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BACKGROUND ON U.S. MACCORDS

The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) element of the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, is part and parcel of the total American effort to assist the Government of Vietnam in resisting and ending communist aggression and providing a better life for its people.

CORDS advises and supports the GVN on pacification or nation-building programs that span the broad spectrum of establishing security to initiating economic development projects.

Informed observers of the Vietnam scene realize that this is more than just a military war. It is not only a war of opposing military forces but a war for the allegiance of the people of South Vietnam.

Hence it is not enough to defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army main forces every time they attack a town, military base, or a bridge, or a hamlet. It is also essential in this kind of war to provide protection to the people of the countryside, to help meet their aspirations for a better life. That is what the GVN's pacification program is all about.

There have been many pacification efforts in the past, but none on the scale that is being demonstrated in South Vietnam today. And it is almost entirely a GVN effort. In the so-called "big battalion" war, Free World Forces make a substantial troop contribution, but all the various pacification programs are developed and directed by the GVN.

To sharpen its advisory and support services in the pacification program, the United States Mission to Vietnam organized CORDS in May, 1967.

CORDS today is directed by Ambassador William E. Colby who succeeded Ambassador Robert W. Komer as deputy to Gen. Crighton Abrahams, the COMUSMACV.

The CORDS Team consists of 5300 American advisers and technicians, 25 percent of whom are civilians. The military members of the team are drawn from the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. Civilian members are foreign service officers selected from the State Department. The Agency for International Development (AID) and the U.S. Information Agency, the majority of whom are spread throughout the 44 provinces of South Vietnam from the DMZ to the Mekong Delta.

By way of history, pacification in South Vietnam was making steady progress until the communists launched their Tet and mini-Tet offensives in February and May 1968. Although the pacification program suffered a serious temporary setback, the program did not cease. Actually it became more important as it had to cope with recovery in the cities as well as development of rural hamlets.

After Tet, the Government of Vietnam focussed a portion of its pacification resources on "Operation Recovery." In about eight months, the GVN had accomplished the massive task of re-housing almost a million South Vietnamese evacuees whose homes had been destroyed or damaged during the two offensives.

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During this same period, of course, other efforts focussed on re-establishing GVN control over portions of the countryside that had fallen under communist influence during Tet, including the important task of reopening essential lines of communications--roads, highways, waterways, railroads and bridges. By October, recovery was largely complete.

Nov. 1, 1968, the GVN launched a new campaign throughout the Republic aimed at increasing the momentum of the pacification program. This program has been appropriately labeled the "Accelerated Pacification Campaign" or APC.

The Accelerated Pacification Campaign which was scheduled to end January 31, 1969, was developed by the Government of Vietnam to lay the foundation for greater nation-building progress in 1969.

The first prerequisite for any successful program in South Vietnam is territorial security or the sustained protection of the rural population against enemy attack and terror. While the larger US, GVN and other Free World Forces quite naturally play an important role, great emphasis has also been placed on the Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF) whose growth in strength, equipment and effectiveness is gradually having a significant impact.

CORDS has committed more than \$200,000,000 (US) to the upgrading of the RF/PF forces, which are assigned an increasing role by the GVN for the establishment and maintenance of security in the countryside.

Paid as regular forces and trained in the same centers as are regular South Vietnamese army soldiers (ARVN), members of the 123-man RF company are organized into three rifle platoons, a weapons platoon and a headquarters platoon.

Regional Forces and ARVN troops differ in that RF troops are under province control and are recruited within their own province.

The 35-man Popular Forces platoon consists of three rifle squads and one headquarters squad. The PF are usually recruited from a specific village and can be placed under the control of a village chief for operations against the enemy.

There are now more than 400,000 RF/PF forces operating throughout the Republic.

The second major aspect in the new APC is the GVN's "Phung Hoang" or "Phoenix" program to neutralize the enemy's clandestine political structure in many of the hamlets, villages and cities of South Vietnam.

The Phoenix program involves elements of the National Police, intelligence agencies, and appropriate military units in a combined effort to identify and capture the VC hard core cadre or infrastructure (VCI) which directs the terror campaign, extorts taxes from the farmers and recruits or forcibly impresses their sons into enemy military forces or turns them into virtual slave laborers. This portion of the campaign is becoming steadily more successful.

The third and relatively new portion of the APC is the rejuvenated People's Self Defense program which already numbers more than a million civilian members. A steadily increasing proportion of these volunteers are being trained and armed to help defend their homes and provide first aid to victims of communist actions.

The fourth part of the APC is a stepped-up Chieu Hoi or "Open Arms" program. Thieu Hoi is a program to induce the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops to quit the communist ranks and "rally" to the Government of Vietnam.

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Anyone who gave active support to the VC or NVA forces, voluntarily or not, is welcomed back as a Hoi Chanh or returnee so long as he or she returns voluntarily.

If a Hoi Chanh brings weapons or leads Allied forces to an enemy arms cache, he will receive a monetary reward from the GVN, the amount depending on the amount returned or uncovered according to a prescribed formula.

The purpose of the Chieu Hoi or Open Arms program is to invite disillusioned enemy troops to help the GVN rebuild South Vietnam instead of destroying it. During 1968, 18,171 enemy troops or communist sympathizers have rallied to the GVN. This boosts the figure of returnees to more than 90,000 -- or the equivalent of nine enemy divisions -- since the Chieu Hoi program began in 1963.

Another important facet of the program is that it saves the lives of Allied troops. For example, assuming a kill ratio of five to one in favor of the Allies, this would mean that for every five enemy soldiers rallying to the GVN, the life of one Allied soldier would be saved.

While the Accelerated Pacification Campaign has focussed on those aspects of pacification that are considered to be most important is increasing the momentum of the program, other activities have not been overlooked.

One such program is Revolutionary Development (RD) whereby specifically trained teams are assigned to hamlets and villages to work with the people. Their mission is to help organize local government, organize and train a self-defense force, identify any VCI, assist the people in initiating modest self-help projects, and, of course help defend the hamlet and village against VC incursions. These cadres have become well-known through their distinctive "black pajamas."

Another and very important aspect is the CORDS support of GVN measures to revive the rural economy, improve farm incomes and redistribute land. These measures can be seen, for example, in the road and highway programs being carried out by ARVN and US military engineers.

Another example is the "green revolution" which is taking place in South Vietnam as improved strains of IR-8 or "miracle rice" have been introduced and planted. Vietnam always has been a major producer of rice in the Far East until the communists' aggression began creating obstacles for the farmer. Rice is basic to the diet of the Vietnamese people and the new rice strains promise to provide not only sufficient grain for the indigenous population but to restore Vietnam as a rice exporting nation.

Thus, pacification is not one, but many programs which Americans are proud to support.

A great deal remains to be done, however. Though the overall trend in pacification -- as in other aspects of the struggle in Vietnam -- is encouraging, US CORDS advisors are under no illusions as to how many problems still must be overcome. Nor is the present farsighted leadership of South Vietnam.

The GVN is even more acutely aware than the American CORDS team of how much still is needed to energize these many programs. The GVN is the first to acknowledge that there still is too much corruption and inefficiency, as is evidenced by its energetic campaign to cope with it.

Many of the more than 12,500 hamlets of South Vietnam still lack adequate protection; systematic Viet Cong terror and assassination has not yet been curbed; numerous refugees still lack adequate care; and many roads, bridges, schools and market places remain to be built. But great progress has been recorded in all areas since Tet.

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Based on the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) which measures trends in population control, the percentage of the population living in relatively secure areas dropped from a pre-Tet high of 67.2 per cent to just under 60 per cent after Tet. However, by the end of 1968, the relatively secure population was 76.3 per cent.

Fully appreciating what needs to be done, the GVN has recently organized a Central Pacification and Development Council to provide top-level management to the pacification program. Considering the current initiatives being demonstrated in the APC and the favorable trends over recent months, there is indeed room for optimism that the pacification program is on track.