

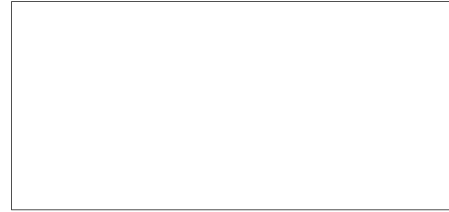
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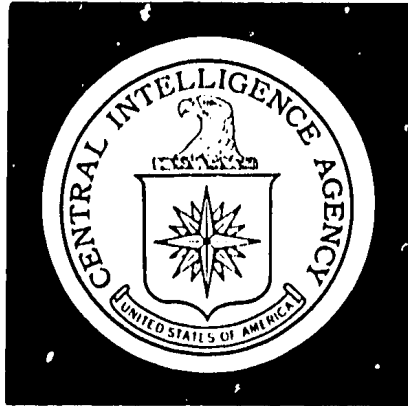
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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

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# Intelligence Memorandum

*Communist Subversion In The South Vietnamese Army  
And Security Apparatus*

ARMY review completed. Release as

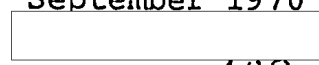
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
September 1970

## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Communist Subversion In The South Vietnamese  
Army And Security Apparatus

Introduction

A recent Intelligence Memorandum\* discussed the Viet Cong covert agencies heavily involved in intelligence and subversion. The agencies included the Military Proselyting Section, the Security Section, the Military Intelligence Office, the Propaganda and Training Section, the Political Struggle Section, and the Civilian Proselyting Section. This memorandum is a more detailed study of the Military Proselyting Section's subversive organization, including the history, role, functions, and extent of its operations within the South Vietnamese Army and security apparatus.

25X1 The principal sources used in this memorandum were captured documents, POW and rallier reports,

[REDACTED]

Other sources included Communist propaganda materials,

[REDACTED]

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Viet Cong Military Proselyting -- Doctrine and  
Organization

1. Viet Cong doctrine calls for fighting the war in South Vietnam on three mutually supporting fronts: military, political, and military proselyting. Military proselyting aims at undermining the morale and effectiveness of the South Vietnamese armed forces and security apparatus by propaganda and subversion.

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*Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence, the Office of National Estimates, and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.*

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2. The Vietnamese Communists organized a military proselyting effort against the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) shortly after the Army's official creation in 1955. The effort gradually expanded thereafter. It enjoyed its greatest successes during the politically unsettled period between the overthrow of the Diem government in November 1963 and the arrival of US ground forces in early 1965. By then, ARVN desertion rates were alarmingly high, and there were growing numbers of small-unit defections and uprisings. Viet Cong documents aver that a large share of the credit for these ARVN difficulties belonged to their proselyting efforts.

3. The arrival of US ground troops in large numbers strengthened ARVN morale and thereby set back the Viet Cong's military proselyting endeavor. Furthermore, in order to counteract the US troop buildup, the Communists transferred large numbers of military proselyting cadres to the combat forces. High-level Viet Cong captives have since indicated that the military proselyting front was relegated to third-rate status by mid-1965. Military proselyting activity continued to be widespread, however.

4. In late 1967 the Viet Cong mapped a large-scale military proselyting campaign to accompany the Tet offensive of 1968. A few small-unit rebellions occurred in the weeks following Tet, and desertion rates for 1968 were high, but the results failed to meet expectations. There were three reasons for the failure: the Communists had too few assets assigned to proselyting, large numbers of these assets turned out to be less effective than hoped for, and the average South Vietnamese soldier was not convinced that the Communists would eventually prevail.

Military Proselyting -- Organization, Quantity,  
and Quality of Agents

Organization

5. Hanoi oversees the military proselyting effort in South Vietnam through the Enemy and Military Proselyting Directorate of the Ministry of Defense. The Directorate forms policy, runs schools,

[REDACTED]

and sends cadres south to fill key posts. For the southern half of South Vietnam, the Military Proselyting Section of the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) directly controls most military proselyting activities. In the northern half of the country, military proselyting is directly controlled from Hanoi. The chain of command throughout South Vietnam extends downward through the regions, provinces, districts, villages, and occasionally hamlets.

6. The proselyting effort employs both full-time and part-time workers. The full-time bureaucracy -- which directs the effort -- operates from Viet Cong territory, although many of its cadres operate in territory controlled by the government of South Vietnam (GVN) from time to time. The full-time bureaucracy includes administrators, propagandists, clerks, secretaries, prison guards (the proselytors run the Viet Cong military prison system), and agent handlers.

7. The part-timers do the grass-roots proselyting work in the villages, hamlets, and cities of South Vietnam. They include couriers, agent spotters, women who write letters or plead with ARVN soldiers to desert, and persons who distribute pamphlets or write slogans on walls. Countrywide, they probably number in the many tens of thousands. This estimate is suggested by a COSVN report of July 1969, which stated that VC Military Region VI (with about 4% of the population of South Vietnam) had 9,480 persons organized into military proselyting cells.

8. Captured documents indicate that most part-timers operate in GVN territory. Those who do so are called "legal" personnel, because they have the legal documentation required by the South Vietnamese government. Most "legals" are recruited locally, although some are infiltrated from North Vietnam. Captured documents offer numerous examples of the widespread use of "legals." A district in VC Binh Dinh Province, for example, reported in 1968 that it had at least 375 military proselyting "legals" in GVN territory; a district in VC Quang Da Province (GVN Quang Nam) reported that during a six-month period, it had "consolidated and organized 247 military proselyting cells of 742 men who operated in legal status."

[REDACTED]

Number and Quality of Agents

9. The number of military proselyting agents in the South Vietnamese armed forces and security agencies in early 1969 is estimated at approximately 20,000, a number which must be viewed as a broad order of magnitude.\* These agents range from highly trained and dedicated agents to unproductive fence-sitters. In listing agents on their rosters, the Viet Cong usually try to make quality distinctions. Trustworthy agents are listed as "Fifth Columnists"; those of less certain reliability are designated as "Sympathizers." Captured rosters suggest that the number of Fifth Columnists and Sympathizers are roughly equal. The Viet Cong rolls also note whether agents are Party or Party Youth Group members. Perhaps somewhat more than one-tenth of all military proselyting agents were Party-affiliated in early 1969. These made up the hard core of the agent network. The evidence on the numbers and types of military proselyting agents is laid out in the Appendix.

10. Since mid-1969 the Viet Cong have greatly stepped up their efforts to increase the overall number of military proselyting agents. They are also attempting to increase the proportion of Party-affiliated agents.

Positions of Agents

11. A substantial proportion -- perhaps as many as 10% -- of the military proselyting agents are officers. A survey of captured VC documents in June 1969 showed that of 400 Fifth Columnists and Sympathizers mentioned in these documents,\*\* about 30 (or 8%) were officers, holding ranks of aspirant through captain.

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\* The gross estimate of 20,000 refers to agents run by the military proselyting organization and does not include an estimated 10,000 additional agents controlled by the VC security and military intelligence organizations.

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\*\* The majority of the documents were dated 1968 and 1969.

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In addition, a substantial percentage of agents are non-commissioned officers.

12. The document survey mentioned above revealed that some VC agents held key posts. The agents included eight signal personnel (five of whom were non-commissioned officers), an officer in a District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Center, two civilians assigned to an intelligence unit on an airbase, a Warrant Officer attached to South Vietnamese Naval Headquarters, a chauffeur for an ARVN major, a sergeant serving at the Da Lat Military Academy, two sergeants and a lieutenant in an infantry training base, a platoon leader of a GVN anti-guerrilla formation [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the body guard of a district chief, two soldiers of unidentified rank serving in the office of the Chief of Ordnance of ARVN, and a National Policeman -- a Party member since 1956 -- who had been assigned to the President's Palace in Saigon.

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[REDACTED]

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14. The evidence also suggests some military proselyting agents have attained field grade rank in ARVN. [REDACTED]

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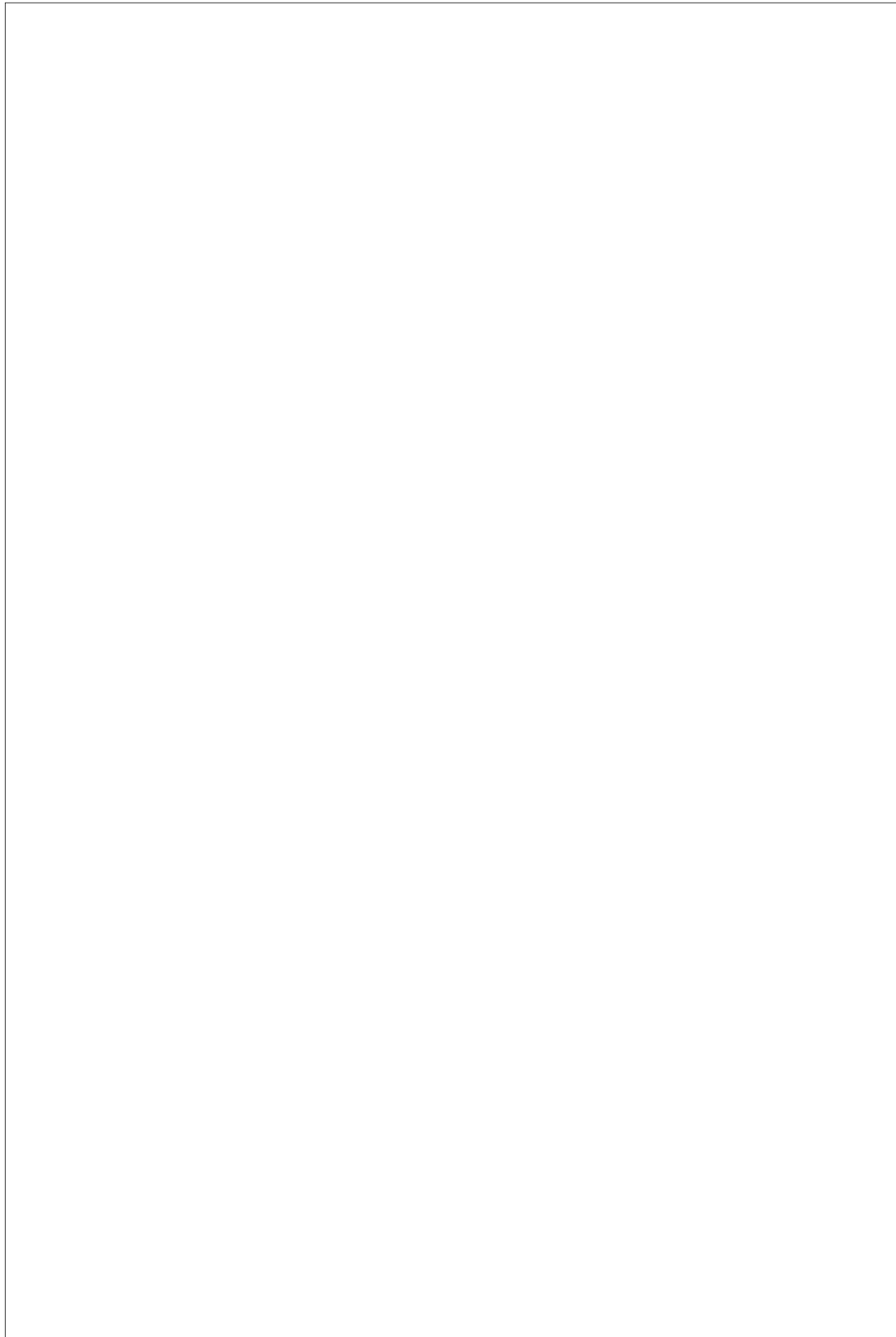
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15. The number and position of high-level military proselyting assets continuing to function in ARVN or the GVN security agencies is impossible to determine. The arrest in early 1968 of some senior military proselyting cadres undoubtedly damaged their effort. There is no way to tell, however, whether these cadres told all, or even knew all.



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[redacted]

Given the Viet Cong practice of compartmentalizing agents, they probably were not in a position themselves to be aware of the full extent of the VC effort. Documents [redacted] indicate that the COSVN Military Proselyting Section -- which customarily controls high-level military proselyting agents -- continues to run extensive operations in Saigon.

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Viet Cong Approaches to GVN Military and Security Personnel

16. The Viet Cong military proselytors recruit agents from among the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and security officials they approach each year.\* Some soldiers and officials are contacted on a one-time basis; others are cultivated over long periods of time.

17. The Viet Cong make recruitment attempts even at the highest levels. A captured COSVN military proselyting cadre revealed that General Duong Van "Big" Minh has been the target of Viet Cong military proselyting efforts "since at least the early 1960s." Minh's brother, a North Vietnamese colonel who had been sent south by Hanoi's Enemy and Military Proselyting Directorate, was in contact with Minh in 1964 while Minh was South Vietnam's chief of state. The brother, whose family lived in Minh's Saigon residence, tried on several occasions to persuade Minh "to have the GVN enter into a coalition with the Communists."

18. Viet Cong proselytors also have tried to approach General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff. The contact was attempted in mid-April 1968 through his brother-in-law, a North Vietnamese army major. [redacted]

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Other documented attempts at high-level contacts have included the ARVN Chief of Ordnance in the

\* *The assertion concerning approaches, which is based on extrapolations from large numbers of captured documents, takes into account the probability that the Viet Cong statistics are heavily padded.*

[REDACTED]

Saigon area, the Commanders of ARVN's First and Second Divisions, and three successive commanding generals of I Corps.

19. The middle and lower levels of ARVN's officer corps are also targets. A captured document from VC Ben Tre Province (GVN Kien Hoa) indicated the proselytors were "making efforts" in 1966 to approach a colonel, a major, and four second lieutenants and had "established secret liaison" with a captain, a lieutenant, six second lieutenants, and an aspirant. Viet Cong plans for military proselyting in Binh Dinh in early 1968 provided for approaches to the Binh Dinh Province chief, and the heads of Binh Dinh's districts. A COSVN report [REDACTED] stated that in January 1970 a military proselyting unit in VC Region II had approached 19 majors, 23 captains, and 67 lieutenants.\*

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20. The Viet Cong direct most approaches at the rank and file. A COSVN military proselyting report, for example, asserted that 41,341 South Vietnamese soldiers were approached in a single area in the Delta in the first quarter of 1969. A report from Hoai Nhon District in VC Binh Dinh Province stated that "378 key (military proselyting) cadres. . . penetrated enemy posts and bivouacing sites to motivate enemy soldiers" in the month of May 1969. A district in My Tho Province reported it "proselyted" 1,260 GVN soldiers during a ten-day period in March 1969. A report dated December 1969 claimed that the proselytors in a district of VC Ben Tre Province had approached 500 soldiers belonging to the 10th ARVN Regiment and 650 "Regional Force, Self-Defense Force, and pacification personnel."\*

21. Approaches are made both through the soldiers' families and directly by Viet Cong cadres. Direct approaches by VC cadres are made more often to ARVN soldiers, who usually serve away from home, than to

\* *In looking at such reports, one must be aware that they may include some padding.*

[REDACTED]

troops in the Regional and Popular Forces, who normally operate in their own locale. Some approaches are so low-key that contacted soldiers are not always aware they have been approached.

22. However, large numbers of soldiers are contacted openly by mail. A district in Binh Dinh Province reported that it had sent 722 letters to South Vietnamese military personnel in one month during the spring of 1969. There were 101 replies reported.

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Viet Cong Military Proselyting -- Functions

23. The tasks of Fifth Columnists and Sympathizers include fomenting unit revolts, aiding Viet Cong attacks, performing acts of sabotage and assassination, stealing munitions, promoting desertions and defections, recruiting new agents, and setting up accommodations whereby local GVN units refrain from actively participating in the war.

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The Viet Cong sources, primarily captured documents, tend to embellish successes and often need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Uprisings

24. The military proselytors' most ambitious goal is to spark revolts in GVN units. Such revolts, sometimes translated as "struggles" or "uprisings," have ranged from unit-wide defiance of orders to small units turning on their fellows.

25. High-level Viet Cong documents claim these "uprisings" occur fairly frequently. A report from the COSVN Military Proselyting Section alleged there were 284 such uprisings in the first six months of 1969. The report cited several instances in which GVN units "refused to participate in sweep operations or act as reinforcements." Cases were also

[redacted]

cited in which the soldiers beat up or killed their officers, and an incident in which "thousands of soldiers" in a training school "opposed carrying out military exercises." Whether all these incidents did indeed occur is impossible to check, because of the tendency on the part of the South Vietnamese to hush them up. Furthermore, there is undoubtedly a tendency on the part of VC report writers to call a relatively minor incident an "uprising."

26. The most spectacular example of an inside rebellion which the GVN tried to conceal occurred north of Saigon in March 1966 when a group of ARVN soldiers made off with half a dozen tanks. The dissident soldiers shot up their ARVN compound and then headed for Viet Cong territory.\* [redacted]

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27. Several recent instances of rebellion have turned up in captured documents [redacted]

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#### Aiding Attacking Forces

28. A captured COSVN Military Proselyting report claimed that there were 151 instances of military proselyting agents aiding Viet Cong military attacks in the first half of 1969. The document claimed the "destruction" of a number of posts, warehouses, and vehicles, and the "disintegration" of some Allied units. [redacted]

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[redacted] Viet Cong had overrun five Popular Force outposts in the Delta with the help of inside penetrations.

\* *Allied air strikes were called in, and all but one of the tanks were destroyed. The Viet Cong used the surviving tank as a training aid.*

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[REDACTED]

29. Captured documents have noted other examples of assistance to attacking VC forces by military proselyting agents. One described a "brilliant" attack on a Revolutionary Development team in Kien Hoa Province in the fall of 1967. The attack had been planned by a Viet Cong military proselyting agent who had joined the team after his graduation from a three-month course at the Revolutionary Development training center at Vung Tau. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

An ARVN officer in charge of a platoon of 105-mm howitzers in GVN Vinh Binh Province secured the small arms of his soldiers and then permitted the Viet Cong to enter his compound. The Communists killed most of the platoon and used the howitzers to fire at the province capital. [REDACTED]

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#### Sabotage

30. Military proselyting agents also try to perpetrate acts of sabotage. For example, a captured document describing the activities of a military proselyting section in Da Nang's Second Precinct stated it had performed 34 acts of sabotage between 23 August 1968 and 22 March 1969. The report alleged the destruction of a gasoline depot, a tank, a truck, four jeeps, a helicopter, a reconnaissance aircraft, two howitzers, and a machinegun. Other sabotage includes the destruction of records, the misrouting of orders, and general administrative foot-dragging.

#### Assassination

31. Military Proselyting agents use assassination to cause terror and disruption; however, it is believed that proselytors are responsible for only a small fraction of all assassinations of military personnel. A captured document of March 1967 stated that a Fifth Columnist serving as the head of the security element of a GVN district seat in Chau Doc Province killed the District Chief and managed to lay blame on the chief's deputy, who was subsequently arrested. In another case, three enlisted men belonging to the ARVN Seventh Division in the Delta killed their commanding officer, shot "several other

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[redacted]

personnel," and then defected with their weapons to the Viet Cong in early 1968. [redacted]

[redacted]

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### Intelligence

32. The primary intelligence aim of Military Proselyting agents is to gather data of use to agent recruiters. Such data include biographic details on individuals, information on troop morale, and intelligence concerning exploitable differences between GVN individuals. The evidence indicates that the gathering of intelligence by the proselytors, although a secondary function, is their most successful effort. The pervasiveness of their agents enables the VC propaganda machine to target specific individuals and groups and gives the Communists extensive insights into all manner of GVN activity, both military and political.

### Supply

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33. A review of captured documents, POW reports, [redacted] turned up more than a hundred instances of military proselyting agents supplying the Viet Cong with stolen munitions or equipment. Although a few reports mention moderately sizable thefts, most thievery by the proselytors is small scale, made more for psychological effect than to add to Viet Cong stocks. The military proselyting apparatus is only one minor source of leakage from GVN stores.

### Promoting Desertion and Defection

34. The Viet Cong attempt to promote desertion by propaganda and agitation. The Fifth Columnists try to capitalize on complaints of low pay, poor living conditions, excessive discipline, short vacations, and transfers away from close relations. The proselytors' agitation is laced with traditional themes of Viet Cong propaganda -- principally anti-Americanism and allegations that the South Vietnamese are US puppets. Viet Cong Fifth Columnists are particularly active each year during Tet, when the inclination to go home is strong among all Vietnamese.

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[REDACTED]

35. Although the Fifth Columnists try to promote desertion in all types of units, their highest priority target appears to be recruit depots. Captured documents and POW reports indicate that several such depots are heavily penetrated. For example, a defector report in the fall of 1969 described in detail a large and efficient underground railroad for deserters from a recruit depot in the Delta. The railroad had apparently been in operation for several years.

36. It is impossible to relate GVN desertion statistics to Viet Cong blandishments. The difficulty in doing so lies in determining what makes a man desert. The Viet Cong, naturally, tend to give their proselytors considerable credit for inducing desertions. A report of the COSVN Military Proselyting Section claimed that "32,534 puppet soldiers" deserted "due to...military proselyting activities" in the first half of 1969. This is about half the 60,851 military deserters carried in GVN statistics for the same six months. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

37. Most deserters do not defect to the Viet Cong. There are several examples, however, indicating that this has occurred, particularly when the enemy has done well. An exhaustive review of captured documents failed to yield the extent of this phenomenon.

#### Recruiting

38. The Viet Cong have long stressed that "Fifth Columnists recruit Fifth Columnists." [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] A Viet Cong document indicated that another Fifth Columnist, a Second Lieutenant serving as the deputy chief of

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the psychological warfare section of a GVN Marine battalion, recruited three other Marines in his unit.

#### Accommodation

39. One of the Fifth Column's most pernicious activities is helping to set up local agreements whereby South Vietnamese military units refrain from actively participating in the war. These understandings sometimes delineate territory, sometimes restrict certain types of action, and occasionally call for advance warning of military activity. It should be noted that military proselytors are only one of several Viet Cong groups engaged in this effort.

40. A Viet Cong document about South Vietnamese military positions in III Corps described a variety of accommodations. The Viet Cong permitted one Regional Force garrison to leave its post "only on the condition they didn't carry any weapons." Fearing the prohibition would be noticed by higher Allied authority, the Communists amended the agreement to allow the soldiers to carry and shoot their weapons, "but only in a direction prescribed by us." Another unit which gave the Viet Cong a "fairly large" quantity of ammunition "stayed in its post. . .and obeyed the stipulated conditions." When the unit was replaced, it "passed down to the new commander all the conditions [the Viet Cong] had dictated. . . ." A third unit, belonging to the Popular Forces, allowed Viet Cong actors to "perform plays to motivate the workers" in the textile plant the unit was guarding.

41. Recently, the Viet Cong have attempted to set up accommodations based on the possibility of a scaledown in fighting. A letter captured on 30 September 1969 addressed to an ARVN "commanding officer" in a district in the Delta noted the Paris negotiations and problems pertaining to "the [US] troop withdrawal." The letter proposed that the officer refrain from sending his troops on patrol, from drafting youths, from organizing agent networks, and from requesting artillery or air support at night and recommended that he allow the local inhabitants (presumably including VC agents) freedom of movement. The letter, which suggested that he

[REDACTED]

carry out his official tasks in a *pro forma* way, promised not to attack the officer's unit "in return for the above provisions."

42. Although documentary evidence on the problem of accommodation is fragmentary and often dated, there are indications that strongly suggest it is still widespread. Many US advisers who have served in the field have commented on the existence of tacit accommodation in their areas. One stated: "We know it's going on, but what can we do about it? No one admits these accommodations, and they are almost impossible to prove. But when the guerrillas keep by-passing this or that hamlet, you have a right to be suspicious."

43. It is important to note that accommodations almost invariably favor the Viet Cong. As a rule, the Communists have taken the initiative in making the agreements. Furthermore, their higher echelons almost always know of and approve the arrangements. On the South Vietnamese side, accommodations are made, just as invariably, without the approval of higher echelons.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses of the Viet Cong and South Vietnamese

##### Problems of the Viet Cong

44. The Viet Cong proselytors are not without their problems, some of which have increased significantly in recent years. The GVN military is larger, the Viet Cong population base is smaller, and the GVN security apparatus somewhat more effective than earlier.

45. In the last five years, the size of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces (including ARVN, and Regional and Popular Forces) doubled, from some 500,000 men in January 1965 to about one million now. Furthermore, after Tet 1968 the GVN began to develop the People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). The GVN Ministry of Interior claimed that the combat elements of the PSDF had more than 1.2 million members in May 1970, most of whom have been trained, and about 350,000 of whom are armed.

46. The growth of the military proselytors' area of responsibility has taxed the organization by vastly increasing the load on its already overburdened case officers. This problem has been exacerbated by the loss through attrition of experienced agent handlers.

47. The Communists have employed two techniques to deal with the problem. First, they are transferring cadres to the military proselyting organization from other bureaucracies, particularly the army and their guerrilla units. Second, they are using increasing numbers of northerners in their proselyting efforts, even in GVN territory. The second technique is not always satisfactory, because northerners are less effective as proselytors in South Vietnam than southerners. They are easy to spot and often distrusted.

48. The GVN security apparatus has become more effective since mid-1968, with the countrywide implementation of the Allied Phoenix program against the VC structure. At the same time, South Vietnamese counterintelligence organs, notably the MSS but also the National Police, have improved.

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49. Captured enemy documents show VC concern over the increasing effectiveness of the GVN security apparatus and the Phoenix program in some areas. Viet Cong security service reports, for example, have dwelt on Communist "shortcomings" and on the danger of operating in some places, particularly Saigon. Prisoner interrogations confirm the documents.

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military proselyting officials in the Delta recently had complained about the "inimical situation" in some areas there.

[REDACTED]

Problems of the South Vietnamese Government

50. Many of the GVN's current difficulties with military proselyting stem from the government's late start in recognizing the nature and extent of the threat. Before Tet 1968, the government lacked a comprehensive program to counter subversion in its armed forces. At Tet, however, the proselyting threat came to be recognized because of the fortuitous capture of a number of COSVN-level military proselyting cadres.

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[REDACTED]

52. Despite GVN efforts, Communist agents appear to be able to infiltrate the South Vietnamese government and armed forces with relative ease. They can do so by acquiring legal papers and then joining the South Vietnamese armed forces by either enlisting or permitting themselves to be drafted. Legal papers can be readily procured by bribery,\*

\* *A military proselyting network subordinate to COSVN estimated it would spend 247,000 piasters to "buy" ID cards in Hau Nghia Province in March and April 1970.*

[REDACTED]

by theft, or by applying to local GVN authorities through regular channels. Another common method of picking up legal papers is by false defection through the Chieu Hoi program. Agents using this method find it particularly easy to infiltrate the South Vietnamese armed forces, since, in December 1969, President Thieu ordered the drafting of all physically qualified "ex-Viet Cong" not actually in prison.

53. In addition to acquiring legal papers, the Viet Cong can also provide their cadres with forged identification which can be used to gain entry into, or exit from, the South Vietnamese armed forces. During a nine-month period in 1967, according to a captured document, a single VC forging cell distributed 145 false ID cards, 55 Deferment Certificates, 40 sets of discharge papers from an ARVN Airborne Battalion, 50 Pacification Cadre's mission orders, and a host of lesser documents. At the same time, the cell obtained from higher Viet Cong authorities 200 civilian ID card blanks, 50 blank identification cards for National Policemen, and two seals of Saigon's Seventh Police Precinct. Although the Viet Cong have found it difficult to falsify certain types of newly issued documents, it is clear that they still have a significant forging capability at district level and above.

54. The laxity of the South Vietnamese ID card system abets Viet Cong attempts to obtain or forge legal documentation. The rigid procedures that supposedly govern the reporting of lost ID cards are seldom followed. Official statistics show that 1.7 million cards of a new type were issued between October 1968 and April 1969. Of the thousands of the new cards that were stolen or destroyed during the period, only 13 were reported lost. The ineffectiveness of the ID system is illustrated by an Allied report of October 1969 which indicated that in the previous 12 months only "35 known or suspected Viet Cong" had been detected as a result of the new cards.

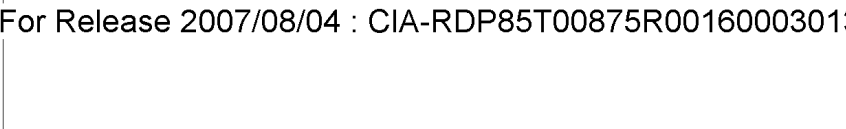
55. South Vietnamese attempts to combat military proselyting are further hampered by the VC penetration of the GVN security and counterintelligence apparatus. These penetrations hamper the roundup of military proselyting agents by providing them

with tipoffs of impending security actions, by misdirecting GVN investigations, by falsifying or destroying records, and by performing other acts of administrative sabotage.

56. Information concerning the penetration of South Vietnamese security organizations is considerable. It indicates that besides the Military Proselyting Section, two additional major VC organizations -- the Security Section, and the Military Intelligence apparatus -- handle penetrations within GVN security agencies. Such penetrations have included the ex-deputy head of the counterintelligence branch of the MSS, two ARVN majors who had served with the Police Special Branch, the chief medical officer of the National Police, and large numbers of low-level military and civilian policemen. The most numerous and best-placed of these agents are run by the Security Section. No important Security Section penetration has yet been reported caught.

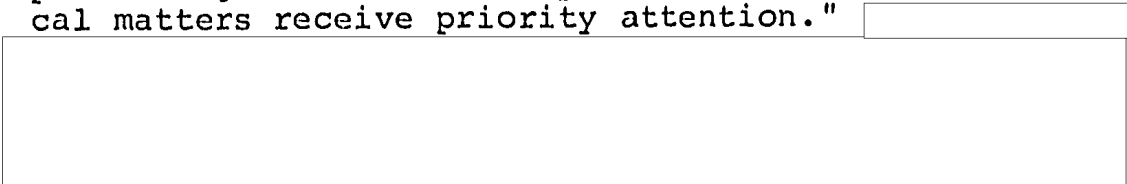
57. Still another factor limiting GVN long-term successes against the military proselyting network is the GVN's continuing inability to retain Viet Cong prisoners. The magnitude of the problem is illustrated by an experiment carried out by the Phoenix program in October 1968. Phoenix personnel drew up a list of 125 Viet Cong who were reported to have come into Allied hands, by capture or defection, in August and September. Phoenix officials could find none of them. The problem continues. A report by MACV in August 1969 stated that from "75%-90% of all (Viet Cong infrastructure personnel) captured were released within six months to one year of arrest." Captured Viet Cong reports indicate that many cadres who return from GVN prisons are given a short period of indoctrination by the VC and then are sent back into the GVN organization as agents.\*

\* *Some, of course, are shot if they are suspected of having become double agents.*



58. Although the MSS and other GVN security agencies have improved in the last year or so, they still leave a great deal to be desired. A MACV study of March 1969 on the GVN counterintelligence and security services outlined a number of MSS inadequacies. The study indicated the MSS was then overextended, undermanned, and without a clear chain of command. Only a fraction of the 2,816 persons in the MSS was assigned to seeking out Communist military proselyting penetrations. The rest were assigned to ferreting out corruption, to routine police work, and to apprehending the thousands of Viet Cong agents run by Communist security and military intelligence services. Finally, the MACV study observed that "the effectiveness of the MSS counterintelligence operations is contingent on the prevailing [GVN internal] political atmosphere. Political matters receive priority attention."

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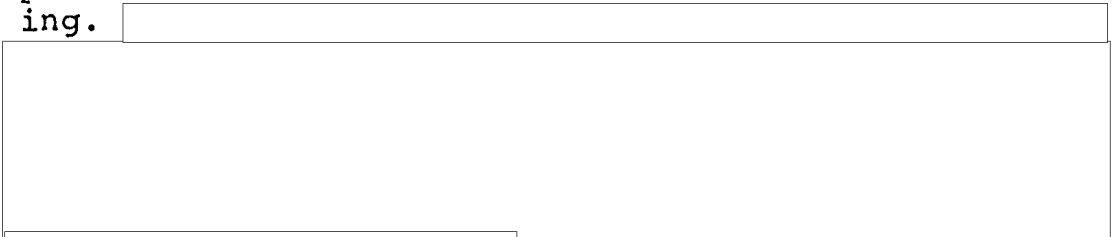


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59. The continued willingness of most GVN soldiers and civilian functionaries to tolerate Viet Cong agents in their midst is perhaps the biggest problem the GVN faces in its war against proselyting.

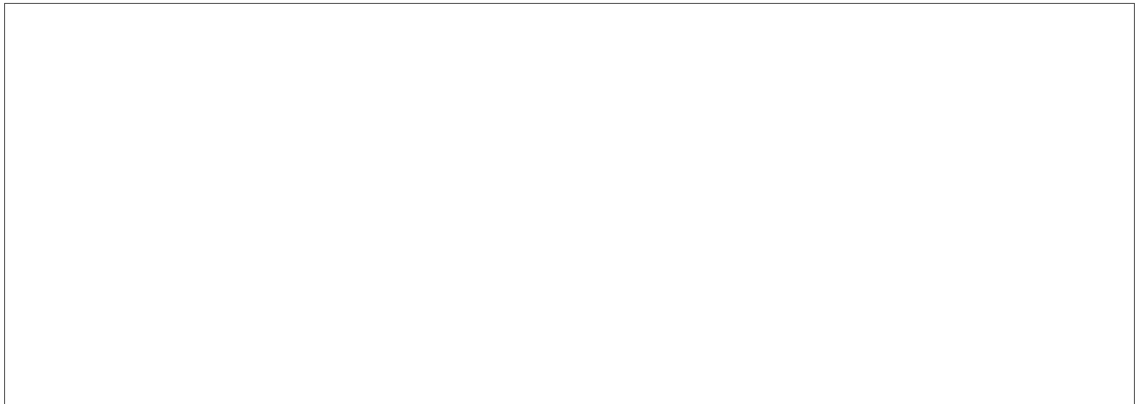
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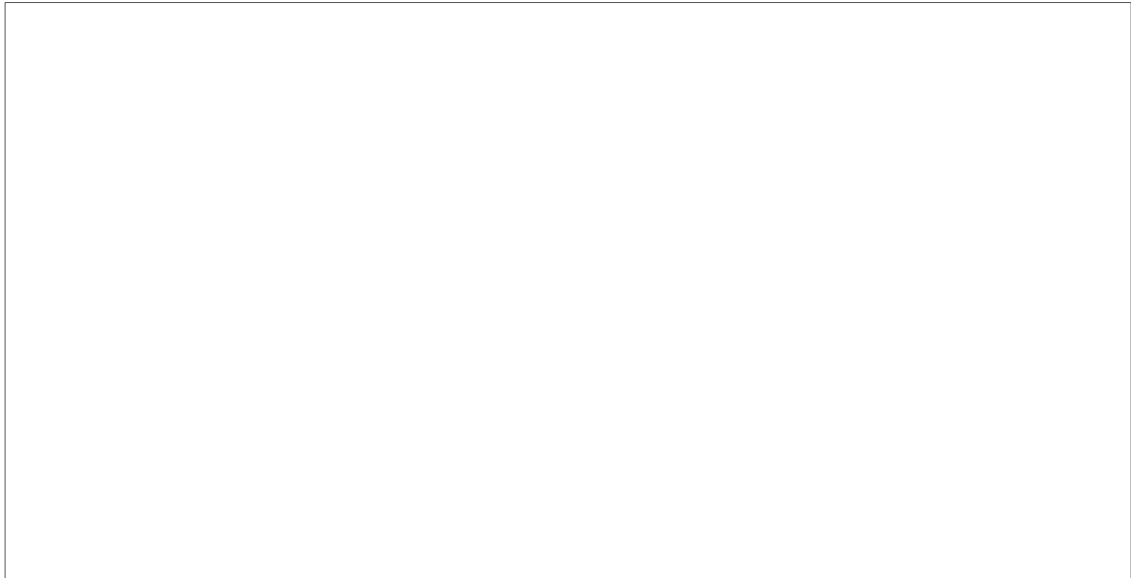


As noted earlier, the number of approaches of one kind or another made by the VC to soldiers probably reaches into the hundreds of thousands annually.

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62. The GVN's problems with the Communists' military proselyting effort may be expected to worsen, at least in terms of gross numbers of persons proselyted in one manner or another. The ARVN draft is taking in more and more inductees of doubtful loyalty, and expanding control over the rural population is bringing hundreds of thousands of people into contact with the armed and security forces who have lived for many years in a Viet Cong-dominated society. The real answer to the problem will continue to be troop morale rather than a large-scale counterintelligence effort against the proselytors. There is no effective way to prevent most types of approaches from being made, and the only good defense is to convince the individual soldier that if he becomes a proselyted agent he is betting on a losing horse.

Military Proselyting -- Policy and Plans

63. Since early 1969, Hanoi has scaled down military activity in South Vietnam, and given increased emphasis to the political side of the war. The policy change has been reflected by three major developments: a shift from large Main Force operations to small-unit warfare; a transfer of experienced cadres from the military to political and subversive tasks; and large numbers of cadres going underground, usually into GVN territory, which has been rapidly expanding.





64. Hanoi's decision to change their mode of warfare became evident on the battlefield after the Viet Cong winter offensive in early 1969. Since then, the enemy military activity has largely consisted of skirmishes, stand-off artillery bombardments, sapper raids, and acts of terrorism and sabotage. Parallel with the decline in large-unit warfare has been a decrease in the rate of infiltration of troops from the North. The Communist Army has adapted to the new mode of warfare: several large units have split up into smaller formations, and the Communist sapper (or special action) organization has been strengthened. A COSVN Directive (CT 7) of early 1970 indicated that the purpose of much current Communist military activity is to support the Political Struggle and Military Proselyting operations -- that is, the use of military activity as a credible threat to support propaganda themes.

65. The transfer of cadres from military to political and subversive endeavors began in earnest about the middle of 1969, apparently in response to a key COSVN Directive (CTNT 88) of early May. The transfer involved physically moving cadres from the army to political agencies and a shift of responsibilities within the army itself. The new policy represents a reversal of earlier policies in existence since the middle of 1965, when political cadres had been sent to combat posts in the Communist Army.

66. The COSVN Directive (CTNT 88) also called for sending large numbers of cadres into GVN-controlled territory. Substantial evidence indicates that a large-scale "legalization" of cadres has been going on since the middle of 1969 -- perhaps longer in some areas. The reassigned cadres include Security Police, Military Intelligence agents, political agitators, and teachers, as well as Military Proselyting agents.

67. Communist plans for giving increased emphasis to military proselyting were integral to the low profile strategy adopted in early 1969. The plans were disseminated by a series of COSVN directives which have fallen into Allied hands since then. The basic directive (CTNT 105) was released in June 1969 and quoted in COSVN Resolution Nine of July. It launched what the enemy called an

[REDACTED]

"Accelerated Military Proselyting Campaign." COSVN Directives of October 1969 (CTNT 124) and of January 1970 (CT 1) amplified and modified the basic plan. Several other COSVN decrees -- for example, a frequently cited Directive of November 1969 (CTNT 136) -- have prominently mentioned proselyting. Together, the documents suggest that the military proselyting front has regained the stature it had prior to US intervention.

68. The documents cited above, although far from clear in detail, have laid out in general both short-term and long-term goals for the new military proselyting program. Resolution Nine, for example, suggests the short-term goal was to "contribute to the disruption of the Vietnamization scheme of the United States." A later Top Secret directive made it clear that the most intensive short-term proselyting efforts were to be aimed at areas "where US troops have withdrawn." Directive CTNT 105 indicated that the military proselytors in these areas would employ standard "tactical" proselyting techniques, such as fomenting unit rebellions and coordinating proselyting actions with outside military attackers.

69. The long-term goal for military proselyting was also consonant with the overall Communist strategy. It was to prepare for a large-scale subversive struggle within the South Vietnamese government and armed forces. The preparations chiefly consisted of building a strategic reserve of subversive assets.

70. How the Viet Cong intend to use the strategic reserve of military proselyting subversives has apparently been left open. The Communists seem to view the reserve as a weapon which can be employed in a number of contingencies. The contingencies could include a ceasefire, a coalition, a major political upheaval in the GVN such as a coup, or the fall of US troop strengths to levels the Viet Cong believe they can handle. When the contest occurs, Resolution Nine foresees a "close coordination. . . between political struggles and troop proselyting activity to support the people's uprising. . ." An MSS study of 1969, based on enemy documents of "high validity," went further. It stated that the enemy's military proselyting apparatus would play the principal role in the political struggle after the fighting dies down.

71. Several sources suggest the Viet Cong set a goal of having something in the order of 50,000 strategic and tactical military proselyting agents in the South Vietnamese military and government security structure by the end of 1969.\* The magnitude of the goal appears to be confirmed by a report from the Delta which stated the Viet Cong there hoped to have placed "the equivalent of one division" of agents in the GVN army in each of the Delta's two regions by the end of September 1969. Neither the overall goal nor the target in the Delta seems realistic, particularly in light of recent trends in the war.

72. The evidence confirms that the Communists have been making intensive efforts since mid-1969 to place additional agents. Some have been recruited in-place; others have been infiltrated from the Viet Cong structure. While the evidence is too fragmentary to estimate the number of agents placed, the documents suggest that the overall size of the network has increased somewhat, primarily because of the many agents infiltrated from the outside. The most common source of agents is the guerrillas, whose overt activities have become more and more circumscribed by increasing GVN security in rural areas.

73. Captured documents concerning current plans for in-place recruitment, although scattered and relatively low-level, are fairly consistent. A district-level document from the Delta of August 1969 called for the recruitment by each village military proselyting section of two to three "additional" Fifth Columnists and five additional "secret agents," presumably Sympathizers. A directive from a district in Phu Yen Province called for the recruitment of an average of six new Fifth Columnists for each of its 11 villages. If the district-level directives cited above reflect a countrywide recruitment policy, they suggest that

\* *The documents, picked up in several areas, call for the creation of a subversive network comprising 5% of the military and security apparatus, whose combined strength exceeds a million.*



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village recruiters are expected to come up with a substantial portion of the agents needed to reach the 50,000 goal.

74. The reports indicate that the Viet Cong use of false defectors undoubtedly increased considerably in 1969.

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[redacted] captured documents, indicated a single VC district in Binh Dinh Province intended to send in from 100 to 300 false ralliers late last year.\* A rallier [redacted]

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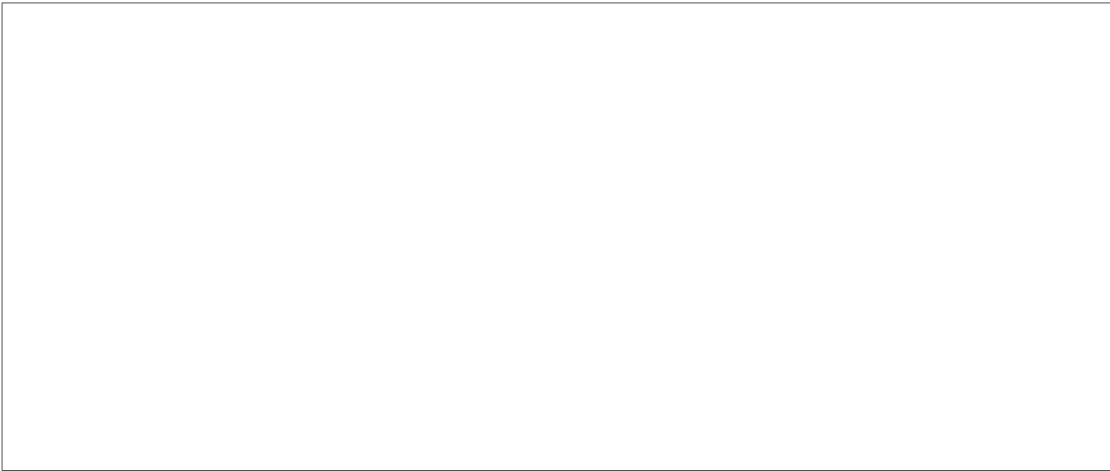
[redacted] stated that 27 Viet Cong were being trained as false ralliers in one of the provinces' eight districts late last August. A cadre captured from VC Subregion 5 outside Saigon stated that the Subregion echelon had earlier in the year sent in 50 cadres to infiltrate the GVN structure.

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If these figures are typical, the overall number of false ralliers countrywide probably reached into the several thousands in 1969 and comprised a large percentage of the defectors tallied in South Vietnamese Chieu Hoi statistics.

75. The evidence also suggests that an unusually high percentage of false ralliers were Party members. A report from Phuoc Tuy Province, for example, indicated that VC Region VII had ordered each province and district to select as ralliers Party members with "at least 5-10 years" experience. The district report from Binh Dinh suggested that almost all the "100-300" false ralliers were to be Party members.



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Other reports suggest that many, if not most, of the false ralliers are being sent in to join the South Vietnamese Army as military proselyting agents.

76. Evidence concerning Viet Cong recruitment attempts is inconclusive. Recently captured documents suggest Viet Cong military proselyting recruiters have done satisfactorily in several areas. A document from VC My Tho Province, for example, indicated the province had recruited "over 400 Fifth Columnists" between November 1969 and March 1970. District and village level reports from Quang Ngai, Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Binh Tuy, and Ben Tre claim military proselytors there recruited unusually large numbers of agents in late 1969 and early 1970. A recent document from II Corps indicated that at least one of the reasons for the proselytors' recruiting success was the influx into GVN ranks of large numbers of new recruits, many of whom had previously lived in Viet Cong areas. But reports of success are by no means universal. Military proselytors in GVN Long An, for example, complained in the fall of 1969 that they were finding it difficult even to maintain the agents they had.

77. High-level Communist documents are mixed concerning the success of the military proselyting recruitment effort in recent months. On the one hand, a COSVN Military Proselyting report of January 1970, (while admitting shortcomings in several areas) stated that "subordinate military proselyting sections [were making] progress in planting Fifth Columnists in enemy ranks." Other recent high-level Communist documents suggest that recruitment has lagged far behind "requirements."

#### Summary and Conclusions

78. The Viet Cong state they are fighting the war on three fronts: military, political, and military proselyting. The military proselyting front, formally opened in 1956, aims at undermining the morale and effectiveness of the South Vietnamese armed forces and security agencies. We estimate that by early 1969 the Communist military proselytors had in the organizations perhaps 20,000 subversive agents, a number which must be considered as a broad

[REDACTED]

order of magnitude. Somewhat more than one-tenth of the agents may have belonged to the Communist Party or Youth Group. These agents are the network's hard core. Many others of the agents are far less motivated and effective. Recent documents indicate that the Viet Cong have a goal -- probably unrealistic -- of increasing the overall number of military proselyting agents to 50,000.

79. In June 1969 the Viet Cong launched an "Accelerated Military Proselyting Campaign." The campaign was part of a new Communist strategy, formulated earlier in the year, designed to lower the Communists' profile while they rode out US troop withdrawals. The military proselyting campaign has the short-term objective of disrupting the South Vietnamese government -- particularly in areas where US troops have left -- and the long-term goal of building a reserve of subversive agents. The reserve could be used in a number of contingencies: a ceasefire, a political upheaval such as a coup, or an overall deterioration in the strength of the South Vietnamese government.

80. The military proselytors are trying to expand their agent network by in-place recruitment and by infiltrating agents into the GVN armed forces. Recent evidence concerning the effectiveness of their recruitment efforts is inconclusive. However, there are numerous reports of infiltration attempts, particularly by false defection through the Chieu Hoi program. The number of false defectors in 1969 possibly reached into the several thousands.

81. Military proselyting agents have been behind many of the South Vietnamese Army's past failings. They have had a substantial but unquantifiable effect on government desertion rates and have been responsible for small unit uprisings and for large numbers of assassinations and bombings, sometimes in coordination with Communist military attacks. One of their most pernicious activities has been helping to set up accommodations whereby South Vietnamese units refrain from vigorously participating in the war.

82. The Viet Cong are not without their problems in implementing their expanded military proselyting program. The GVN security apparatus has become

scmewhat more effective over the past several years. Counterintelligence organs, particularly the National Police, have improved. Captured enemy documents show VC concern in some areas over the increasing effectiveness of the GVN security apparatus.

83. However, the problems confronting the ARVN Military Security Service (MSS) in its effort to combat proselyting are large and fundamental. First, Viet Cong agents can penetrate the GVN without too much difficulty. Second, the Communists almost certainly have penetrations in both the police and MSS themselves. Third, the GVN judicial system frequently detains Viet Cong prisoners for only a short period of time.

84. The most basic problem facing the GVN security apparatus, however, is the willingness of most government soldiers and functionaries to tolerate suspected Viet Cong agents in their midst. Communist documents suggest approaches to GVN soldiers and police by Viet Cong military proselyting operatives total hundreds of thousands per year,

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85. This study of Viet Cong military proselyting leads to four major conclusions:

a. Most GVN soldiers do not feel positive identification with the present government in Saigon. Their tepid allegiance, illustrated by their tolerance of Viet Cong agents, allows the subversion network to exist.

b. The GVN security organization has been inadequate in its efforts to combat the military proselyting in most areas, and there is little assurance that it will be able to prevent the growth of this activity.

c. The military proselyting effort -- because it is clandestine and because it largely takes place in "pacified" areas -- has received scant consideration in Allied

prognoses of the war. Since military proselyting (like other VC subversive activities) is largely unmeasured -- many of the favorable trends portrayed in Chieu Hoi and HES statistics are exaggerated.

d. The Viet Cong military proselyting network is unique in that the South Vietnamese government has no equivalent subversive apparatus in the Viet Cong structure. The end result is the pitting of the tightly controlled and relatively secure Viet Cong structure against the sprawling and heavily penetrated military and security establishment of the South Vietnamese government.



## APPENDIX

Estimate of Military Proselyting Agents  
on Viet Cong Rolls: Early 1969

The estimate of 20,000 military proselyting agents on Viet Cong rolls as of early 1969 was derived from extrapolations from records of a limited number of areas and echelons. As pointed out in the text of the memorandum, the estimate is designed only to suggest a broad order of magnitude. The two types of military proselyting agents are "Fifth Columnists" and "Sympathizers."

Among the records used were translations and excerpts taken from hundreds of pages of documents, captured in late November 1968, which covered a number of districts and villages in VC Ben Tre Province. The documents recorded the presence on VC books of more than 500 Fifth Columnists and Sympathizers in GVN ranks in that province alone. Since the records were far from complete, the actual number of agents in Ben Tre was probably much higher. Detailed village records from one of the province's nine districts, Mo Cay, suggests that eight of Mo Cay's villages had more than 150 agents in 1967 -- that is, more than 18 per village. The rosters did not indicate the number run by the district echelon. [redacted]

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these documents were never exploited locally and that there were no known arrests or investigations of South Vietnamese military personnel as a result of their capture. Therefore, most of these agents were probably still at large in early 1969.

Tam Binh District in VC Vinh Long Province had 140 proselyting agents in GVN ranks in August 1969,

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[redacted] Of these, 44 were run by the district and 96 by the district's 11 subordinate villages -- that is, almost nine per village. Also, according to recent defectors, Vinh Loi City -- equivalent to a district in Viet Cong organization -- ran at least 30 to 40 military proselyting agents early this year.

[REDACTED]

The Military Proselyting Section of VC Hai Lang District in Quang Tri Province ran some 35 agents at the end of 1968, according to an analysis of a captured document. The document omitted discussion of village-run agents, almost certainly more numerous than those handled by the district.\* A scattering of village reports from other areas suggest that it is common for villages to run at least half a dozen agents. Many villages run more than six.\*\*

The evidence cited above concerning agent numbers is relatively straight forward. Indirect evidence from elsewhere suggests the numbers listed are not unique.

For example, a captured report from Binh Dinh Province indicated that the military proselytors recruited at least 51 Fifth Columnists and 40 Sympathizers in the first quarter of 1969. Another captured document, from Phu Yen Province, indicated the proselytors there recruited 354 military proselyting agents in a seven-month period between November 1968 and May 1969. In both cases, the newly recruited agents joined those already on the rolls. Records of Subregion II outside Saigon suggested the subregion echelon ran at least 31 agents -- many well-placed -- as of 30 May 1968.

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[REDACTED] A three-woman Military Proselyting cell in My Tho City recruited 13 agents, including nine "GVN service personnel and four My Tho

\* Hai Lang is one of three districts belonging to VC Front Seven.

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[REDACTED] "accord-  
ing to statistics published at the end of May 1968," there were 382 agents "within the Front."

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[REDACTED] the statistics "cannot be depended on for accuracy."

\*\* Viet Cong maps divide South Vietnam into seven regions, 32 provinces, five subregions roughly equivalent to provinces, 250 districts, and some 2,500 villages.

[REDACTED]

policemen" prior to its leader's arrest in April 1969. A recent COSVN document indicated there were still several hundred military proselyting cadres operating in My Tho's vicinity three months later.

There are also areas in which information on numbers of agents is scattered and fragmentary, but where other evidence suggests they abound. For example, military proselyting reports from VC Quang Nam and Quang Ngai -- provinces of relatively heavy Communist influence -- suggest the Fifth Columns there are large and active. Similarly, documents suggest that, as recently as a year ago, some areas just beyond the suburbs of Saigon were infested with agents.\*

Furthermore, there are some areas in Vietnam for which evidence concerning Fifth Columnists, either direct or indirect, is almost non-existent. These tend to be regions where US presence has been small and where the GVN has run the show. Incident rates and activity patterns suggest that Viet Cong influence is strong in many such areas -- for example, large tracts of Delta. A high incident rate is probably a good indicator of the existence of Fifth Columnists.

\* *Because of the intense pacification campaign thereabouts, many of these may have been arrested or may have become inactive. Evidence suggests that military proselyting within the city itself is limited.*