believe that Hanoi is out to establish a significant military presence in the delta to strengthen its position in the peace negotiations in Paris.

"The Delta is the richest plum in Vietnam," one American colonel said. "And when it comes time to divide the spoils, the North Vietnamese will want to be able to lay claim to at least part of it."

The South Vietnamese Army has the equivalent of three divisions of infantry and artillery units based throughout the delta. The only Americans in the region since the withdrawal of the Ninth Division are the advisers attached to the South Vietnamese Army and regular force and militia units.

Their principal role is to call in American air support when the fight gets rough. There are no longer any American infantry units operating in the IV Corps, or delta, area.

Thus, if the North Vietnamese decide to test the South Vietnamese Army's ability to fight alone, the stage is set in the delta.

# NIXON SEES AIDES TODAY ON VIETNAM

## Meeting Comes Amid Signs of Disagreement Among His Principal Advisers

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 11—President Nixon's scheduled meeting here tomorrow with his principal advisers on Vietnam comes amid evidence of disagreement in the Administration on how to proceed in Vietnam and signs of Congressional discontent with the Administration's policy.

Congressional sources said they were aware of a revival of sentiment among both civilian officials and military leaders that the United States should seek a clear victory in Vietnam and should play down the attempt to reach a negotiated settlement.

[In Saigon, a United States spokesman said that enemy combat activity had increased significantly, following the end of the three-day cease-fire declared by the Vietcong and partly honored by the allies.]

The United States Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, has brought President Nixon optimistic reports of the political situation under President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam and of improving combat capabilities of the South Vietnamese Army, the Congressional sources said.

Mr. Bunker is said to have told the President, when they met Tuesday, that the North Vietnamese have been badly hurt on the battlefield and

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their only hope for victory is a collapse of American determination. The Ambassador is also said to have urged Mr. Nixon to hold off on negotiations, contending that the longer the talks in Paris are deadlocked, the better it is for the United States and South Vietnamese military position.

The United States military commander in Vietnam, Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, has given the same optimistic evaluation through military channels, the sources said. General Abrams arrived in Washington from Saigon today to attend tomorrow's meeting.

Such reports were reflected in a speech in Sacramento today, by Gen. Leonard F. Chapman Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Chapman told the Comstock Club: "We have, I think, reached a point of crisis in this war. Time, the weapon employed so well by the enemy, is beginning to work against him now. His raids and attacks against allied forces have lessened. He has cut down his input of replacements and materiel."

According to a text made available here, General Chapman said that the enemy "is running out of options. Time, and the American casualties he can inflict in that time is still his hope for breaking American determination. But that same time finds a stronger and more

active armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam taking on more of the fighting."

Earlier, the views of the generals are reported to have helped persuade the President to delay his decision on whether to withdraw a second contingent of American troops from South Vietnam.

Ambassador Bunker, with the support of General Abrams, is said to have urged the President to go slow on withdrawals in order to give President Thieu time to improve his political position and to permit the South Vietnamese Army to increase its fighting capability.

These views are reported to have caused considerable dismay among some of President Nixon's political advisers, who contend that the American people have grown ever more weary of the long war and are eager to see it ended.

Such reports have also caused concern among some high officials of the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency who believe that the reports do not accurately reflect the ability and determination of the enemy to keep on fighting despite serious losses. These disparate views help explain the pulling and hauling that has come into public view in recent weeks.

The State and Defense Departments have openly disputed the significance of figures on infiltration from North Viet-

nam. Spokesmen for the Pentagon tended to downgrade them for fear that they would lead to stronger demands for withdrawing American troops from South Vietnam.

The State Department, in contrast, publicly labeled the figures as a significant sign that implied a North Vietnamese willingness to reduce the level of fighting and move toward a negotiated settlement.

The recent cease-fire declared by the Vietcong gave rise to additional contradictory statements. State Department officials let it be understood that the United States was prepared to see the cease-fire extended beyond the proclaimed three days, if the enemy so chose, as a sign of movement toward peace.

At the White House, however, the President's press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, termed such reports speculative and made clear that the President did not entertain the idea that the cease-fire could be prolonged into a scaling down of military activity. This, well-informed sources said, was the basis of an understanding with President Thieu.

Officials who have watched the development of United States policy on Vietnam for many months explained that part of the disagreement was cyclical. They said that there had always been differing assessments of the actual situation in Vietnam, politically and militarily.

The sources said that while such disagreements often occur between the State and Defense Departments, they are, by no means purely interagency disputes.

There are varying assessments within each department and even within the C.I.A. and other organizations in the intelligence community, the sources added.

Therefore, different proposals on how to proceed in Vietnam are considered natural. When the Administration approaches a major decision, as it is now doing, these differences are accentuated as those concerned try to make their influence felt on the coming decision.

President Nixon is known to have encouraged the presentation of disparate views and to have instructed his special assistant on national security affairs, Henry A. Kissinger, to seek them out. But once the President makes a decision, he expects the Government to speak with one voice.

Thus, the meeting at the White House tomorrow, which informed sources said, was called to make major decisions.

Vietnam

# Division on Infiltration

By Jack Anderson

THE STATE and Defense Departments still can't agree whether the North Vietnamese infiltration rate has declined and what effect this might have on the Paris truce talks.

The State Department is eager to believe intelligence estimates that the number of troop replacements from North Vietnam dropped to 100,000 during the first half of the year, as compared with 200,000 for the same period last year.

These estimates are based largely upon our readings of the sensors that have been planted along the infiltration routes and the electronic gadgets that our helicopter crews use to detect people hiding in the jungles. The State Department, which is responsible for peace, would like to interpret the electronic reports as evidence of a Communist move to ease the fighting and prepare for a truce.

The Army, however, has detected infiltrators who apparently have managed to slip into South Vietnam without registering on the electronic devices. Also, captured documents contain plans for offensives, not withdrawals.

Therefore the Army, which is responsible for the battlefield, is dubious about an enemy letup. The Communists' failure to mount an effective offensive, in the opinion of most generals, is the result of our own military superiority.

Some experts believe that the North Vietnamese don't want to conduct a military campaign that might delay the American withdrawal from Vietnam.

Other experts insist that the North Vietnamese desperately want to break up an orderly withdrawal, that they would like to force a precipitate withdrawal. With this as

their goal, say these experts, the Communists have sought to make the Vietnam war as painful as possible for the American public.

White House security adviser Henry Kissinger, on the other hand, has cautioned President Nixon that it takes three or four months for Hanoi to shift strategy and get the word to all the cadres in the field.

## Tigress in Congress

A FORMER schoolmarm who sometimes lectures Congressmen as if they were inattentive pupils will leave her stamp upon U.S. education. She is Rep. Edith Green, gray-haired and grandmotherly chairman of the important House education subcommittee, who has worked vigorously to counter the crisis in our schools.

In 1967, she stirred up a tumultuous floor fight over school aid. Conservatives scowled and liberals howled as she fought, first, for an expanded federal aid program, then for local administration of the program.

She firmly maintained that local authorities know more about their school problems than do Washington sages—political heresy among her fellow Northern Democrats. Throughout the ensuing uproar, the diminutive but indomitable congresswoman from Oregon sat in the eye of the storm, prim and cool, her feet barely touching the floor. She finally got her way.

The liberals got their revenge this summer by blocking her plan to curb student disorders. She wanted to deny federal funds to any college that failed to file a plan for handling disruptions.

"No one challenges the right of dissent," she argued, "but many of us question the wisdom of requiring others to pay taxes to finance it." She warned the liberals, who voted down her bill, that con-

servatives would ram through a far more punitive measure. This is now what they are driving to do.

Edith Green, a veteran of 14 years in Oregon classrooms, began lecturing her colleagues a few days after she entered Congress in 1955 when she scolded congressmen for taking too much time to extol the groundhog for his weather prediction.

Her first concern, as it was in her teaching days, is for education. Sinking almost out of sight behind the huge mahogany desk in her congressional office, Edith Green summed her feelings:

"I came across a statement recently which rings very true. 'In a country like this—if there cannot be money found to answer the common purposes of education, there is something amiss in the ruling political power.' George Washington made that statement almost 200 years ago. I think it is time we put our priorities straight."

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*Vietnam*

**State and Defense Departments Act to Ease Infiltration Dispute**

**Pentagon Official Emphasizes Caution in Interpreting the Decline, While McCloskey Calls It Significant**

By RICHARD HOLLORAN  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 — State and Defense Departments tried today to reconcile their public differences over interpretation of a decline in the infiltration of North Vietnamese soldiers into South Vietnam.

A noticeable difference remained, however. The State Department continued to regard the decline as significant while the Defense Department looked at it cautiously. Both departments appeared to be working from the same figures. The disagreement came against the backdrop of the decision in the Administration about whether and when to withdraw more American troops from South Vietnam.

**No Indication of Response**  
State Department officials indicated that their interpretation was intended to prod the North Vietnamese at the Paris talks into confirming a reduction of their war effort. Other officials indicated that the interpretation could also be used to justify another, and possibly later, withdrawal of American soldiers after the first contingent of 25,000 has left by the end of this month.

Officials here said they had received no indication from the meeting in Paris today that the North Vietnamese had responded. The American delegation there also told the other that the fate of B-52 bombings in South Vietnam had been decreased for more than a month. This was included as another piece of evidence of American intentions to

McCloskey, said that he stood on his earlier evaluation that the decline might be "significant" as an indicator of enemy intentions. The Defense Department spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim, said that "we are interpreting it cautiously."

Mr. McCloskey said he had no figures on infiltration that were different from those of the Defense Department. He said that "Defense is the repository for this kind of information and I would let Defense speak for the Government on this matter."

Mr. Friedheim, in a prepared statement, said that the two departments "believe that enemy infiltration into South Vietnam is down considerably compared to last year's average."

"It also appears to have been lower during July than it was earlier this year," he continued, adding that "the enemy has suffered a decline in total troop strength in South Vietnam."

Mr. Friedheim said that the North Vietnamese had infiltrated about 1,000,000 men into South Vietnam during the first six months of 1969. This compared with 200,000 men infiltrated during the same period last year, he said.

However, he added that "a direct comparison of the first half of this year with the first half of last year must be made cautiously" because of the Tet offensive, the half in the bombing of North Vietnam and weather variations last year.

**Figures on Enemy Losses**

Mr. Friedheim also noted that 119,000 enemy soldiers were killed during the first



**ENDS VIETNAM TOUR: Secretary of the Army Stanley B. Resor talking with Gen. William B. Rosson, deputy commander of U.S. forces in South Vietnam, before the Secretary left Saigon yesterday. At a news conference before leaving, Mr. Resor avoided commenting on the case of the eight Green Berets accused of slaying a Vietnamese national.**

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# Hanoi Cuts Infiltration, U.S. Reports

By Murrey Marder  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Infiltration of North Vietnamese troops into South Vietnam has dropped below Hanoi's combat losses, and total enemy forces in the war now "may be" shrinking, the State Department said yesterday.

The Defense Department, however, issued a far more cautious assessment which did not agree with the State Department that these factors are "significant." The Pentagon added that "the enemy is substantially replacing his losses."

The Defense Department's guarded statement was issued last night only after hours of discussion behind the scenes to try to reconcile the two departments' positions. Informed sources said the State Department's first and more encouraging statement was issued with White House approval.

The State Department's statement could be used in justifying the argument that "attrition" of North Vietnamese forces ultimately would have the same effect as the mutual "withdrawal" of forces that the United States insists

## INFILTRATE, From A1

The sudden attention that focused on the infiltration and enemy troop strength issue was touched off by remarks made by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk, speaking in Madison, Wis., Tuesday night.

Rusk was quoted as saying that U.S. intelligence indicates there has been an "almost total lack" of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam recently, and he saw that as a hopeful omen. It was learned yesterday that Rusk tried to put off the record that and other answers questions, but local newsmen in Madison refused to agree on grounds that he was speaking to a public audience of hundreds of bankers.

The State Department used the opportunity to make a detailed statement expanding on the reduction in infiltration but stopping short of claims that North Vietnamese infiltration has fallen to zero.

In recent weeks, other U.S. officials, informally, have also reported what they have regarded as the potentially very significant drop in infiltration. Secretary of State William P. Rogers, on July 2, said officially that "we do have evidence that the infiltration in the last two or three months has been at a fairly low level."

Yesterday morning, State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said:

"Well we have indicated on several previous occasions that there has been a considerable reduction in North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. We believe that the infiltration figure is currently lower than the North Vietnamese casualty figures in the South.

"Now this suggests that they are not replacing all of their casualties and that there may be a net reduction in enemy field forces which occurs as a result of attrition in the North Vietnamese component of those forces.

"We consider these facts significant and have said so on several occasions. However, what we seek is mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces.

"While it could be argued that this attrition process would eventually have the same effect as a withdrawal by North Vietnamese forces, it would be a slow and grim process.

"We prefer to end the conflict by negotiation—a negotiation which would lead to the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces."

McCloskey was asked by newsmen how the State Department reconciles its statement on the reduction of infiltration with President Nixon's delay in ordering further U.S. troop withdrawals. McCloskey replied that "I'm not trying to draw a broad picture and relate this to strategy or military or political" factors.

When asked if the State Department is requesting North Vietnam, in effect, to acknowledge the drop in infiltration, McCloskey replied, "If that can be implied, let it be." Hanoi is hardly likely to do so, however; it never has officially admitted having any troops in the South.

In answer to questions about Rusk's knowledge about the infiltration date, McCloskey said that Secretary Rogers meets "from time to time" with Rusk, but that the former Secretary is "not a paid consultant."

Judge Doyle has said a committee court hearing will be held on the desegregation plan, which involves mandating busing.

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Vietnam

# Official Hails Detectors Along Ho Chi Minh Trail

By George C. Wilson  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Listening devices the United States has placed along the Ho Chi Minh trail to detect enemy infiltrators "will rank as one of the major technological contributions" of the Vietnam War, the Pentagon research chief said yesterday.

John S. Foster Jr., in making that assertion in his annual statement on research and development, added that "we may well be on the verge" of keeping a battlefield under mechanical surveillance around the clock.

While Foster did not specify where sensors have been sown, it is known they have been placed along infiltration trails in Laos as well as North and South Vietnam.

"Land combat may well have been revolutionized for the years ahead," Foster said, "by the emergence of a new family of sensors for remote detection and for rapid delivery of firepower. Building on our experience in Vietnam, the instrumented battlefield has become possible."

### Successful in Siege

The research chief said the anti-infiltration devices — including ones which listen for vibrations in the ground as well as noises in the air — were used with success in the siege of Khesanh and in the defense of Saigon.

The fuller system the Pentagon is working on calls for sensors to warn an automated command and control network of the approach of enemy

troops. Then artillery and bombing could be loosed into the area, or infantry flown there.

The system Foster praised goes beyond the \$1.6 billion McNamara line of mechanical obstacles installed along part of the DMZ separating the two Vietnams. Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said earlier this year that the line — code named Project Dye Marker/Muscle Shoals — had not lived up to expectations.

To combat a Soviet military threat which he said is supported by a research program growing faster than our own (10 per cent growth a year in military, space and atomic energy research compared to 1 per cent for the U.S. in "the last few years"), Foster said he is thinking of building a giant test submarine with long-range missiles inside.

### Continue Blasts

While considering such a weapon for under the sea, Foster said the Pentagon will continue setting off nuclear blasts underground to test such things as the effect X-rays have on warheads for our Polaris and Minuteman missiles.

In case the United States reaches an arms control agreement with Russia, Foster said he has asked a Defense Science Board task force to analyze how the Pentagon's research program should be rearranged to keep track of Soviet "capability and intent."

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## Marquis Childs

# Vietnam Pacification Drive Takes a More Realistic Turn

DALAT, Vietnam—During the 70 years of their colonial empire in Indochina—Laos, Cambodia, North and South Vietnam—the French did very well for themselves. The big rubber plantations were highly profitable, as were other enterprises worked by docile natives.

Among the intellectuals they spread some French education. Aristocratic families sent their sons and daughters to Paris to school. They offered French citizenship on a favored few. It was all very cozy in the French style.

Even during their war with the Viet Minh, as the Communists were known then, in the early years after 1947 they did not do too badly. The ranks were largely made up of the Foreign Legion. They suffered heavily in military leadership, however, as class after class went out of St. Cyr, the French West Point, to die in the jungles of Vietnam. During the latter years, before the disastrous defeat of Dien Bien Phu, the United States was pouring \$800 million a year into the French treasury to sustain the franc against the heavy drain of the war.

Dalat was their mountain resort. In this mile-high city with a vista of mountain ranges in the distance, their pleasant villas, little ravaged by the war, are evidence of their knowledge of the good life, whether in

France or in the far reaches of the empire. The Central Highlands were a buffer between the Indochinese and the mountain people, the Montagnards, and the French allowed almost no southerners except for their servants to settle in Dalat.

Now the responsibility for pacifying this mountain area, or trying to bring the Montagnards into the 20th century to live at peace with the Vietnamese, for trying to get the economy on an even keel, is jointly that of the South Vietnamese government in Saigon and the United States Mission. Ambassador William E. Colby, in charge of the pacification program, is in Dalat for conferences with the local province chief, a colonel in the Vietnamese army, and with his own officials stationed here.

Pacification has for long been a sneer word. It was bureaucratized for a costly venture in idealism which was erased by the Vietcong shortly after the pacifiers left the pacified village. Colby's predecessor, Robert Komer, was a tough-talking salesman who could marshal charts and graphs to show just what percentage of territory and people had been pacified. He met any challenge by mowing down the challenger with strong language. Komer went from here to be Ambassador to Turkey, where the Turkish Vietnam protesters celebrated his arrival by burning the embassy car.

SINCE last November pacification has taken a new and more realistic tack. The initial effort is to root out the Vietcong infrastructure, bureaucratized for the Mao-like organization holding many villages in a discipline of terror, so pacification by day becomes submission to the VC by night. The rooting out is done by various organizations of the Vietnamese People's Police and by Operation Phoenix directed by the CIA. Phoenix undertakes to do to known terrorists what they have done to villagers collaborating with the government—reprisals such as beheading and disembowelling. The process includes road-building so a village will not be isolated and subject to VC incursions.

After at least comparative security has been established the work of pacification begins. Various forms of aid are made available. Each district chief is given one million piasters—at the legal rate close to \$100,000. He can use this for any form of improvement in his villages he sees fit.

A 48-year-old Foreign Service officer, Colby is the best type of civilian American working in Vietnam. He brings to his difficult—perhaps, in the long pull, impossible—task dedication and tireless effort. Besides the long hours and the seven-day week in his Saigon office, he travels widely through the country for a first-hand appraisal of how pacification is going.

There is still an inordinate amount of paperwork. The questionnaire of the hamlet evaluation survey, which must be filled out periodically by the American adviser to the province chief, is as detailed as an income tax return and almost as hard to understand. The returns are sent to Saigon and fed into a computer. Out comes the percentage—80-plus pacified. One must, as in the past, take these percentages with strong reservations, although they are probably more trustworthy than before in light of the village and district security operation.

HERE IN Dalat the problem seems to be security and a lack of troop protection. That is the complaint of the province chief who is about to be relieved by another army appointee coming from Saigon.

For three hours through the night the firing goes on. To the ear of the newcomer

it sounds like mortaring mixed with small-arms fire. In the morning the old-timers say it was only outgoing artillery fire in support of the defenders of a hamlet five miles down the road who came under VC attack.

Colby visits the mayor, he inspects the police training school where recruits are squirming through the wire under live ammunition, and then he is off for Saigon with a briefcase full of papers to be studied during the hour's flight.

If there were more men like Colby and fewer of the time-serving advisers who are legion and whose so-called advice is like dust in the fierce wind of the war, the chances for arriving at a Vietnam free of war and terror would be greatly improved.

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# The Hidden War

## Elite 'Phoenix' Forces Hunt Vietcong Chiefs In an Isolated Village

### Raid Prompted by Informers Finds Most of Foe Gone And Natives Tight-Lipped Demolishing a VC Monument

By PETER R. KANN  
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
DON NHON, South Vietnam—Was it a trap? There was reason for suspicion.

But the risk had to be taken. An unsolicited bit of information offered an opportunity to strike at a local unit of the Vietcong "infrastructure" (VCI), the clandestine political and administrative apparatus through which the enemy lays claim to control much of the Vietnamese countryside.

The affair began like this:

Two ragged Vietnamese, one short and squat, the other tall and thin, recently walked into Don Nhon, a village about 50 miles southwest of Saigon that is the capital of Don Nhon District. The pair told American officials that they wanted to talk about the VCI in their home village of Vinh Hoa, a nearby community of about 2,000 persons nestled deep in Vietcong territory along a Mekong River tributary. A Vietcong-sponsored "Liberation Committee" had been elected to govern Vinh Hoa five months previously, the informers said.

The U.S. advisers were dubious about taking military action on the basis of this intelligence. An ambush might be in the offing. Vinh Hoa was dangerous territory, several miles from the nearest government-controlled village. And the informers said they were refugees, rather than Vietcong defectors, who normally could be expected to be more eager to talk. But the two stuck to their story of overt Vietcong control in their village, and their information checked out with that in allied files.

#### High Priority

Vinh Hoa clearly was a target for "Operation Phoenix," the high-priority allied effort to root out the VCI across South Vietnam. The year-old Phoenix campaign obviously is related to the Paris negotiations. When peace comes, South Vietnam's claims to control the countryside will be strongest where the VCI cadre are fewest.

The Vietcong claim that about 1,800 governing bodies have been freely elected in "liberated areas" of South Vietnam. The U.S. dismisses most of the committees as fictions existing only on paper and claims VCI cadre are being recruited at a rate of better than 2,300 a month. Total VCI strength is estimated at about 70,000.

other American planners. Operation Phoenix is executed primarily by Vietnamese troops. Its methods range from after-dark assassination strikes by small killer squads to battalion-sized cordon and search efforts. A small strike clearly wasn't indicated for Vinh Hoa. The village might be heavily defended. U.S. officials finally settled on a plan for a daylight assault with helicopter transportation. The U.S. 9th Division would provide support.

#### Hunting the Enemy

Phoenix operations are reputed to be highly sophisticated and productive affairs. The Vinh Hoa effort proved to be neither. It involved intricate—and apparently flawed—planning, largely fruitless interrogation of fearful, tight-lipped villagers, calculated brutality applied to suspected Vietcong, the execution of one suspect, looting of homes by Vietnamese troops, systematic destruction of village installations and a largely unproductive hunt for Vietcong officials who apparently had fled by sampan long before the allies arrived.

The operation highlighted agonizing questions about Phoenix and the allied methods for waging war in Vietnam. Because the Vietcong torture and assassinate, should the allies? Is there value to an operation that "sweeps" a Vietcong area and then departs, leaving no permanent allied presence? Who should be considered Vietcong? Does the VC include a farmer who happens to own ancestral rice land in a Vietcong-controlled village and pays taxes to the enemy?

The counter-infrastructure experts are the Provincial Reconnaissance Units called "PRUs." Along with the Vietnamese, they include Cambodian and Chinese Nung mercenaries. All are recruited, trained and paid by the CIA. In two days of planning the Vinh Hoa force grew to include about 40 PRUs, about 30 Vietnamese special combat police and a handful of interrogators from the Police Special Branch, Census-Grievance men and psychological warfare cadre. The Americans taking part in the operation were two civilian PRU advisers, two civilian advisers to the special police, two young Army officers working in Don Nhon District and several radio operators. Two companies of the 9th Division, about 110 men, were to form a cordon around the village to prevent Vietcong escapes.

#### The Last Meeting

Final plans were coordinated at the Tactical Operations Center of Kien Hoa province (which includes Don Nhon) the night before the strike, with more than a dozen Americans and Vietnamese attending or within earshot. The size of the meeting troubled CIA men. They worried, justifiably as it turned out, that confusion and intelligence leaks would follow.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, the operation force is waiting for its helicopter transport at the airfield at Ben Tre, the Kien Hoa provincial capital. And waiting. It turns out that the 9th Division is having difficulty arranging its "air assets." An outpost under siege in a neighboring province has to be aided.

The civilian U.S. advisers begin to get restless and irritable: "The U.S. Army is more trouble than it's worth . . . all their maps and charts and crap . . . goddamned army must have schools that teach delay and confusion . . . never seen a 9th Division operation go off on time. . . ."

One of the advisers, plans to the west circling roughly over the area of the target village. Fluttering from it are thousands of propaganda leaflets. He explodes: "Great. Just

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Continued From Page One

great. The army is really good. Pick up a paper and read all about it. Read about the operation that's coming in to get you."

The PRUs and Vietnamese special combat police are wearing a wild variety of jungle fatigues, flak jackets, bush hats, berets, combat boots, tennis shoes and sandals. Some are barefoot. Initially they are sitting in orderly rows along the runway. Soon they begin dispersing about the airfield.

The PRUs invent a game. As a big C130 cargo plane comes in to land, they sit on the runway, then duck their heads as the plane's wings whip past just above them. "They're the toughest men in this war," says one adviser. "They join this outfit because they want action."

The American points to a small Vietnamese half-doing on the grass. "That man used to be a VC. He got disillusioned with them, so they killed his family. He lit out for the bush. Spent two years out there alone, conducting a private vendetta against Charlie. God knows how many VC he killed. Finally he came in and joined up with the PRUs. He wants to kill more VCs."

### Hovering Close

Shortly after 9 a.m., two hours late, 10 helicopters arrive. The Phoenix force piles aboard and is flown for 15 minutes across flat rice land and coconut groves to the landing zone, a rice paddy less than a mile from the center of Vinh Hoa. The helicopters hover close to the ground, and the troops leap out, wading cautiously through thigh-deep mud and water toward a treeline from which they expect enemy fire.

There is no firing. At the treeline the troops are joined by the Don Nhon District U.S. advisers and the two Vietnamese informants who prompted the operation. They have been separately helicoptered to the scene. The informers, garbed in baggy U.S. Army fatigues, are to remain mystery men, for their own protection. Their heads are covered with brown cloth bags with eye and mouth holes. The two present a part comic, part frightening spectacle.

The local advisers have bad news. They say the 9th Division cordon along the southern fringe of the village didn't get into place until about 9 a.m., two hours late, leaving the Vietcong an escape route. (The 9th Division later denies any delay.) Now the informers claim not to recognize the approach being taken to the village. One American sharply questions them. Another is cursing the Vietnamese "psywar" operatives trampling along with the troops: "All we need are these goddamned guys with their leaflets. And they're wearing black pajamas. Beautiful. Now the army (the 9th Division troops) will zap 'em as VC."

### Looking Around

Several of the Vietnamese special police have found an empty farmhouse, recently deserted judging by damp betel-nut stains on the floor. They are passing the time knocking holes in a water barrel. In another farmhouse, the occupant, an old lady, stares at a wall while two carefree PRUs boil eggs on her wood stove.

A lone PRU wanders along the treeline shaking his head and muttering, "VC di di, VC di di... (VC gone, VC gone)." The troops presently advance toward a cluster of houses nearer the village center. Spaced along the mud trails at intervals of about 10 yards are thick mud bunkers, each large enough for several men. The houses also have bunkers, inside or out. Vinh Hoa, being within an allied "free strike zone," is subject to air and artillery

paganda leaflets carried in plastic bags. Some garlands of flowers. The procession takes on a festive air.

Ten minutes later the column reaches the center of the village, a small cluster of houses and shops facing a square that previously contained a covered marketplace. The marketplace has been bombed out. In the center of the square is a concrete obelisk about 10 feet high—a Vietcong memorial, say the Americans, dedicated to the enemy dead. It is one target of the Phoenix strike.

The PRUs and Vietnamese special police begin searching—and sacking—the homes. They are bored, and restless, because there has been no "action." The psywarriors' plastic bags, emptied of propaganda, are commandeered for loot ranging from clothing to chickens. "Trick or treat," says an American, not really amused. In one house, some of the Vietnamese troops are having a small celebration. They have unearthed a bottle of rice wine.

A few village residents, women, children and old men, are assembled along one side of the square. They squat on their haunches in the dust. Several male captives are bound a few yards away. Against a wall, the narrow-shouldered prisoner is rocking back and forth, a trickle of blood running down his head.

Amid whirling dust, a 9th Division helicopter lands in the square. A lean U.S. lieutenant colonel in polished boots and trim uniform steps out with aides in tow. Displaying a map marked with red grease pencil, he reports the kill totals of the support troops: "Charlie Company got three KIAs (Killed In Action), Delta Company two, we got one from my chopper. . . ." All the fatalities, he says, were armed Vietcong, carrying packs. They were shot trying to flee through the cordon. "They had low-level documents on them," the colonel reports. Presently the chopper leaves.

In the middle of the square, two Americans are strapping demolition charges around the Vietcong monument. A one-minute warning is sounded. Everyone takes cover. As the charge explodes, the monument disintegrates into chunks of brick and concrete. It is exactly noon.

### The Village Church

The explosion seems to galvanize the foraging troops into action. "Don't they have anything to do but loot those houses?" an American PRU adviser shouts to a Vietnamese lieutenant. "Get the men out combing the rest of this village." Two search parties move out. A third group, mostly Americans, crosses a narrow footbridge spanning a canal to investigate a church.

Crossing the bridge, the Americans spot fresh footprints on both sides of the river connected with the canal. For the moment, they pose a mystery.

The church, a Roman Catholic structure, is bolted shut at front and rear. Just as two Americans warily advance to smash a lock, the front door opens and an elderly man in white pajamas appears, smiling as though to welcome parishioners to services. The inside of the little church is newly painted and neatly scrubbed. A row of angled bullet holes along the metal-sheet roof attests to a visit from a helicopter gunship.

In the rear are a large drum and a brass gong. An American points to them and questions the man. "What are they for?"

"To call the faithful to worship."

"Did you see any people leaving the village

all about it by midnight last night. So they blew up the bridge and blew down the river on their sampans."

But there may be something to salvage from the operation. In the square, the group of squatting villagers has grown to 50 or 60. Census-Grievance operatives examine their identification cards. Few have them; in Vietcong-controlled areas, the enemy forbids the people to carry government ID cards and often punishes those who do.

The two informers, still with bags on their heads, stand behind a nearby wall, peering at the villagers. Occasionally they point to a resident and whisper to a PRU. Those put under suspicion are pulled to their feet, bound and taken aside to the prisoner group. The others remain on their haunches staring silently into the dust.

### The Moving Finger

One villager "fingered" by the informers is a bowlegged woman clutching a baby. She is identified as a member of the village "women-farmer association," a Vietcong citizen-involvement organization not normally considered important enough to classify as Vietcong cadre. ("No point picking them up," a U.S. official says later in Saigon. "They're more trouble than they're worth to process and hold.")

But the woman is moved to the prisoner group, clutching the baby. Her two other children, a boy about six and a girl about 10 years old, begin to cry loudly. A PRU raises a rifle butt over their heads menacingly, and the wails subside into muffled sobs.

From behind a nearby house two shots are heard. The narrow-shouldered prisoner has been executed. His body is dumped into a bunker.

One of the psywar operatives lectures the villagers on the perils of supporting the Vietcong and outlines the benefits of backing the Saigon government. Propaganda sheets bearing a smiling portrait of President Nguyen Van Thieu are handed out.

At one side of the square an American adviser muses about the operation and what it has to do with the war: "There are 30 people sitting around a table in Paris, and they just aren't going to hack it. How can they solve this thing? The people in this village have been VC for 10 years, maybe 20. How are you going to change that? We come here on an operation, and what does it prove? We've got some crook sitting in Don Nhon picking up a salary every month because he claims to be the government village chief here. He hasn't dared to visit this village for seven years. The district chief was too chicken to come on this operation. So we come in, pick up a few Charlies and leave. The VC will be back in control here tonight. . . ."

### Heading Back

At 3 p.m., with five prisoners in tow, the troops start hiking back to the landing zone in the rice paddy for transportation home. Near the paddy they meet two U.S. soldiers from the 9th Division cordon, leading two prisoners. Each of the captives wears a neatly printed "Detainee Card."

The taller and more talkative of the two informers is brought forward to examine the new prisoners. One is identified as a deputy Vietcong village chief, the other as a non-Vietcong. Both are placed with the other prisoners.

A deputy Vietcong village chief would be the most important captive of the day by far, the others being low-level cadre at best. "Hey, we got us a big one," says an elated American adviser, who then cautions nearby PRUs: "You

No booby traps materialize. The troops arrive at a substantial farmhouse with flower beds in the front yard, a manicured hedge and pillars flanking the front entrance. It is one of many prosperous homes in Vinh Hoa—surprising, since Vietcong villages usually are poorer than government-controlled towns. Isolation from major markets, high Vietcong taxes and allied bombing are among the reasons.

Behind the house some leaf wrappings are found. "The VC must have been here," an American says. "That's what they wrap field rations in." (Leaves are used by most rural Vietnamese, VC or not, to wrap food.) The occupant of the house, an old man who stares at the interlopers through wire-rim spectacles, is shaking, through age, or fear, or both.

The aged Vietnamese is questioned briefly. "Bring him along," an American says sharply. "Let's move." Another adviser says, "That old man could be the top dog VC in this village. You never know." The old man totters along with the troops. He is released in mid-afternoon when one of the two informers claims him as an uncle.

### Interrogation

At about 11 a.m., an American adviser and two special police turn up with three captives. "Found them hiding in a house," the American says. The informers inspect the captives and whisper, through an interpreter, that one is a Vietcong village guerrilla, the second a Vietcong "security section chief" and the third a non-Vietcong, perhaps a deserter from the South Vietnamese army.

The two identified as Vietcong are bound, and one of them, a narrow-shouldered, bent young man with protruding teeth, is leaned against a tree trunk. Several police interrogators and PRUs gather around him and fire questions. They want to know where Vietcong weapons and ammunition are hidden.

The suspect doesn't know or won't say. Soon the questions are interspersed with yanks at his hair and sharp kicks to his head, face and groin. The prisoner sags against the tree, face bloodied.

"Americans don't want to be here for any more of this," says one U.S. adviser, moving away. "It's a nasty goddamned business." He adds, "You know, it's a whole cycle of this stuff. Last week in another village near Don Nhon the VC marched five government sympathizers into the marketplace and beat their heads in with hammers. So we return it on this guy. It goes on and on."

By now the informers have gotten their bearings. They lead most of the troops along a trail to a hospital building behind a hedge of blue flowers. It is a straw-thatch structure containing eight wide plank beds separated by white plastic curtains. In one corner is a mud bunker, in another a crude case of glassware and medicine bottles, some with French and American labels. There are no patients or traces of them.

The Americans decide it is a Vietcong hospital for wounded enemy troops. "Burn it," an American adviser directs. Ignited with cigaret lighters, the hut burns readily.

### Vinh Hoa Village

In single file, the troops wind along a trail toward the center of Vinh Hoa. Since there hasn't been any firing, the possibility of an ambush is discounted. Some of the PRUs and special police are carrying food and household articles taken from the outlying farmhouses. The "psywarriors" are strewing the trail with pro-

"We have information on how much this church pays to the VC in taxes. How much do you know?"  
"Maybe the people pay 100 or 200 piasters (80 cents to \$1.60)."

"The church, how much does it pay?"

"The church does not pay taxes. The church never pays taxes."

"The hell it doesn't pay," the American says. "This may be a Catholic church, but it's Charlie's Catholic church."

### A Taciturn Lady

The Americans follow a path past the church to a cluster of solidly built homes. Most are empty. In one, two candles burn before a postcard picture of Christ. In another, a picture of Pope Paul sits on a small altar beside a mud bunker. One house is occupied by a woman with six children. She is interrogated.

"Did you see people crossing the river this morning?"

"No, I was in my bunker."

"Where is your husband?"

"He went to the market at Cai Mang."

"Why?"

"He always goes when the soldiers come here. . . ."

"Do you know who are the VC in this village?"

"No. We don't know VC. We are Catholic. Catholics don't know VC."

"We know that a Liberation Committee was elected here. When?"

"I just heard about it recently."

"Who is the Vietcong village chief here?"

"I don't know. . . ."

"How much tax do you pay to the VC?"

"More than 1,000 piasters." (About \$8.)

"How often do Vietcong song and dance (propaganda) teams come and visit?"

"Not often."

"What do they say?"

"They say the Americans will go home soon."

"How often does your husband stand guard for the VC?"

"Every five or six days."

"How often do the women here have to make punji stakes (poisoned stakes) for the VC?"

"Once or twice a year."

"That's pretty typical," says the American, heading back across the footbridge to the village square.

### Disappearing Enemy

An American adviser has figured out the footprints on both sides of the river. There are no sampans around the village. Adult males except for old men, seem almost nonexistent. The village population is estimated at 2,000, but no more than 200 persons have been seen on this day.

The American finds a youngster hiding in a farmhouse. He poses a few perfunctory questions, then suddenly demands: "At what time this morning did all the people leave here by boat?" Perhaps startled by the suddenness of the query, the boy replies, "At four o'clock."

The conclusion: Most of the village's Vietcong guerrillas, VCI cadre and Liberation Committee members have eluded the Phoenix troops. "They just had to have that big meeting last night," fumes an American adviser, recalling the last planning session for the operation. "Everyone had to get in on this goddamned operation. The VC must have known

One war memorial dynamited. One hospital  
ture. Seven prisoners taken for interrogation.  
suits of the operation: Eight kills, one later for  
the Special Branch. The Special Branch  
and the prisoners are on their way to the Po-  
copied back to their compound in Ben Tre.  
Half an hour later the troops have been held  
keep this one alive, you hear. We want him  
alive."

## The Vietnam Policy Reversal of 1968

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 5— On the cold and cheerless early morning of Feb. 28, 1968, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, landed at Andrews Air Force Base after an urgent mission to Saigon. Pausing only to change into a fresh uniform, he hurried through the rain to the White House to deliver a report and make a request.

The report was designed to encourage an anxious President and his beleaguered advisers, but it served only to

*This is the first of two articles written by Hedrick Smith in collaboration with William Beecher, and incorporating reports by Peter Grose, John W. Finney, E. W. Kenworthy, Roy Reed, Benjamin Welles, Edwin L. Dale Jr. and Max Frankel.*

shock them into extended debate.

The request — for more troops—was designed to bring military victory at last in the eight-year American military effort, but it led instead to a fateful series of decisions that

stand in retrospect as one of the most remarkable turnabouts in United States foreign policy.

The month of March, 1968, became a watershed for a nation and a Government in turmoil. The Johnson Administration, by pulling back from the brink of deeper commitments and moving toward disengagement, set a course that affects the daily decisions of the Nixon Administration.

Many of the ingredients of

**Continued on Page 14, Column 1**



# Facing Facts

## Nixon's Team Is Trying to Determine What's Really Happening in Vietnam

By Joseph Kraft

THE NIXON Administration has not yet fully formulated its policy for Vietnam. But in one critical area, the new men have decisively parted company with the practices of the Johnson Administration.

They are not kidding themselves, or the country, with rosy progress reports. Instead of merely spouting statistics and homilies designed to justify past actions, they are making a systematic effort to determine what is really happening in Vietnam.

THIS WILLINGNESS to face facts, even unpleasant facts, finds a notable expression in what President Nixon himself said about a cease-fire at his first White House news conference. In the past, a cease-fire in Vietnam was airily included in the official line as a distinct possibility.

How could it not be? The seat of all the trouble was supposed to be an invasion of South Vietnam by North Vietnam. A settlement required only that the North leave its neighbor in the South alone. Once that happened, a cease-fire was child's play.

Mr. Nixon came off this nonsense with a vengeance. By reference to a guerrilla struggle, he implicitly recognized that the insurgents had deep local roots all over Vietnam. By reference to the possibility that "one side may not even be able to control many of those who are re-

sponsible for the violence," he discreetly surfaced some doubts as to whether the regime in Saigon was all that peace-minded.

Then he went on to tell the truth about how much of an illusion it was to expect a cease-fire. He said: "I think it is not helpful in discussing Vietnam to use such terms as cease-fire, because cease-fire is a term of art that really has no relevance, in my opinion, to a guerrilla war."

IN KEEPING with the new President's appetite for the facts, there has been a significant change in the flow of Vietnam information to the White House. President Johnson depended on his special assistant for national security affairs, Walt Rostow, a fervent partisan of the Vietnam involvement. Rostow in turn looked to a unit in the Central Intelligence Agency headed by George Carver.

Nobody doubts Carver's knowledge of Vietnam or his basic competence. But according to a wide variety of officials in both the Defense and State Departments, the Carver unit largely served up to Rostow what he wanted to hear.

Thus before the Tet offensive of last year, its evaluations were apparently very optimistic about the progress being made in subduing the insurgency. These reports justified the continuing military effort on the ground that success was not too far away.

Subsequent to Tet, the Carver unit apparently filled

the air with predictions of a second and third and fourth wave of attacks by the other side. The effect of these reports was to put a discount on the Paris peace talks on the theory that the other side was only using the talks as a stalling device while winding up for a knockout blow on the ground.

Rostow's replacement at the White House, Henry Kissinger, has from the beginning sought to bring on to his staff a capacity for critical evaluation of the intelligence reports. The man he originally sought—one of Carver's chief critics—was not available.

In the end, Kissinger took on his staff a former CIA man, Dean Moore. But Moore was not a member of the Carver unit. He is known to his colleagues at the agency and at the Departments of Defense and State as a top-flight analyst without any bias.

ALL THIS, to be sure, does not add up to anything like a change in policy. But the ground is plainly being laid for change, if conditions are found to warrant it. True toughmindedness, a disposition to face facts and to be skeptical and analytical, is at last being substituted for that ultimate expression of romantic sentimentality which caused so many leading figures in the Johnson Administration to equate fighting a war that could not be won with hardheaded realism.

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# 4 Divisions in North Said to Move Toward DMZ

**Southward Shifting of Units Previously Withdrawn by Hanoi Puzzles U.S. Aides**

By WILLIAM BEECHER  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20—Senior American analysts report that four North Vietnamese Army divisions that were withdrawn well out of South Vietnam late last year appear to be moving southward again. The divisions had been pulled back to the area between Vinh and Donghoi, at least 50 miles above the demilitarized zone. The intelligence officials stress that their present movements southward are slow and primarily by foot rather than in motor vehicles.

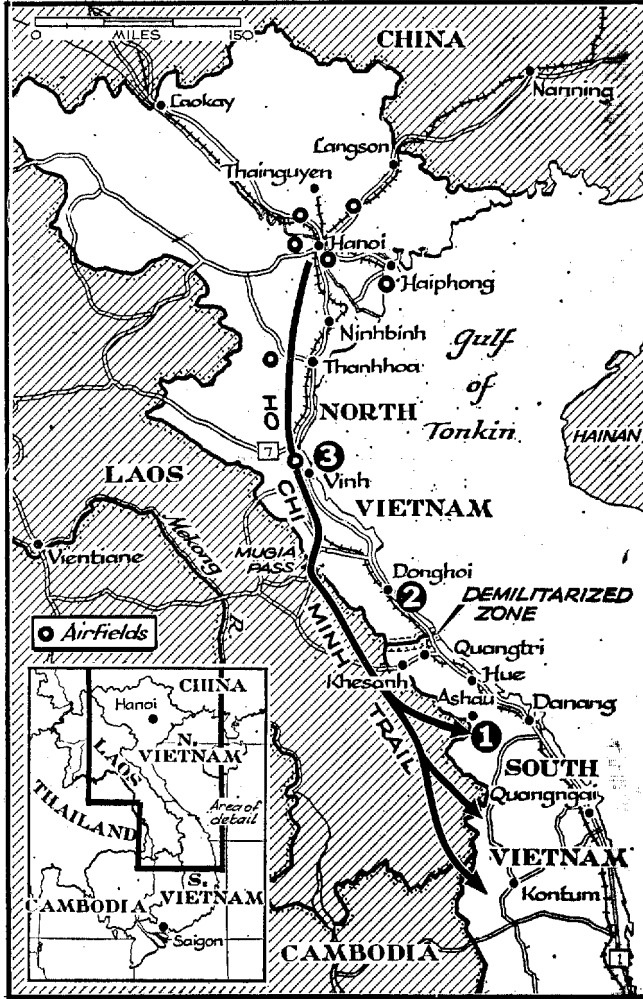
The American officials say they cannot tell whether the enemy divisions will continue to move south, either through the demilitarized zone or around it through Laotian territory, or whether the troops will remain poised across the border in North Vietnam.

Two regiments of a fifth North Vietnamese division, which moved into Laos earlier, are reported back in South Vietnam, in the Ashau Valley area southwest of Danang.

Government analysts, puzzled by the movements, are uncertain whether they may presage a long-expected offensive just as the Paris peace talks move into a more substantive stage, or whether they may merely serve as a threat to underscore Hanoi's ability to resume more active war.

**Hanoi Position Bolstered**

Officials who have studied intelligence reports say that since the partial halt in bombing of North Vietnam last March 31 and the full bombing halt on Nov. 1, the Hanoi regime has placed itself in a much stronger position to continue the war should the bombing be resumed. The reports indicate that most major bridges, roads, rail hubs and marshaling yards in North Vietnam have been rebuilt and are in active use. North Vietnam is said to have restored about half its thermal power capacity, but restoration of the chemical fertilizer industry has lagged. Nine jet airfields have been put back into opera-



The New York Times

Jan. 21, 1968

**Some enemy units are back in Ashau Valley (1), and others are heading southward from near Donghoi (2) and Vinh (3).**

tion and a 10th is under construction.

By their troop movements in North Vietnam, it is estimated to have reached about 10,000 in December. In addition, there are believed to be about 30,000 men "in the pipeline" in the southern panhandle area of North Vietnam, on their way to fill out existing units throughout the South.

Starting late last September, the enemy began withdrawing the 324B Division from the northernmost part of South Vietnam, moving it to Donghoi, about 50 miles north of the border. Other units were moved toward, and in some cases across, the Laotian and Cambodian borders in a general disengagement with allied forces South.

Ranking officials say this was

one of the factors behind the Johnson Administration's decision to end the bombing of North Vietnam and the line south to Vinh have been repaired and are operating again. The rail link between Vinh and Donghoi is under repair.

Large underground oil tanks have been installed at Thanhhoa, Vinh and Donghoi and at the entrance to the Mugia Pass, which leads from North Vietnam into the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. An oil pipeline is also being completed between Vinh and Donghoi.

Trucks, trains and ships are carrying many types of military supplies to ports as far south as Donghoi. In addition, there are reports of "significant stockpiles" of weapons along the northern edge of the demilitarized zone.

## 'Secure' Areas Increase

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, Jan. 11—A report Saturday from U.S. pacification headquarters said nearly 13 million of South Vietnam's 17 million people now live in areas considered "relatively secure" from Vietcong harassment, the highest number ever reported.

The report said the South Vietnamese government gained control over an additional 537,000 peasants in December, increasing its overall control to 76.3 per cent of the population.

The number of people living in relatively secure areas is 9.1 per cent higher than at the end of January, 1968, and 16.5 per cent higher than the low of 59.8 per cent recorded after the Communist Tet offensive last January-February.

Spokesmen said 2.1 million South Vietnamese—12.3 per cent—remain under Vietcong control, while 1.9 million—11.4 per cent—live in contested areas.

The report was based on the computerized Hamlet Evaluation System under which South Vietnam's 12,650 hamlets are rated in six categories—A, B, C, D, E and VC. When

speaking of security, U.S. officials say A, B & C are relatively secure. D & E are rated contested and VC means Vietcong controlled.

The Evaluation System has been criticized by some observers who believe it gives an overly optimistic picture of rural security in South Vietnam. Robert W. Komer, who ran pacification until two months ago, and other American officials have readily conceded that the systems is not an exact measurement, but believe it is the best available.

Since Nov. 1, South Vietnamese troops have moved into more than 1000 hamlets in the countryside with a total population of over 1 million. "We are moving into a vacuum," one U.S. official said in a recent comment on the lack of Vietcong resistance to the stepped-up pacification program.