

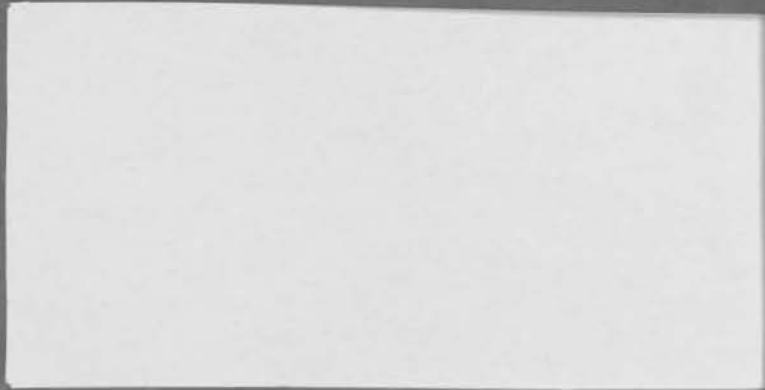
IV.C Evolution of the War (26 Vols.)  
Direct Action: The Johnson Commitments, 1964-1968  
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8. Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965-1967

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# UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

## 1945 - 1967



==== VIETNAM TASK FORCE =====

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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SET #13

0295

IV. C. 8.

RE-EMPHASIS ON PACIFICATION:

1965 - 1967

Sec Def Cont Nr. E-0295

SUMMARY



IV. C. 11.

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The United States Re-Emphasizes Pacification - 1965 to Present

An Examination of a Major Trend in our Effort

SUMMARY

By the summer of 1967, pacification had become a major ingredient of American strategy in Vietnam, growing steadily in importance and the amount of resources devoted to it. The U.S. Mission in Vietnam had been reorganized three times in 15 months and each reorganization had been designed primarily to improve the management of the pacification effort and raise its priority within our overall effort.

Pacification -- or as it is sometimes called by Americans, Revolutionary Development (RD) -- had staged a comeback in priority from the days in 1964 and 1965 when it was a program with little emphasis, guidance, or support. It has by now almost equalled in priority for the Americans the original priority given the Strategic Hamlet program in 1962-1963, although the Vietnamese have not yet convinced many people that they attach the same importance to it as we do.

This study traces the climb in pacification's importance during the last two years, until it reached its present level of importance, with further growth likely.

This study concentrates on American decisions, American discussions, American papers. It will be clear to the reader that, if this version of events is accurate, the Vietnamese played a secondary role in the move to re-emphasize pacification. It is the contention of this paper that this was indeed the case, and that the Americans were the prime movers in the series of events which led to the re-emphasis of pacification. This study does not cover many important events, particularly the progress of the field effort, the CIA-backed PAT/Cadre program, and GVN activity.

The process by which the American government came to increase its support for pacification is disorderly and haphazard. Individuals like Ambassador Lodge and General Walt and Robert Komer, seem in retrospect to have played important roles, but to each participant in a story still unfolding, the sequence may look different. Therefore, it is quite possible that things didn't quite happen the way they are described here, and someone else, whose actions are not adequately described in the files available for this study, was equally important.

Nor was there anything resembling a conspiracy involved. Indeed, the proponents of what is called so loosely in this paper "pacification" were often in such violent disagreement as to what pacification meant

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that they quarreled publicly among themselves and overlooked their common interests. At other times, people who disagreed strongly on major issues found themselves temporary allies with a common objective.

Moreover, there is the curious problem of the distance between rhetoric and reality. Even during the dark days of 1964-1965, most Americans paid lip service, particularly in official, on the record statements, to the ultimate importance of pacification. But their public affirmation of the cliches about "winning the hearts and minds of the people" were not related to any programs or priorities then in existence in Vietnam, and they can mislead the casual observer.

The resurgence of pacification was dramatically punctuated by three Presidential conferences on Pacific islands with the leaders of the GVN -- Honolulu in February, 1966, Manila in October, 1966 (with five other Chiefs of State also present), and Guam in March, 1967. After each conference the relative importance of pacification took another leap upward within the U.S. Government -- reflecting a successful effort within the U.S. Government by its American proponents -- and the U.S. tied the GVN onto Declarations and Communiques which committed them to greater effort.

In addition, each conference was followed by a major re-organization within the U.S. Mission, designed primarily to improve our management of the pacification effort. After Honolulu, Deputy Ambassador Porter was given broad new authority to run the civilian agencies. After Manila, Porter was directed to re-organize the components of USIA, CIA, and AID internally to create a single Office of Civil Operations (OCO). And after Guam, OCO -- redesignated as CORDS -- was put under the control of General Westmoreland, who was given a civilian deputy with the personal rank of Ambassador to assist him.

The low priority of pacification in 1965 was the understandable result of a situation in which battles of unprecedented size were taking place in the highlands and along the coast, the air war was moving slowly north towards Hanoi, and the GVN was in a continual state of disarray.

But a series of events and distinct themes were at work which would converge to give pacification a higher priority. They were to meet at the Honolulu conference in February, 1966.

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I. Threads That Met At Honolulu

A. Hop Tac

The first was the hold-over program from 1964-1965 -- pacification's one priority even then, the Hop Tac program. It had been suggested first by Lodge on his way home from his first Ambassadorship, and Taylor and Westmoreland had given it recognition as a high priority program. Although Westmoreland judged it repeatedly as a partial success, it appears now to have been a faultily conceived and clumsily executed program. It was conceptually unsound, lacked the support of the Vietnamese, created disagreements within the U.S. Mission which were never resolved, and then faded away. So unsuccessful was it that during its life span the VC were able to organize a regiment -- 165A -- in the Gia Dinh area surrounding Saigon, and thus forced MACV in late 1966 to commit three U.S. infantry battalions to Operation FAIRFAX to protect the capital. No one analyzed Hop Tac before starting FAIRFAX. With the beginning of FAIRFAX, Hop Tac was buried quietly and the United States proceeded to other matters.

B. Ambassador Lodge and the True Believers

Henry Cabot Lodge returned as Ambassador in August of 1965, and immediately began to talk of pacification as "the heart of the matter." In telegrams and Mission Council meetings, Lodge told the President, the GVN, and the Mission that pacification deserved a higher priority. Because he saw himself as an advocate before the President for his beliefs rather than as the overall manager of the largest overseas civil-military effort in American history, \* Lodge did not try, as Ambassador Maxwell Taylor had done, to devise an integrated and unified strategy that balanced every part of our effort. Instead, he declared, in his first month back in Vietnam (September, 1965), that "the U.S. military was doing so well now that we face a distinct possibility that VC main force units will be neutralized, and VC fortresses destroyed soon," and that therefore we should be ready to give pacification a new push. While his involvement was irregular and inconsistent, Lodge did nonetheless play a key role in giving pacification a boost. His rhetoric, even if vague, encouraged other advocates of pacification to speak up. The man he brought with him, Edward Lansdale, gave by his very presence an implicit boost to pacification.

C. The III Marine Amphibious Force

Meanwhile, to their own amazement, the Marines were discovering that the toughest war for them was the war in the villages behind them near the Da Nang air base, rather than the war against the main force, which had retreated to the hills to build up. In the first 12 months of their deployment, the Marines virtually reversed their emphasis, turning away

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\* No other American Ambassador has ever had responsibility and authority even close to that in Saigon; only military commands have exceeded it in size.



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from the enemy to a grueling and painfully slow effort to pacify the villages of the central coast in their three TAORs. It was a job that Americans were not equipped for, and the Marine effort raised some basic questions about the role of U.S. troops in Vietnam, but nonetheless, the Marines began to try to sell the rest of the U.S. Government on the success and correctness of their still unproved strategy. The result was a major commitment to the pacification strategy by a service of the U.S. Armed Forces, and influence on the other services, particularly the Army.

D. Washington Grumbles About The Effort

When Lodge was Ambassador, there was widespread concern about the management of the Mission. Lodge was admittedly not a manager. This concern led to a major conference at Warrenton in January of 1966, during which increased emphasis on pacification and better organization within the U.S. Mission were the main topics. Improving the Washington organizational structure was raised, but not addressed candidly in the final report; Washington seemed far readier to tell Saigon how to reorganize than to set their own house in order. But Warrenton symbolizes the growing dissatisfaction in Washington with the Mission as it was.

E. Presidential Emphasis on the "Other War" and Press Reaction

Finally, there was the need of the President, for compelling domestic political reasons, to give greater emphasis to "the other war." With the first full years of major troop commitment ending with victory not yet in sight, there was a growing need to point out to the American public and to the world that the United States was doing a great deal in the midst of war to build a new Vietnam. While this emphasis did not necessarily have to also become an emphasis on pacification, it did, and thus the President in effect gave pacification his personal support -- an act which was acutely felt by Americans in Vietnam.

F. Meanwhile, Back at the War...

A summary of the MACV Monthly Evaluations and other reports is contained here, showing how the U.S. command saw its own progress. The summary suggests that MACV foresaw heavy fighting all through 1966, and did not apparently agree with Ambassador Lodge's predictions and hopes that a major pacification effort could be started, but the issue was not analyzed before decisions were made.

II. Honolulu

A. The Conference - February 1966

The details of the working sessions at the Honolulu conference do not appear, in retrospect, to be nearly as important on the future

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emphasis on pacification as the public statements that came out of Honolulu, particularly the Declaration itself. The discussions and the Declaration are summarized, including the President's final remarks in plenary session.

B. Public Impact...

The press reaction to the conference is summarized.

III. Honolulu to Manila

A. Saigon: Porter in Charge

The first reorganization now took place, and Deputy Ambassador Porter was put in direct charge of the civilian agencies. His responsibility and his ability to carry out his responsibility were not equal from the outset, and Porter saw his role in different terms than those in Washington who had given him his difficult task. A major problem was the lack of full support that Porter received from Ambassador Lodge, who had never been fully in favor of the reorganization. Another problem was the lack of a parallel structure in Washington, so that Porter found himself caught between the Washington agencies and their representatives in Saigon, with Komer (see below) as a frequent participant. Nonetheless, Porter accomplished a great deal in the months this arrangement lasted; it just wasn't as much as Washington sought.

B. Washington: Komer As The Blowtorch

In Washington, the President selected a McGeorge Bundy deputy, R. W. Komer, to be his Special Assistant on non-military activities in Vietnam. Komer did not have the same kind of authority over the Washington agencies that Porter, in theory, had over the Saigon extensions. Komer pushed pacification hard, and became the first senior official, with apparently ready access to the President, who put forward the pro-pacification position consistently in high level meetings. His mandate was contained in a loosely worded NSAM, 343, dated March 28, 1966. During the summer of 1966, Komer applied great pressure to both the Mission and the Washington agencies (thus earning from Ambassador Lodge the nickname of "Blowtorch"), with a series of cables and visits to Vietnam, often using the President's name.

C. Study Groups and Strategists: Summer 1966

With Porter and Komer in their new roles, a series of Task Forces and Study Groups began to produce papers that gave a better rationale and strategy to pacification. These included the Army study called PROVN, the Priorities Task Force in Saigon, and the Roles and Missions Study Groups in Saigon. At the same time, Westmoreland, whose year end wrap-up message on January 1, 1966, had not even mentioned pacification, sent

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in a new long range strategy which emphasized pacification, to Lodge's pleasure. MACV also produced a new position on revamping ARVN, and briefed the Mission Council on it in August, 1966. The Honolulu emphasis was beginning to produce tangible results on the U.S. side.

D. The Single Manager

Despite the movement described in the above three sections, Washington wanted more, and was not satisfied with the rate of progress. Komer, therefore, in August of 1966 had produced a long paper which offered three possible changes in the management structure of the Mission. They were: (1) put all pacification responsibility and assets, including MACV Advisors, under Porter; (2) reorganize the civilian structure to create a single office of operations, and strengthen MACV internally, but leave the civilians and the military split; (3) give Westmoreland full pacification responsibility. The Mission rejected all these ideas, offering in their stead the proposal that Washington leave Saigon alone for a while, but the pressure for results and better management was too great, and the inadequacies of the Mission too obvious, to leave it alone. Secretary McNamara weighed in at this point with a draft Presidential memorandum proposing that Westmoreland be given responsibility for pacification. Komer and JCS concurred in it, but State, USIA, AID, and CIA nonconcurred. McNamara, Katzenbach, and Komer then went to Saigon to take a look at the situation. When they returned, Katzenbach, new to the State Department and previously uninvolved in the problem, recommended that Porter be told to reorganize the civilians along the lines previously discussed (similar to Komer's Alternative Number 2). The President agreed, discussing it with Lodge and Westmoreland at Honolulu. But he added a vital warning: he would give the civilians only about 90 to 120 days to make the new structure work, and then would reconsider the proposal to transfer responsibility for pacification to MACV.

E. The Manila Conference

The decision had not yet been transmitted to Saigon, but it had been made. At Manila, with six other heads of state in attendance, the discussion turned to other matters. At Manila, in the final Declaration, the GVN announced that they would commit half the armed forces to securing operations in support of pacification/RD. This had previously been discussed, but it was the public commitment that really mattered, and now it was on the record.

IV. OCO to CORDS

A. OCO on Trial: Introduction

The Office of Civil Operations was formed, creating confusion and resentment among the agencies, but also marking an immediate and major



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step forward. The example of the civilians moving at this pace also created pressure and conflict within MACV, which was for the first time confronted with a strong civilian structure. The GVN indicated that it understood and approved of the new structure.

B. OCO on Trial: Too Little Too Late -- Or Not Enough Time?

Although it was slower than Washington desired, OCO did get off to a start in December of 1966. Wade Lathram, who had been USAID Deputy Director, was chosen to head up OCO -- a choice that was unfortunate, because Lathram, a skilled and cautious bureaucrat, was not the kind of driving and dynamic leader that OCO -- in a brink of disaster situation from its inception -- needed.

Even worse, Porter was almost immediately diverted from OCO to pay more attention to other matters. While the planners had hoped that Porter would take OCO in hand and give Lathram direct guidance, instead he left Lathram in control of OCO and was forced to turn his attentions to running the Mission, during a long vacation (one month) by Lodge.

The most dramatic action that was taken was the selection of the Regional Directors, a move which even attracted newspaper attention. They included Henry Koren, formerly Porter's deputy; John Paul Vann, the controversial former MACV advisor; and Vince Heymann of the CIA.

Slowly, the OCO then turned to picking its province representatives. All in all, OCO accomplished many things that had never been done before; given time it could no doubt have done much more. But it was plagued from the outset by lack of support from the agencies and their representatives in Saigon, and Washington made higher demands than could be met in Saigon.

C. Time Runs Out

It is not clear when the President made the decision to scrap OCO. He communicated his decision to his field commanders at Guam, but there was a two-month delay before the decision was announced publicly or discussed with the GVN.

D. The CORDS Reorganization

As Bunker took over the Mission, there was a considerable turnover in key personnel. Bunker asked Lansdale and Zorthian to stay on, but Porter, Habib, Wehrle, all left just as Locke, Komer, Calhoun, Cooper, and General Abrams all arrived.

In the new atmosphere, Komer took the lead, making a series of recommendations which maintained the civilian position within MACV, and Westmoreland accepted them.

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An example of Komer's influence was the question of the role of the ARVN divisions in the RD chain of command, and here Westmoreland took Komer's suggestion even though it meant a reversal of the previous MACV position.

E. The Mission Assessment as CORDS Begins

The situation inherited by CORDS was not very promising. Measurements of progress had been irrelevant and misleading, and progress by nearly all standards has been slow or nonexistent. At this point, the study of CORDS and pacification becomes current events.



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I. THREADS THAT MET  
AT HONOLULU

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I. Threads that Met at Honolulu

A. Hop Tac

While pacification received a low emphasis during troubled 1964-1965, there was one important exception: the Hop Tac program, designed to put "whatever resources are required" into the area surrounding Saigon to pacify it. The area was chosen by Ambassador Lodge in his last weeks as Ambassador in June, 1964, and Hop Tac deserves study because both its failures and limited achievements had many of the characteristics of our later pacification efforts -- and because, like all pacification efforts, there was constant disagreement within the Mission, the press, and the Vietnamese as to how well the program was doing.

Hop Tac -- an intensive pacification effort in the provinces ringing Saigon -- was formally proposed at a high level strategy session in Honolulu in July of 1964 by Lodge, then on his way home from his first assignment as Ambassador. In a paper presented to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara and incoming Ambassador Taylor at Honolulu (dated June 19, 1964), Lodge wrote:

"A combined GVN-US effort to intensify pacification efforts in critical provinces should be made...The eight critical provinces are: Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Long An, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Vinh Long, and Quang Ngai. Top priority and maximum effort should be concentrated initially in the strategically important provinces nearest to Saigon, i.e., Long an, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong. Once real progress has been made in these provinces, the same effort should be made in the five others."<sup>1/</sup>

General Taylor and General Westmoreland began Hop Tac, setting up a new and additional headquarters in Saigon which was supposed to tie together the overlapping and quarrelsome commands in the Saigon area. The Vietnamese set up a parallel, "counterpart" organization, although critics of Hop Tac were to point out that the Vietnamese Hop Tac headquarters had virtually no authority or influence, and seemed primarily designed to satisfy the Americans. (Ironically, Hop Tac is the Vietnamese word for "cooperation," which turned out to be just what Hop Tac lacked.)

Hop Tac had a feature previously missing from pacification plans: it sought to tie together the pacification plans of a seven-province area (expanded from Lodge's three provinces to include the adjacent provinces of Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa, Phuoc Thanh, and Gia Dinh, which surround Saigon like a doughnut), into a plan in which each province subordinated its own priorities to the concept of building a "giant oil spot" around Saigon. In a phrase which eventually became a joke in the Mission, the American heading the Hop Tac Secretariat at its inception, Colonel

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Jasper Wilson, briefed senior officials on the creation of "rings of steel" which would grow outward from Saigon until the area from the Cambodian border to the South China Sea was secure. Then, according to the plan, Hop Tac would move into the Delta and North. Colonel Wilson ordered his staff to produce a phased plan in which the area (Map 1) to be pacified was divided into four circles around Saigon. Each ring was to be pacified in four months, according to the original plan, which never had any chance of success. But Wilson, under great pressure from his superiors, ordered the plan produced, got his Vietnamese counterparts to translate it, and issued it. The kickoff date for Hop Tac was to be September 12, 1964: the operation, a sweep into the VC-controlled pineapple groves just west and southwest of the city of Saigon -- the VC base nearest to the city, which had not been entered by the GVN since the last outpost had been abandoned in 1960.

The operation began on schedule, with elements of the 51st Regiment moving toward their objective west of Saigon. During the second day of the operation, the unit ran into a minefield and took numerous casualties. Shortly thereafter, instead of continuing the operation, the unit broke off contact and, to the amazement of its advisors, turned back towards the city of Saigon. When next located it was in the middle of Saigon participating in the abortive coup d'etat of September 13, 1964.

From that point on, Hop Tac was a constant source of dispute within the U.S. Mission. Almost to a man, the civilian agencies "supporting" Hop Tac felt that the program was unnecessary, repetitive, and doomed. They claimed that they preferred to work through existing channels, although these, in MACV's view, were inadequate. This view was not stated openly, however, since the Ambassador and General Westmoreland had committed all U.S. agencies to full support. On October 6, 1964, for example, General Taylor sent Washington an EXDIS cable in which he discussed and rejected a suggestion to decentralize the pacification effort, and instead listed several actions that the Mission would take. First among these was a "unanimous recommendation" that the Mission "give full support to Hop Tac Plan, assuring it the necessary priority to give it every chance to succeed...When Hop Tac priorities permit, concentrate on selected weak areas." 2/ Thus there was a reluctance to criticize the program directly.

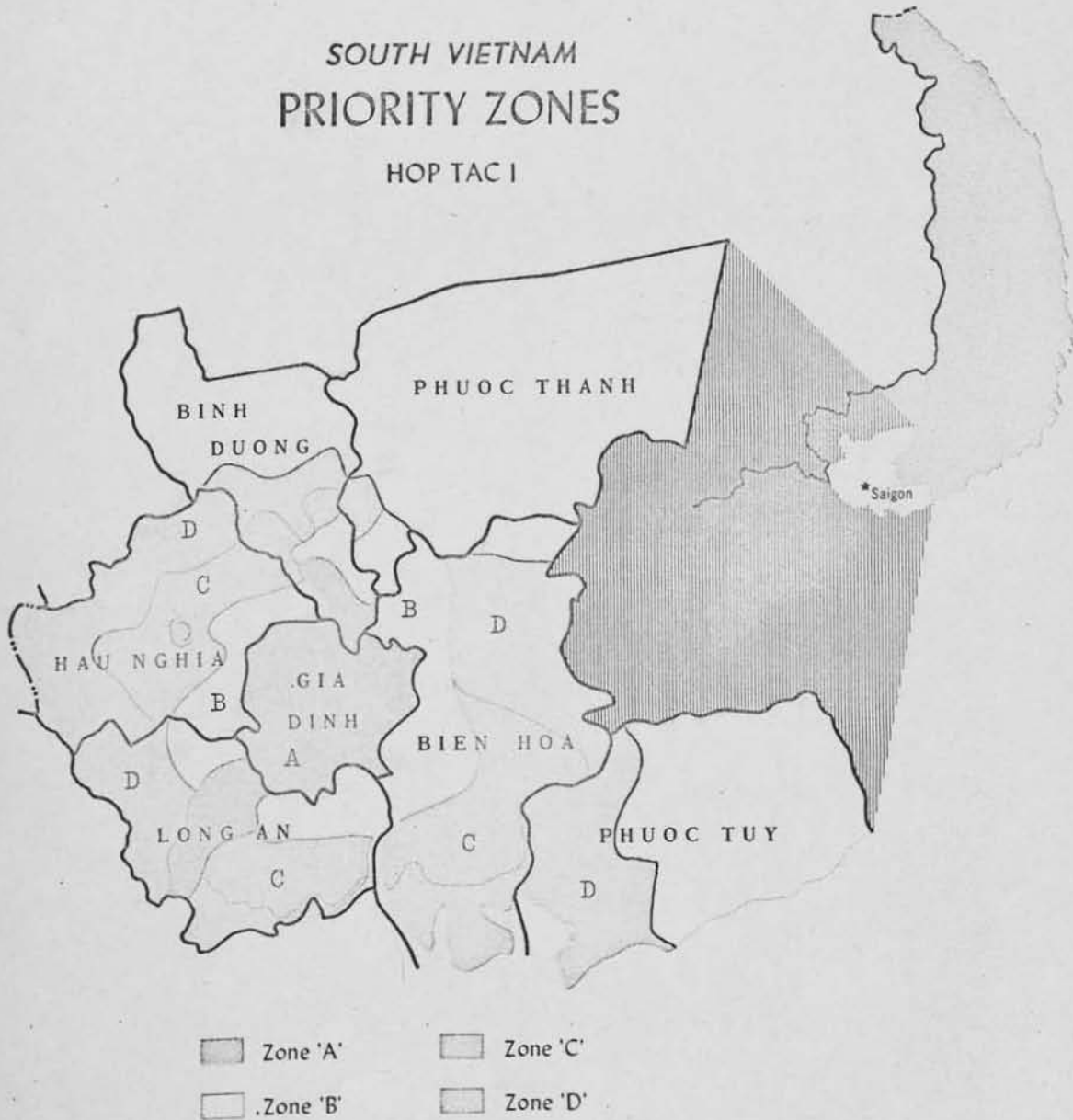
Deadlines slipped continually; phase lines were readjusted; the official count of "pacified" hamlets climbed steadily. But a special study of the area made in October, 1964, by representatives of USOM, USIS, and MACV concluded: "Generally speaking, Hop Tac, as a program, does not appear to exist as a unified and meaningful operation." 3/

The official view of Hop Tac was that the new coordinating machinery was doing some good. Thus, during a period in which cables on the general situation were rather gloomy, Ambassador Taylor could tell the President



SECRET

SOUTH VIETNAM  
PRIORITY ZONES  
HOP TAC I



MAP 1

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2A

GROUP 1  
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING  
AND DECLASSIFICATION

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in his weekly NODIS that while "pacification progress throughout the rest of Vietnam was minimal at best, largely because of the political climate...Some forward movement occurred in the Hop Tac effort growing out of U.S. Mission discussions with the Prime Minister on September 25. The number of operating checkpoints in the Hop Tac area increased markedly; command areas were strengthened; available troop strength increased." 4/ Minor statistical advances, taken out of context, were continually being used in the above manner to prove overall progress.

The MACV Command History for 1964 reflects the official view: "At the end of 1964, Hop Tac was one of the few pacification areas that showed some success and greater promise." 5/ But subsequent events in the area do not bear out this view. In February of 1966 for example -- 18 months after the birth of Hop Tac -- when the Hop Tac area was designated as one of the four "National Priority Areas," the briefers were unable to show Ambassadors Lodge and Porter any progress in the preceding year. They could not even produce a plan for the coming year. Originally Hop Tac was focused on cleaning out the nearest VC base areas, but by February of 1966 -- with the GVN unable to stop the growing VC build-up, the emphasis was "placed on lines of communications, with special attention to be given vital installations including Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut air bases and ammunition and gasoline depots." 6/ The best the briefers could do, in the final briefing prior to the Honolulu Conference, was to say that they hoped to pacify 72 hamlets in the entire seven-province area, and "consolidate" 144 hamlets in Gia Dinh -- which meant the hamlets ringing Saigon, including many which were really part of the city. Lodge and Porter were told that day "there has been a lessening of security in Hau Nghia and Gia Dinh provinces. RF and PF units generally are not up to authorized strengths. The new cadre program should be helpful in solving the problem of continued hamlet security after pacification...The 1966 plan is not overly optimistic from a military standpoint." 7/ (The memorandum recording of this meeting, made by a member of General Lansdale's staff, shows as the only Ambassadorial guidance after this sobering report: "Maps drawn to depict progress of Rural Construction (Pacification) should show as the goal only that area to be pacified during the year...The U.S. Mission manpower committee should look into the use of refugees in the national labor force.") 8/

The Vietnamese were cynical about Hop Tac; it was something, speculation ran, that General Khanh had to do to keep the Americans happy, but it was clearly an American show, clearly run by the United States, and the Vietnamese were reluctant to give it meaningful support. It was one of the first major programs with which the United States became publicly identified (since Diem had always kept the United States in as much of a background role as possible -- and its shortcomings were in part derived from this fact.

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All through Ambassador Taylor's tenure, Hop Tac was something on which he and the Mission Council pinned hope. General Westmoreland thought the program had been reasonably successful, when he told the Mission Council about Hop Tac's first year:

"General Westmoreland said that while Hop Tac could be said only to have been about 50% successful, it had undoubtedly averted a VC seige of Saigon." 9/

This same view was reflected in McGeorge Bundy's comments in a memorandum to the President months earlier in February, 1965, when he said:

"The Hop Tac program of pacification in this area has not been an unqualified success, but it has not been a failure, and it has certainly prevented any strangling seige of Saigon. We did not have a chance to form an independent judgment on Hop Tac, but we did conclude that whatever its precise measure of success, it is of great importance that this operation be pursued with full vigor. This is the current policy of the Mission." 10/

There were others who said that, as a matter of fact, Saigon was almost under seige and that the situation was deteriorating. Westmoreland's own headquarters, for example, sent to Washington in the June Monthly Evaluation from MACV, the following statement which seems to contradict Westmoreland's optimism:

"The sealing off of Saigon from surrounding areas, no matter how incomplete the sealing may be, has had and will continue to have serious economic as well as military effects." 11/

Shortly after he arrived in Vietnam for his second tour, Lodge asked for a private assessment of Hop Tac from an Embassy officer, who reported to him in early September of 1965:

- "1. Hop Tac did not achieve its original goals primarily because they were completely unrealistic and did not take into account the difficulty of the task. These goals were set quite arbitrarily and with no regard for the available resources and the strength of the enemy.
- "2. The second reason for the failures of Hop Tac lies in its strategic concept. The idea of concentric circles outward from Saigon to be pacified in successive waves of clearing, securing and developing may be sound in macroscopic terms; when the Hop Tac area is looked at carefully, the viability of this strategy breaks down. The concentric phase lines around Saigon do not adequately take into account existing areas of GVN strength and existing Viet Cong base areas; rather



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they commit the GVN to a continual expansionary effort on all sides of Saigon simultaneously, an effort which is beyond its capabilities. Above all, they ignore the political structure of the area around Saigon.

- "3. The U.S. Mission has two broad courses of action available in regard to Hop Tac. First, the Mission Council may feel that the area encompassed by Hop Tac remains the first pacification priority of the U.S. and the GVN. If this is the considered judgment of the Mission Council, then we must seek ways of re-emphasizing, re-invigorating and reorienting Hop Tac in order to achieve a dramatic and sustained success in pacification.
- "4. There is an alternative open to the Mission Council. Perhaps it would be politically unwise to attempt to commit the GVN to re-emphasis of Hop Tac at this time. There are several facts which support this view:
- "A. The GVN has never considered Hop Tac its own plan and its own number one priority. The staff planning for the plan was done almost entirely by the United States, and then translated into Vietnamese. It is, in the eyes of many Vietnamese, 'the plan of the Americans.'
- "B. It is perhaps the most difficult area in the country in which to attempt pacification. Since it surrounds Saigon (but does not include it), every political tremor in the capital is felt in the neighboring area...the High Command has created chains of command in the area which are clearly designed primarily to prevent coups, and only secondarily to pacify the countryside. Another example: in the last 11 months, 24 out of 31 district chiefs and five out of seven province chiefs have been changed.
- "C. Prime Minister Ky will never feel that Hop Tac is his plan. If he is seeking a major public triumph, and intends to devote his attention to achieving that triumph, it is unlikely that he will choose Hop Tac, which as mentioned above, is publicly considered an American plan. Moreover, to the extent that any Vietnamese is publicly connected with Hop Tac, it is Nguyen Khanh. For this reason, more than any other, the dangers of re-emphasizing Hop Tac outweigh the possible gains..."

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"The situation in the Hop Tac area will not collapse if Hop Tac is not revitalized now. With the available forces, and particularly with the impending arrival of the 1st Infantry Division to take up a position across the southern arc of Zone D, Saigon itself is not going to be threatened any more than it presently is. The threat -- which is substantial -- comes from the enemy within, and the solution does not lie within the responsibility of the Hop Tac Council: it is a problem for the Saigon police and intelligence communities. This threat, serious as it is, is not directly affected by the presence of the Viet Cong's 506th battalion 20 miles away in Hau Nghia, nor by Zone D. The two problems can be dealt with separately, and solution of the internal security problems of Saigon are not contingent on the success of clearing Hau Nghia and Long An." 12/

In an effort to reconcile these opposing views about Hop Tac, Lodge told the September 15 Mission Council that "the original reasons for the emphasis placed on the area surrounding Saigon...were still valid, primarily because of the heavy density of population. Lodge noted, however, lack of a clear commitment to Hop Tac on the part of the GVN, possibly due to the fact that the Vietnamese consider the program an American scheme. The view was also expressed that the trouble may also lie in US/GVN differences over some fundamental concepts in Hop Tac. Finally, Ambassador Lodge said it was essential that all interested American agencies be agreed on concepts and tactics before an approach to the GVN could be made." 13/ After this meeting, no significant action was taken, and the matter lapsed.

The importance of Hop Tac is still difficult to assess; it is included here primarily because of its role as the one major pacification program that was tried during the 1964-1965 period when pacification was not receiving its present top-level emphasis. Whether or not it averted a seige of Saigon, as General Westmoreland claimed, is a semantic question: what constitutes a seige in a guerrilla war? Saigon, of course, never was under seige in the classic sense of the word, but it is hard to conceive of it ever being literally cut off as Dien Bien Phu or Makefing were -- this would not be a logical objective to the Viet Cong, who wanted to put pressure on the capital but knew they couldn't seal it off (nor would have wanted to, since they got supplies from it).

What is important is that the failures of Hop Tac were never adequately reported and analyzed prior to embarking on other pacification efforts. Thus, at one point General Westmoreland told each of his Senior Corps Advisors to start a Hop Tac in his area -- a strange request since Hop Tac was designed to pull together a multiplicity of commands not duplicated in any other area. Each Corps naturally responded by producing plans which concentrated their pacification assets around the Corps headquarters -- Da Nang, and Can Tho or, in the case of II Corps,

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Qui Nhon. This in turn led naturally to the later National Priority Area program, but had no other value.

With MACV reluctant to close down its Hop Tac Secretariat, with the civilian Americans giving Hop Tac only verbal support, and with the Vietnamese leaving a powerless staff at the headquarters, Hop Tac could well have survived as an appendix to the normal chain of command, as so many outdated structures survive in Vietnam because no one wants to admit their irrelevance. But General Westmoreland saw a way to dispose of Hop Tac cleanly and quietly in the summer of 1966, and he took it. At the Mission Council meeting of July 7, 1966:

"General Westmoreland then turned to the subject of Hop Tac. He summarized the purpose of the Hop Tac concept, which was implemented two years ago, and said that -- while it has enjoyed only modest success over the past two years -- the situation in the area surrounding Saigon/Cholon would be comparatively worse if we had not had the Hop Tac arrangement. He noted that recent organizational changes have taken place, which have resulted in the Capital Military Region becoming the Capital Military District (as part of the III Corps Tactical Zone) with Saigon remaining as an autonomous city. In view of these changes, there is some question of the validity of continuing with the original concept. More importantly, III Corps has a Revolutionary Development Council and a Hop Tac Council which results in some duplication of effort. Consequently, the General believes that these two councils should be merged, with the Revolutionary Development Council absorbing the Hop Tac Council. General Westmoreland asked the Mission Council to endorse this proposal for him to carry out. After brief discussion, Ambassador Lodge indicated his approval." 14/

By this time Hop Tac had long lost the "highest priority" which was supposed to justify it, and both the American and the Vietnamese had turned to other matters.

But Hop Tac was not adequately analyzed before embarking on other efforts, and its shortcomings were largely forgotten by the time that the still-deteriorating situation in Gia Dinh led MACV to commit three U.S. Army battalions to the inner area surrounding Saigon -- the original first phase of Hop Tac -- as part of Operation Fairfax in November of 1966. The Mission, with no institutional memory, forgot -- or never learned -- the lessons that Hop Tac could have offered.



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B. Ambassador Lodge and the "True Believers"

Many senior American officials have paid varying degrees of lip service to the pacification effort since 1962 -- a fact which makes it extremely hard to determine who really pushed pacification and who didn't. But about Ambassador Lodge, there can be little question. He had repeatedly called pacification "the heart of the matter," and his unfailing belief in the importance of the effort can be clearly shown in his public and private statements and his cables.

His emphasis on pacification resumed the day he returned to Saigon in August 1965, when in his arrival statement he said that the United States supported the "true revolution" of the Vietnamese people. His continual emphasis on the effort seems to have had a definite impact on the mood in Washington and in the Mission, and played a role in the events leading up to the Honolulu Conference in February 1966 -- where pacification was given (or so it seemed to Americans and Vietnamese alike in Vietnam) the President's blessing.

It is true that Ambassador Taylor also felt that pacification was important and that it would deserve high emphasis; his push on Hop Tac clearly demonstrates this fact. But because Maxwell Taylor saw that it was his responsibility as Ambassador to reconcile competing requirements for limited resources, and develop a single overall strategy for the effort, he never let pacification consume too many resources prematurely. Lodge, on the other hand, did not see himself as an administrator or manager of the U.S. Mission, but as the President's personal representative and advisor in Saigon. Thus, he felt no qualms about advocating a certain course of action -- in this case, pacification. There is no record of Ambassador Lodge worrying about the way his latest proposals would affect the balance of the whole effort. He simply did not see himself as responsible for the actions of the operating agencies which represented AID, USIA, and the CIA, let alone DOD, in Vietnam \* -- not even after receiving a strong letter of authority from President Johnson in July of 1965: 15/

"As you take charge of the American effort in South Vietnam, I want you to have this expression of my confidence, and a reaffirmation of my desire that as Ambassador you exercise full responsibility for the work of the United States

\* See for example, Lodge's NODIS to the President, February 1, 1966, in which he said: "...I have learned of Zorthian's wire to Marks, which, of course, he has the right to send, since I hold that Zorthian, like U.S. agency chiefs here, has and should have an open channel to his agency. It is a statement of Zorthian's opinion which, of course, was sent without my approval or direction..." 16/ (The subject was apparently a suggestion that Lodge address the United Nations General Assembly in New York, although Lodge's cable cited does not explicitly state what Zorthian's cable said.)

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Government in South Vietnam. In general terms this authority is parallel to that set forth in my letter to Ambassador Taylor of July 2, 1964." \* 17/

Given his belief in the fundamental importance of the pacification effort, Lodge was ready to push it at any time he could. He did not examine the possibility that certain times were more favorable than others for an effort which needed the full participation of the Vietnamese in order to succeed, and, like many in the government, failed to see that at certain times emphasis on pacification would not only not work but would be harmful to GVN/US relations, and would reduce the chances for a successful joint effort at some more propitious time.

Thus, it is not surprising that one of his last major documents at the end of his first tour as Ambassador proposed Hop Tac (see I. A.) -- in the face of strong possibilities that the situation was not favorable to it -- and that on his return in August 1965 he was advocating more effort in pacification.

Thus, for example, meeting with his senior officers one month after he arrived, Lodge "began the meeting by stating that in his opinion the United States military was doing so well not that 'we face a distinct possibility that VC main force units will be neutralized and that VC fortresses will be destroyed soon. We should be ready to handle the VC in small units. This gives counter-subversion/terrorism or pacification or counterinsurgency -- I am not overly concerned with what we call it -- a new urgency for all of us here.'" 18/

It is likely that if Lodge had clarified his view of pacification and repeated it continually in public and privately, as he did with anything he believed in, his view would eventually have taken hold in the United States Mission. But the problem of how pacification should work was -- and is -- a very difficult one. It raises a number of extremely difficult questions on which the United States Government has never reached a unified position.

Sensing that Lodge was receptive to ideas which emphasized pacification but that he had no set views on details, many groups and individuals besieged him with a resurgence of ideas and philosophies on pacification. They were all encouraged by his verbal support or his glowing cables to Washington. The whole atmosphere in the Mission became more favorable towards pacification and pacifiers; Lansdale, Colonel Serong (the Australian who was to organize the Police Field Force with support from

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\* The letter to Taylor had said, among other points: "I wish it clearly understood that this overall responsibility includes the whole military effort in South Vietnam and authorizes the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate."

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Lodge), Sir Robert Thompson (whose Malayan experiences had led him to emphasize the police), Colonel Bohannon (who began as a Lansdale deputy, but whose views took a different line), the Marines (with their pacification efforts and CAP's near Da Nang), the CIA (which produced, with Lodge's strong support, the PAT's-turned RD cadre), USIA and AID (with their small but growing field programs), the Army (which entered the game late but elicited from Lodge on visits to the U.S. 25th Infantry Division and then the 1st Infantry Division, some of his longest and most glowing accounts of pacification in action. 19/)

These groups and individuals fought about details, sometimes debating minor points like medieval monks but also disagreeing on rather basic points -- such as whether the object was to gain the population's support or to control them by force. (A popular Marine saying, which tried to bridge the gap, went: "Get the people by the balls, and their hearts and minds will follow.") But each group found something that appealed to Lodge, and each in turn gained encouragement from him. The slow change in mood also affected Washington.

In dealing with his role in the re-emphasis of pacification, we must distinguish between Lodge's influence on our overall, or grand, strategy -- on which he was ultimately to have considerable impact -- and his influence on the operational details of the policy. The latter did not interest him on a continuing basis, and it is thus easy to underestimate his influence. There was, for example, a tendency in Saigon during his Ambassadorship to minimize his importance, since each agency could ignore him when he told them to do something and usually get away with it. But this popular view overlooked Lodge's impact in encouraging all sorts of people to emerge from parts of the USG with renewed hope for pacification. It overlooked the impact of his cables and statements, which added up to a massive endorsement of pacification. In his NODIS weeklies to the President, for example, pacification receives more attention than any other subject.

Alone, Lodge could have done little, if anything, to move the USG around. But his influence seems clear, more so in retrospect than at the time: at a time when frustrations were growing, he was emphasizing a different rhetoric and strategy.

The best way to show his emphasis is simply to quote from the cables and memoranda of the period. Each one shows Lodge, either directly or indirectly, putting forth his general beliefs -- sometimes contradictory. They form an important part of the background to Honolulu, where pacification was to get its biggest push to that date:

1. Lodge at the end of his first tour in Vietnam, defining pacification in his paper proposing Hop Tac:

"The first priority after the military have cleared an area is to bring about the selection of an able man for that area,



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who will in turn go about creating a basically civilian counter-terrorist organization on the 'precinct' level, or equivalent thereof...Its prime purpose will be, notably with police help, to create security for the local government and free it from all intimidation by going through the precinct with a fine-toothed comb...Once the local government feels safer, it should move energetically to promote public safety for the people; the people should then rally more to the government; and this should create an upward spiral as regards security organization...USOM and USIA will support these local 'precinct' organizations, will actually work through them, and will seek to make it attractive to be one of those who builds such a counter-terrorism precinct organization...The military should take special precautions in their operations not to injure in any way the non-combatants. It must also behave itself so well that the people like the Army..." 20/

2. Lodge's Ten Point Program for Success:

"In each city precinct and each rural hamlet immediately adjacent to a thoroughly pacified city (i.e., the smallest unit from a public safety standpoint) the following program should be undertaken in the following order:

"1. Saturate the minds of the people with some socially conscious and attractive ideology, which is susceptible of being carried out.

"2. Organize the people politically with a hamlet chief and committee whose actions would be backed by the police or the military using police-type tactics. This committee should have representatives of the political, military, economic and social organizations and should have an executive who directs.

"3. With the help of the police or military, conduct a census.

"4. Issue identification cards.

"5. Issue permits for the movement of goods and people.

"6. When necessary, hold a curfew.

"7. Thanks to all these methods, go through each hamlet with a fine-tooth comb to apprehend the terrorists.

"8. At the first quiet moment, bring in agricultural experts, school teachers, etc.

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"9. The hamlet should also be organized for its own defense against small Viet Cong attacks.

"10. After all these things have been accomplished, hold elections for local office." 21/

COMMENT: Lodge began his second tour as Ambassador where he had left off the year before. The above paper, which he also transmitted to the President in a NODIS message, again represented no official U.S. position. After writing it and giving it to everyone in the Mission, he let the matter drop, and thus the paper did not assume any official character. Since nothing was changed in the procedures of the Mission, and since the old criteria for pacification still applied unchanged, Lodge had, in typical fashion, failed to affect the operating Mission.

3. The Assignment of Lansdale:

"Handpicked group of about ten experienced counter-subversion/counter terrorism workers under direction of Edward G. Lansdale will be going to Saigon to provide Ambassador Lodge with special operating staff in field of political action both at central level and also in connection with rural programs." 22/

COMMENT: From the beginning, there was misunderstanding over Lansdale's role in Lodge's Embassy. The first cable reflects this. The phrase "counter-subversion/counter-terrorism workers," seems to contradict the latter part of the sentence, about "political action." From the start Lodge wanted him to "get pacification going." Thus, less than a month later, Lodge told the President:

"I appointed Edward Lansdale, with his complete approval, to be chairman of the U.S. Mission Liaison Group to the newly created Vietnamese governmental body having to do with what we call 'pacification,' what they call 'rural construction,' and what means to me socially conscious practical politics, the by-product of which is effective counter-subversion/terrorism. I thought it was important for all concerned for him to have a definite allocation where he would have the best chance of bringing his talents to bear. I trust that the hopes of some journalists that he is here in an adversarial relationship with existing US agencies will be nipped in the bud by making him the spokesman for the whole US Mission in this particular regard." (underlining added) 23/

Thus, another action which served to strengthen the pacification priority, although its primary reason probably was to get Lansdale working on something other than Saigon politics.



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4. Lodge on the Use of U.S. Troops in Pacification:

"The presence of American troops does provide the opportunity for thorough pacification of the areas in which they are stationed and full advantage should be taken of this opportunity. It is a very big dividend from our investment of men and money. For example, the Third Marine Division has scored impressive successes north, south, and west of Da Nang...If our American troops can emulate this performance (of the proto-CAC units) of 60 Americans and 150 Vietnamese, we ought to get a tremendous amount of small unit nighttime effective pacification, and we would be neglecting an opportunity not to use American troops for this purpose, thereby pacifying the country and transforming the ARVN, making it into a much more vital and effective element of Vietnamese society, able at some not too remote date to carry on by themselves without outside help... We are already discussing with the Vietnamese the possibility of singling out areas that look like good prospects, that are potentially pretty much over on our side, and then pacifying them so as to get a little smell of across-the-board success in the air...I am not ready to say, 'What areas would be chosen for pacification, when should the plan be started, what objectives would be best,' but hope to be able to do so soon. I am now encouraging General Ky to concentrate GVN efforts and enthusiasm on pacification so that this can have sustained, wholehearted GVN participation...Development of popular electoral processes is part of all our current planning for counter subversion/terrorism in 'rural construction (pacification)'." 24/

COMMENT: Here, for the first time, Lodge addresses a key point: the role of U.S. troops on pacification. The whole concept of the use of U.S. troops was being worked out during this period (see following section on Marines), and Lodge now began to weigh in with qualified support for the Marine approach, based on an overly optimistic view of the situation.

5. Lansdale's Weekly Report, October 4, 1965:

"Past week devoted to getting GVN into sound start again on pacification program...U.S. Mission Liaison Group shaping up into realistic instrument for working level teamwork on pacification by all U.S. Missions..." 25/

COMMENT: Lansdale was responding to the direction given him by Lodge.

6. Lodge on the GVN's Attitude Towards Pacification:

"During my talk with General Co, the deputy Prime Minister in charge of six ministries, I was impressed by the amount of

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sustained analytical thought which he, with his colleagues, had given to how to organize the government for the great new job of pacification which confronts them -- and which is clearly their government's most important single responsibility." 26/

COMMENT: Lodge had by this time let the GVN know clearly what tune he wanted to hear, and with their usual skill the Vietnamese -- even General Co, who turned out to be worthless on pacification -- were playing the right song back.

7. "When the chance to win over the people was missed some years ago, a situation came into being in which it was indispensable for the VC large units to be defeated before true community building, with its mixture of political and security measures, would be possible. Otherwise, the VC battalions, emerging from untouchable sanctuaries, would destroy whatever community building had painstakingly been achieved. Now it looks as though the VC know this and has already begun to act on the knowledge, transforming themselves into small units and individual terrorists, and into subversive political operators." 27/

COMMENT: Lodge's sequence of events -- destroy the main force enemy first, pacify second -- is hard to argue with, but his assessment of VC capabilities and intentions falls short of accuracy.

As a final note to the examination of Lodge's emphasis on pacification, it is worthwhile asking why he has so consistently put such a high priority on the effort -- regardless of methodology -- to gain control of the villages. The answer may lie in his strong views on the way the war will end in Vietnam. Lodge doubted that there would ever be meaningful negotiations with the Viet Cong. An old hand at negotiating with the communists, Lodge felt that the most likely end to the war was for the enemy to "fadeaway" after a prolonged period of conflict. In his view, therefore, control of the population became the best way to force the fadeaway. Furthermore, in the event that there was some sort of pro forma discussions with the communists at some future date, Lodge felt that there were certain minimum conditions of a "satisfactory outcome" which must be met. An examination of his definition of a satisfactory outcome shows the overriding importance of the pacification effort in his mind. The following is from a telegram sent "For the President and the Secretary from Lodge" on October 21, 1965, which Lodge considered one of his most important cables:

"What we consider a satisfactory outcome to be would, of course, be a very closely kept secret. It would include the following, not necessarily in this order:

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"1. The area around Saigon and south of Saigon (all of the Delta) must be pacified. This area includes about 55 to 60% of the population of Vietnam. 'Pacified' is defined as the existence of a state of mind among the people that they have a stake in the government as shown by the holding of local elections. It also means a proper local police force. In brief, a pacified area is economically, socially, and politically a part of the RVN.

"2. The thickly populated northeastern strip along the coast which includes 25% of the population would be completely pacified.

"3. The GVN would retain its present control of all cities and all provincial capitals.

"4. All principal roads would be open to the Vietnamese military day and night.

"5. Those areas not pacified would not be safe havens for the VC but would be contested by energetic offensive forays to prevent consolidation of a communist base.

"6. The VC disarms; and their weapons and explosives are removed from their hands. Their main force units broken up.

"7. North Vietnam stops its infiltration.

"8. Chieu Hoi rehabilitation would be extended to individual VC who are suitable...

"9. Hardcore VC to go to North Vietnam.

"10. GVN to approve.

"COMMENT: This means that we would not be insisting on the complete elimination of the VC although no safe haven would be allocated them. It would mean that we and the GVN would control 80 to 85% of the population and that the VC would be limited to the jungle and mountainous areas where they would go on as bandits, much as their counterparts in Malaya and Luzon -- and where the GVN would have the right to pursue them and try to destroy them." 28/

Lodge's formula for a satisfactory outcome is based on the absolute necessity of controlling the villages. In day-to-day terms this meant that, as Ambassador, Lodge had to push pacification as hard as possible. Thus, he was quite pleased with the emphasis that came out of the Honolulu conference in February of 1966.



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C. III Marine Amphibious Force

To what extent the growing Marine emphasis on pacification was a factor during the period before the Honolulu conference is impossible to determine; the timing and evidence would suggest that the impact of the Marine strategy was greatest in the period after Honolulu, as they became more sure of the rightness of their approach, and as they garnered more and more publicity for it. Nonetheless, in the first eleven months of their mission in I Corps, the Marines had gotten deeply into the pacification program. The Marines thus became the most vocal advocates within the Armed Forces for emphasizing pacification more, and search and destroy less.

The Marine deployments and mission are covered in earlier decision studies in this series and will thus be treated only briefly here. The emphasis of this section is not on the influence the Marines had on the Honolulu conference, but on the way the Marines gradually moved into their new role, and the difficulties with it. The material here applied, therefore, equally to the pre- and post-Honolulu periods, throughout which the Marine successes, as they reported them, had a growing impact on the thinking of civilian and military alike, in Saigon, CINCPAC, and Washington.

The Marines landed their first troops -- two Battalion Landing Teams -- in Da Nang in March of 1965. Their original mission, "to secure enclaves in the northern region of Vietnam containing air and communications installations, was simplicity itself." 29/ (From "U.S. Marine Corps Civic Action Efforts in Vietnam, March 1965-March 1966, a study done by the USMC Historical Branch, SECRET; hereafter referred to as MC History; from un-paged draft.)

By the time of the Honolulu conference the Marines -- by now organized into the III Marine Amphibious Force -- had changed their mission considerably, and to a degree then unequalled among other American units was deeply engaged in pacification operations.

A monthly report issued by General Krulak, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, indicates the evolution of Marine thinking on their mission. Reviewing the first seven months of their deployment in I Corps, the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, wrote in September, 1965:

"The Mission assigned III MAF was initially confined to airfield security. Subsequently, a limited offensive responsibility was added, which has gradually grown to an essentially unrestrained authority for offensive operations. Finally, and largely on its own, III MAF has entered the pacification program, with the bulk of its pacification efforts taking place since June." [Emphasis added] 30/

One month later, after chronicling their successes, the report indicated the major shift in strategic thinking which was taking place at General Walt's headquarters in Da Nang, and at General Krulak's in Hawaii:

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"While accomplishing all this the Marines were feeling, with growing impact, a cardinal counterinsurgency principle: that if local forces do not move in promptly behind the offensive effort, then first line forces must be diverted to provide the essential hamlet security, police and stabilization. The alternative is to risk the development of vacua, into which the VC guerrilla can flow. This condition grew during the period. The Popular Forces and police were inadequate in numbers and in quality to do their part of the job, as the Marines did theirs. This operated to complicate the Marines' problem by making the civic action effort more difficult, by permitting harassment of our forces, and by making possible a suicide attack on the Chu Lao and Marble Mountain areas.

"The end of the period saw the 676 square mile III MAF area of influence more stable, more prosperous, and far more hopeful, but it saw also an urgent need for efficient regional or local forces to take up their proper burden, so the Marines can maintain the momentum of their search/clear/pacification efforts. It is plain that the most efficient way to bring this about is to give III MAF substantial authority over the RF or PF serving in this area, in order that they may be properly trained and properly led." 31/

This summary, written in the headquarters of the man often regarded as the philosopher of the Marine Corps, shows the Marines in the process of swinging their emphasis around -- turning away from the offensive against the enemy waiting in the nearby hills, and towards the people and the VC guerrillas among the people inside their TAOR.

It was a crucial, difficult decision for the men who made it. Significantly, the indications are strong that the decision was made almost entirely inside Marine Corps channels, through a chain of command that bypassed COMUSMACV and the civilian leaders of our government, and ran from General Greene through General Krulak to General Walt. The files do not reveal discussions of the implications, feasibility, cost, and desirability of the Marine strategy among high-ranking officials in the Embassy, MACV headquarters, the Defense and State Departments. Yet in retrospect it seems clear that the strategy the Marines proposed to follow, a strategy about which they made no secret, was in sharp variance with the strategy of the other U.S. units in the country, with far-ranging political implications that could even affect the ultimate chances for negotiations.

It should be clear that the Marine concept of operations has a different implicit time requirement than a more enemy-oriented search and destroy effort. It is not within the scope of this paper to analyze the different requirements, but it does appear that the Marine strategy, which General Walt sometimes described as the

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"wringing out of the VC from the land like you wring water out of a sponge," is slow and methodical, requires vast numbers of troops, runs the risk of turning into an occupation even while being called "pacification/civic action," and involves Americans deeply in the politics and traditions of rural Vietnam. The strategy can succeed, perhaps, but if it is to succeed, it must be undertaken with full awareness by the highest levels of the USG of its potential costs in manpower and time, and the exacting nature of the work. Instead, the documents suggest that the Marines determined their strategy basically on their own, deriving part of it from their own traditions in the "Banana Republics" and China (where Generals Walt, Krulak, Nickerson, and others had served in the 1930's), and partly from an attempt to solve problems of an unprecedented nature which were cropping up inside their TAORs, even on the edge of the great air base at Da Nang.

As it was, the Marine strategy was judged successful, at least by the Marines, long before it had even had a real test. It was applauded by many observers before the VC had begun to react to it, and as such, encouraged imitators while it was still unproven.

The Marine dilemma was how to support the pacification effort without taking it over. They thought they had succeeded in doing this by "self-effacing support for Vietnamese rural construction" after August of 1965, but there is much contradictory evidence on this point. The Marines themselves, according to the classified historical study they recently produced, understood that their pacification work had "to function through local Vietnamese officials. The tendency to produce Marine Corps programs or to work 'democratically' through individuals had to be strictly controlled. Only Vietnamese programs could be tolerated and support of these programs had to take place through Vietnamese governing officials..." 32/

But despite their good intentions to work through the existing GVN structure, the Marines found in many cases that the existing structure barely existed, except on paper, and in other cases that the existing structure was too slow and too corrupt for their requirements. And gradually the Marines got more deeply into the politics of rural Vietnam than they had intended, or presumably desired.

Their difficulties were greatest in the area of highest priority, the National Priority Area (as it was to be designated in October 1965) south of Da Nang. In a nine-village complex just south of the air base, the Marines urged upon the GVN successful completion of a special pacification program which had been designed by them in close conjunction with the Quang Nam Deputy Province Chief. The nine villages were divided into two groups, and the first phase, scheduled for completion first in December of 1965, included only five of the villages, with only 23,000 people living in them. By February, 1966, the plan had slipped considerably, and the projected completion date for the first



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five villages was pushed back to April, 1966. The GVN and the Marines considered their control to extend to over 16,000 of the 23,000 people in the area, but, according to an Embassy evaluation of the area, only 682 were young men between the ages of 17 and 30. It was clear that the Marines were trying to pacify an area in which the young men no longer lived, having either been drafted, joined the VC, or gone to Da Nang to work for the Americans. "The basic problem posed by this lack of manpower must be solved before the area can be expected to participate in its own defense," the Embassy report said. "Until it is solved, the Marines and the ARVN will remain tied to defensive mission involving them with the population. No one in Quang Nam sees any immediate solution to this dilemma." The report concluded with a description of how over-involved with local politics the Marines were becoming, unintentionally, and said:

"The plan, despite the valiant efforts of the Marines, is in trouble, caused by a confused and fragmented chain of command, a lack of skilled cadre, inability to recruit locally RF and PF -- and the open opposition of the VNQDD." 33/

The VNQDD, or Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang, was the political party controlling the provinces of Quang Ngai, Quang Nam, and Quang Tin. The Marines knew little about them, although, according to the study, all the village chiefs in the area were VNQDD members. The VNQDD were not supporting the priority area plan because they had not been consulted in its formulation, and for this reason, and others, the report predicted the failure of the plan, despite the heavy Marine commitment.

Like Hop Tac, it was an unusually difficult situation, but it illustrates the problems that the Marines, and any other U.S. troops that got deeply involved in pacification, confronted in Vietnam.

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D. Washington Grumbles About the Effort

Throughout the period of the buildup in Vietnam, there was a growing chorus of discontent in Washington over the management of the U.S. effort in Vietnam, most of it directed at the civilian agencies -- USIA, AID, and the CIA. Unhappiness with the way the Mission ran was to lead to three major reorganizations in the 15-month period from the Honolulu conference to the arrival of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. The first reorganization took place immediately after Honolulu, and assigned to the Deputy Ambassador, William J. Porter, specific duties and responsibilities which had previously been dispersed throughout the Mission and handled on an ad hoc basis. The second reorganization, which took place in November-December 1966, reorganized the internal components of AID, USIA, and the CIA so that the Deputy Ambassador could control directly a single Office of Civil Operation (OCO), bypassing the agency chiefs. The latest reorganization, which was announced in May 1967, transferred responsibility for OCO from the Deputy Ambassador to COMUSMACV, who in turn was given a civilian Deputy with the rank of Ambassador (R. W. Komer). This section outlines events leading to the first reorganization in March 1966, a reorganization which raised the priority of the pacification effort, but left most of the basic problems in the U.S. Mission unsolved. The actual reorganization, and its effects, will be covered in Part III. 1.

Efforts to reorganize the Saigon Mission are a recurring theme in recent history. The impetus for reorganization has consistently come from Washington, and the Mission has usually resisted. Its resistance is not hard to understand, since almost every reorganization scheme tended to diminish the authority and autonomy of senior members of the Mission Council such as the JUSPAO Director, the USAID Director, and the CIA Station Chief.

Skeptics have said that whenever things are going poorly, "Americans reorganize." But the opponents of various reorganization schemes have been unable to defend the existing Mission Council system, which must definitely be rated one of Vietnam's casualties. Not since the beginning of the "country team" concept in the 1950's ("Mission Council" being another term for the same structure) had the concept been tested the way it was to be tested in Vietnam. The pressure of events, the tension, the unprecedented size of the agencies and a host of other factors made the system shaky even under the strong manager Maxwell Taylor. Under the man who didn't want to manage, Lodge, it began to crumble. Each agency had its own ideas on what had to be done, its own communication channels with Washington, its own personnel and administrative structure -- and starting in 1964-65, each agency began to have its own field personnel operating under separate and parallel chains of command. This latter event was ultimately to prove the one which gave reorganization efforts such force, since it began to become clear to people in Washington and Saigon alike that the Americans in the provinces were not always working



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on the same team, and that they were receiving conflicting or overlapping instructions from a variety of sources in Saigon and Washington.

Still, while General Taylor was Ambassador, reorganization was not something to be pushed seriously by Washington. With Lodge back in charge, it was a different story. As a matter of fact, so serious were Lodge's managerial deficiencies that even during his first tour, when the U.S. Mission was less than 20,000 men, and the entire civilian component under 1,000, there was talk of reorganization. In a personal message to Lodge on May 26, 1964, the President made the following prophetic statement:

"I have received from [Mike] Forrestal a direct account of your belief that there is need for change and improvement in the civilian side of the country team. We have reached a similar conclusion here, and indeed we believe it is essential for you to have a top-ranking officer who is wholly acceptable to you as chief of staff for country team operations. My own impression is that this should be either a newly appointed civilian of wide governmental experience and high standing, or General Westmoreland...." 34/

This message became irrelevant when Lodge suddenly resigned in June of 1964 to assist Governor Scranton's bid for the Republican nomination, but it shows that the President, Lodge, and apparently other people in Washington had deep concern with the structure of the Mission at this early date.

By sending Taylor and Alexis Johnson -- then the State Department's highest-ranking Foreign Service Officer -- to Saigon in July of 1964, the President in effect put off any Washington-initiated reorganizations for the length of Taylor's tour, since no one in Washington could tell the former Chairman of the JCS how to run a mission.

Taylor organized the Mission Council -- not a new invention, but a formalization of the country team into a body which met once a week, with agendas, minutes, and records of decisions. Taylor was particularly concerned that the Mission Council should have a "satisfactory meshing with...counterpart activities on the GVN side." 35/ And while he was Ambassador the U.S. made a determined effort to make the system work without reorganization. In a letter to Elbridge Durbrow, who was once American Ambassador in Saigon himself, Alexis Johnson described the system:

"Max and I dropped the title 'Country Team' and set up what we called the 'Mission Council' on a formalized basis. In addition to Max and myself, the members were General Westmoreland, Barry Zorthian as JUSPAO (Joint United States Public Affairs Office -- this covered both MACV and Embassy

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info as well as psychological operations in the field and against the DRV), the Director of USOM and the CAS Station Chief. We established an Executive Secretary who was first Bill Sullivan and later Jack Herfurt, who was charged with the preparation of agenda, the recording of decisions, and, most importantly, following up and monitoring of decisions that were taken. We met regularly once a week (with occasional special meetings as required), with paper circulated beforehand insofar as possible. One of the responsibilities of the Executive Secretary was to see that issues were worked out beforehand at staff level insofar as possible and the remaining issues clearly defined...It was normally our practice to keep all members of the Council fully informed and to discuss all questions, regardless of their sensitivity...After an informal exchange of views, we took up questions on the agenda, doing our best to obtain the consensus of all members. When in rare cases this was not achieved, the Ambassador of course took the decision. We considered the full range of questions, including such fundamental ones as when and under what circumstances we should bomb the North...etc...Below the Mission Council level we established a series of committees in problem areas involving more than one agency of the mission, chaired by the agency of primary interest. These committees were responsible directly to the Mission Council...We persuaded the GVN, on its side, to set up a similar organization that was first called the 'Pacification Council' and later the 'Rural Construction Council.'...The GVN Council and the Mission Council met together once a week with an agenda prepared beforehand by the two Executive Secretaries...One of my theories, and to a degree I think it was borne out in Saigon, was that the Mission Council and the Joint Council were important not so much for what was in fact decided at the meetings but for the fact that their existence, and the necessity of reporting to them, acted as a spur to the staff people to get things done and to resolve issues at their level. Organization structure of course does not assure brilliant performance, but I do take some satisfaction in feeling that, due to the organizational structure that we established, we established the habit of the Mission elements and the GVN and the Mission, working together in a more effective way." 36/

Whether or not the system described by Ambassador Johnson above really worked the way he says it was supposed to is not the subject of this study. But it appears that within a few months after Lodge returned as Ambassador the people within the USG advocating reorganization as at least a partial solution to the problems of the Mission were once again in full cry.

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The relationship of the reorganizers to the pacifiers must be explained. Those who advocated restructuring the Mission for more effective management were not necessarily the same people advocating a higher emphasis for pacification. But usually, since the organization of the Mission was so obviously deficient, both groups of people would end up advocating some kind of change -- and even if they disagreed on the nature of the change, the most important fact was that they were generally pushing a similar mood of dissatisfaction with the Mission upon the high-ranking officials with whom they might come in contact. (It should be kept in mind that they were really not groups at all, in the normal sense of the word, but a shifting collection of individuals with varying degrees of loyalty to either their parent agency or their own sense of history; and on each individual issue a different set of allies and antagonists might well exist.)

The efforts of those advocating reorganization began to bear edible fruit in December 1965 and January 1966, when a conference was held at Warrenton, Va., to which the Mission sent an impressive collection of Mission Council members: Deputy Ambassador Porter, USAID Mission Director Mann, JUSPAO Director Zorthian, Political Counsellor Habib, General Lansdale, CIA Station Chief Jorgenson, and Brigadier General Collins, representing Westmoreland. From Washington came the second and third echelons of the bureaucracy: Leonard Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Rutherford Poats, Assistant Administrator of AID; Major General Peers, SACSA; Alvin Friedman, ISA; William Colby and Peer da Silva, CIA; Chester Cooper, White House; and Sanford Marlowe, USIA. Other participants included: Major General Hutchins, CINCPAC; Rufus Phillips of Lansdale's group; Charles Zwick and Henry Rowen of BOB; George Lodge, the Ambassador's son; Desmond Fitzgerald, CIA; and Leon Goure, of RAND.

The purpose of the meeting was to "bring together senior representatives of the U.S. Mission, Saigon, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, Washington, and several other individuals to (a) review the joint GVN-US pacification/rural construction program and seek to promote its more effective operation and (b) address the problem of the increasingly serious shortages and bottlenecks in manpower, materials, and transport in Vietnam and to designate priorities and machinery for resources control and allocation." The major unstated purpose, in addition to those mentioned above, was to discuss the organization of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam.

Warrenton was to turn out to be a prelude to Honolulu, and as such its recommendations never were to become an integral part of the Mission's plans and strategy. But the direction that was developed at Warrenton is significant, because it represents the clear and unmistakable thrust that existed at the time in the "working levels" of both Saigon and Washington. Given the normal time lag before individual thoughts can reach the stage of agreed-upon committee-produced papers,



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Warrenton, we can assume, reflected the evolution of thinking that had been going on, particularly among the civilians, as the first year of U.S. combat troop and deployment began to end. Indeed, in its catch-all approach to pacification, Warrenton had something for everyone.

The final recommendations from the Warrenton conference were addressed to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Admiral Raborn, Mr. Bell, Mr. Marks, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy, from the meeting's co-chairmen, Ambassador Unger and Ambassador Porter. The conclusions included the following points (with comments as required):

1. "There was a consensus that the designation of priority rural construction areas for 1966 was important and that the modest goals set for these areas were realistic. However, it was emphasized that the contrast between the massive input of U.S. resources and the modest priority area goals made success in those areas imperative..." 37/

COMMENT: The National Priority Areas did not meet their 1966 goals.

2. "In view of the prime importance to the U.S. of success in the four National Priority Areas, there was discussion of the need for designating U.S. team chiefs to head the U.S. advisory effort in those areas. It was agreed that the U.S. Mission Council would consider this matter promptly and report its conclusions to the VNCC." 38/

COMMENT: The designation of team chiefs for the priority areas did not take place. Here is another example of the Washington effort to reorganize Saigon, with Saigon resisting.

3. "There was widespread recognition of the need to provide within the U.S. Mission a single focus of operational control and management over the full range of the pertinent U.S. efforts in order to gear all such U.S. activities and resources effectively into implementation or the rural construction concept. However, some concern was expressed that too drastic organizational changes within the U.S. Mission would create problems with the counterpart GVN organization and would not ensure success of rural construction programs. No agreement was reached on the precise form for organization changes but there was general consensus that the focal point of control and management had to rest just below the Ambassador and that there must be a senior Mission official solely concerned with this subject. Disagreement was registered as to: (1) whether the Deputy Ambassador, assisted by a staff, should serve this function or whether another senior official



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(perhaps a second Deputy Ambassador) should be appointed; and (2) what extent individual agency personnel, funds, and operations devoted to rural construction could and should be broken out of agency organizations and placed under the direction of the single focal point..." 39/

COMMENT: Here was the compromise wording on the issue which concerned the participants at Warrenton a great deal. Each representative at Warrenton brought with him a proposed organization chart for the Mission (see below), but no agreement could be reached at that time. In the main body of the memorandum to the principals on January 13, 1966, Unger and Porter wrote:

"The optimum organization for the U.S. Mission for its support of the rural construction/pacification program -- a senior official with a supporting staff with full-time responsibility in this field was considered necessary. (Coordination is also required with Ambassador Lodge and Mr. Bell on this point.) It would also be desirable for such an official to have in Washington a high-level point of liaison to assure the expeditious discharge here of urgent Vietnam business in this field..." 40/

When he reported to the Mission Liaison Group on Warrenton two weeks later, on January 27, 1966, Porter sharply downplayed the move for reorganization which was coming from Washington and changed the emphasis. He said:

"a. No decision was reached at Warrenton with respect to a U.S. in-country organization for rural construction, although the possibility of a single manager was discussed.

"b. The U.S. Mission will continue to support Rural Construction with the same organizational structure it is now using, placing particular reliance on the Mission Liaison Group.

"c. Officials in Washington were concerned about teamwork among the U.S. agencies in Vietnam but not about ability to do the job. Differences of opinion are expected, and machinery exists to resolve them. Differences due to personalities cannot be tolerated.

"d. It is clearly understood in Washington that military operations alone are not enough, and that effective Rural Construction is imperative. The highest levels in the USG are keenly aware of the importance of US/GVN work in Rural Construction..." 41/ [Emphasis Added]

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Although not much more than a footnote now, the reorganization schemes that were presented at Warrenton deserve brief mention. At Warrenton, the participants were still fishing for ways and means, and their proposals reveal to a limited extent the intent of each agency when faced, three months later, with a new structure in both Saigon and Washington -- with Porter in charge in Saigon and Komer in business in the White House (discussed in III, 1 & 2).

--Chester Cooper, working for McGeorge Bundy in the White House, proposed a second Deputy Ambassador for Pacification, with control over CIA, USAID, JUSPAO, and partial control (not clarified) over MACV's Rural Construction advisors. Cooper also wanted a "Washington representative" in Saigon to expedite resource allocation. He was ambiguous about Lansdale's role. Cooper advocated a unified field chain of command.

--Poats and Mann submitted a joint Washington-Saigon proposal on behalf of AID (another clear indication of the fact that the real chains of command ran through agency channels, rather than through the Ambassador to Washington). They advocated a complicated arrangement in which a Chief of Staff for Pacification would head up special task forces "drawn from operating agencies but staying in their operational job in their agencies." AID in effect wanted no major change in the Mission, and particularly opposed any change in the multiplicity of chains of command in the provinces. They also advocated a Theater CINC, a resources allocation committee chaired by the AID Mission Director, and a MACV advisory structure that is partially under the Ambassador and partially separate (not clarified).

Zorthian suggested that the Deputy Ambassador coordinate all pacification activities but made it clear that he would make no change in the chains of command. Indeed, he emphasized the direct access of each Mission Council member to the Ambassador, the separateness of each agency's field program.

SACSA proposed a division of MACV into a tactical unit command and a Pacification command. All civilian elements supporting pacification would be under the Deputy for Pacification, who in turn would report to the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador. The advisory structure would have been split down the middle between tactical unit advisors and province/district advisors.

General Collins suggested no major change in the structure of the Mission, but advocated the formation of "Task Groups to deal with specific problems organized on an ad hoc

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basis from personnel provided by interested agencies. The Deputy Ambassador to be relieved of routine duties and to spend substantially all his time on rural construction duties...

The State Department proposed a "Central Pacification Organization" which would have been not more than a coordinating committee for the existing agencies. 42/

What these reorganization proposals seem to suggest, in light of the ultimate direction that the Mission took, is that when agencies are asked to produce suggestions which may reduce or inhibit their prerogatives, they are unlikely to do so in a manner responsive to the requirements of their politically-appointed chieftains. The prerogatives and privileges of the agencies inevitably come first. One does not reorganize voluntarily; the impetus comes from without. This is also seen in the different attitude that the reorganizers had towards Washington and Saigon. Although the same problem in coordination existed (and still exists) in Washington as in Saigon, the Washington officials always were ready to tell Saigon how to clean up its house, but were slow to suggest self-improvements. At Warrenton, perhaps prodded by the Saigon representatives, they did take note of the matter, although they were reluctant to suggest a clear solution:

"Note was also taken of the inadequacy of present U.S. Government machinery to handle Vietnam problems quickly and decisively. The need for referral of too large a number of problems to the Secretarial level was one of the problems mentioned. While the meeting did not have time to come to any firm conclusions, there was a view that the VNCC because of its coordinating, rather than decision-cum-enforcement powers could not perform this task except in part. If endowing the VNCC or its Chairman with larger powers, and with a staff associated with no one agency, is not a feasible solution, it was considered that the required directing position might have to be set up at a higher level, perhaps related to the National Security Council." 43/

In the Warrenton report, then, all the events of the coming year were foreshadowed, and, reading between the lines, one can now see what was coming. Unfortunately, and obviously, this was not the case at the time--particularly for the Mission in Saigon.



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E. Presidential Emphasis on "The Other War" and Press Reaction

At the end of 1965, with the bombing of the north in its tenth month, and our ground forces growing steadily, the Administration was making a determined effort to emphasize those American activities in Vietnam which did not directly involve guns and fighting. This emphasis on what came to be called the "Other War" reached a high point during the conference at Honolulu in February of 1966. The emphasis on the other war did not necessarily have to lead, as it did, to a re-emphasis of pacification; that was a by-product, at least in part, of the renewed support for pacification which had been coming from Ambassador Lodge, the Marines, the CIA (with their cadre), and the advocates of organizational reform (all covered in previous sections). But the two themes merged at Honolulu, and thus, out of the conference, came the first clear statement of Presidential support to pacification.

The need of the Administration to emphasize and publicize the non-military aspects of the war needs little amplification. Few documents show this emphasis in the pre-Honolulu period, since it was so obvious. In an exception, a joint State-USIA message dated October 4, 1965, Washington told the Saigon Mission:

"There is continuing concern at the highest levels here regarding need to emphasize our non-military programs in Vietnam and give them maximum possible public exposure both in U.S. and abroad. [Emphasis Added]"

"We recognize that the Mission is fully cognizant of this problem and already has underway measures to broaden public knowledge and understanding of non-military activities... We are also conscious of difficulties involved in enlisting greater press interest in these developments when it finds military actions more dramatic and newsworthy. Nevertheless, we hope will continue to give non-military programs increasing priority..." 44/

It is useful to recall the situation which existed in February of 1966, when the President went to Honolulu to meet with Ky and Thieu. On January 30, 1966, the bombing of the North began again, after a 37-day pause. There were 197,000 American servicemen in Vietnam by February 1. The Washington Post -- which supported the Administration -- editorialized on February 1:

"It is to be hoped that a new look is being taken at the military tactics in the South so that greater emphasis can be put on the safety of civilians, the rehabilitation of the countryside, the furtherance of economic growth.... Efforts behind the lines at economic and social programs must be increased." 45/



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Senator Fulbright had launched his public hearings on Vietnam, and on February 4 had subjected David Bell of AID to a nearly four-hour grilling in the committee. That same day, the conference was announced.

The emphasis at Honolulu was clear from before the conference started. In his press conference announcing the meeting, the President said that he would take Secretary Freeman and Secretary Gardner, not previously involved in Vietnam, as well as experts from their staffs. Freeman would go on to Saigon, the President added "to explore and inaugurate certain pacification programs in the fields of health, education, and agriculture." The President then added:

"We are going to emphasize, in every way we can, in line with the very fine pronouncements that the Prime Minister [Ky] has made concerning his desires in the field of education and health and agriculture. We want to be sure that we have our best planning and our maximum effort put into it. But we will, of course, go into the military briefing very thoroughly..." 46/

Even before the conference began, there were early reactions from the press to this emphasis. The New York Times editorialized on February 6:

"Programs in health, education and agriculture of the kind President Johnson evidently has in mind, can make an important contribution. To combat the revolutionary idea the Communists have set loose in Vietnam, a better idea is needed. Vigorous social reform -- and particularly, land reform, which has received little more than lip-service so far -- could well be made the price of increased economic aid, which is now to be doubled.

"But an effort to seek political 'victory' in South Vietnam is likely to prove as fruitless as the long attempt at military 'victory.' A more limited and realistic objective is essential." 47/

The conference itself, and its repercussions both in Washington and Vietnam, will be discussed in a following section, so there is little need to dwell on the pre-Honolulu period. In Saigon, where the word of the conference barely preceded the departure of the participants, the New York Times bureau chief wrote a perceptive article which reflected thinking of many junior and mid-level officials in both the U.S. Mission and the GVN. The theme it stated was not new then, and still has a very familiar ring today:

"...There are now 230,000 to 250,000 pro-Communist troops in South Vietnam, including the Vietcong guerrillas

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and about 11 tough regiments of the North Vietnamese Army. That is at least twice as many enemy troops as there were at the start of last year, despite the major United States build-up since then.

"This does not mean that the American build-up has been futile: the build-up was all that saved South Vietnam, in the view of most experts. It does mean that no way has yet been found to prevent the enemy from matching an American build-up with a build-up of his own.

"About 200,000 American troops are now in South Vietnam along with 550,000 South Vietnamese armed men, of whom about half are well-trained army troops.

"American and South Vietnamese military officers have asked for more American troops, requesting a force of about 400,000 men by the end of 1966. Not all of this strength has been promised by President Johnson, but major reinforcements are already in the offing...

"But while 1966 will be an important year militarily, one in which all generals assume that there will be bloodier fighting, it will also be a year of increased emphasis on the subtle political and social aspects of the struggle.

"The Honolulu conference will in fact concentrate largely on economic, social and political problems, according to informed sources.

"It is felt in Saigon, however, that the Johnson Administration cannot, even with the best of intentions, guarantee the allegiance of the Vietnamese to their Government merely by pumping more money and technical skill into South Vietnam to give people the 'better life' of which officials speak.

"At least 20 to 25 per cent of the country's area is so firmly in control of the Vietcong guerrillas that no civic and political programs are possible there at all. Other large areas are so sharply contested that for the time being pacification and rural-improvement workers cannot operate.

"Thus, rural-pacification work in 1966 is to be concentrated in one-third or fewer of the rural hamlets that the Government already claims to control. The limitation implies an admission that after five years of war the allies are starting from scratch in this field, and that progress must be slow.

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"With American enthusiasm, the United States may wish to speed the pace of pacification, but there will be serious obstacles. Most of the sadder but wiser veterans of previous programs in Vietnam seem convinced that pressure from Washington for higher and more seductive statistical goals is a major danger. They counsel 'slowly but surely.'

"As an example, the South Vietnamese Government is trying to turn 23,000 rural-affairs workers, most of them originally trained only in armed propaganda work, into more rounded rural-construction workers.

"It then plans to recruit and train 19,000 more workers, for a total of 42,000. In the opinion of some officials, it will be very difficult even to reach this goal, and any great expansion carries a risk of substituting numbers for real training.

"The present pacification plan is considered imaginative and sound by experts with long experience in Vietnam, but it is considered certain that the plan could be improved at Honolulu.

"Experience has shown that the crucial matter in Vietnam is always execution rather than planning. The scarcest resources in the country are manpower and leadership.

"It is generally agreed that it would not be enough, say, for the United States to offer help in improving agriculture in the South Vietnamese countryside. The Americans must also consider, it is felt, whether their suggested plan is one that the South Vietnamese understand and actually -- rather than merely politely -- approve, and whether the badly strained South Vietnamese administration can execute the plan.

"American experts in Saigon also assert that the highly ideological Vietcong movement cannot be offset merely by offers of a 'better life' for the peasants.

"The Vietcong have a loyal, dedicated and highly disciplined underground political structure that operates in the heart of Saigon itself and in thousands of hamlets. So far the peasants have shown little inclination to inform on this structure and to help the Government activity.

"This is the central problem of the South Vietnamese war..." 48/

Charles Mohr

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F. Meanwhile, Back at the War

The re-emphasis of pacification was, of course, a far more disorderly process than any written review can suggest, and unfortunately must overlook many events and recommendations which were not central to the re-emphasis of pacification. But it is useful and important to review briefly what the Mission was reporting to Washington about the overall effort during 1965, since Saigon's reports should have formed an important part of the background for decision.

This selection should be read not as the "objective" story of what was happening in Vietnam -- such an objective study is simply not possible at this time, even if we had access to enemy thinking -- but as a reflection of the beliefs of the Americans in Saigon, and as a reflection of what the Mission wanted Washington to believe.

This selection is entirely direct quotations from MACV's Monthly Evaluation Report. Each month this report began with a summary of the month's events, and the following items represent the running evaluation for 1965: [Emphasis Added]

"January, 1965: Review of military events in January tend to induce a decidedly more optimistic view than has been seen in recent months. Despite adverse influence exerted by national level political disorders and localized Buddhist/student rioting, the military experienced the most successful single month of the counterinsurgency effort...Pacification made little progress this month. Although some gains were made in the Hop Tac area, effort in the remainder of RVN was hampered by political activity and religious and student disorders...If the RVNAF capability can be underwritten by political stability and durability, a significant turning point in the war could be forthcoming.

"February, 1965: ...GVN forces continued to make progress in III and IV CTZ, maintained a tenuous balance over the VC in I CTZ, and suffered general regression in II CTZ...The indicators of RVNAF operational effort...all showed a decline. However, losses on both sides remained high due to the violence of encounters and VC tenacity...The long term effect of events in February is impossible to foretell. It is obvious that the complexion of the war has changed. The VC appear to be making a concerted effort to isolate the northern portion of RVN by seizing a salient to the sea in the northern part of II CTZ. Here RVNAF has lost the initiative, at least temporarily. However, US/GVN strikes against DRV and increased use of U.S. jet aircraft in RVN has had a salutary effect on



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both military and civilian morale which may result in a greater national effort and, hopefully, reverse the downward trend.

"March, 1965: Events in March were encouraging...RVNAF ground operations were highlighted by renewed operational effort...VC activity was considerably below the norm of the preceding six months and indications were that the enemy was engaged in the re-supply and re-positioning of units possibly in preparation for a new offensive, probably in the II Corps area...In summary, March has given rise to some cautious optimism. The current government appears to be taking control of the situation and, if the present state of popular morale can be sustained and strengthened, the GVN, with continued U.S. support, should be able to counter future VC offenses successfully.

"April, 1965: Friendly forces retained the initiative during April and a review of events reinforces the feeling of optimism generated last month...In summary, current trends are highly encouraging and the GVN may have actually turned the tide at long last. However, there are some disquieting factors which indicate a need to avoid overconfidence. A test of these trends should be forthcoming in the next few months if the VC launch their expected counter-offensive and the period may well be one of the most important of the war.

"May, 1965: The encouraging trends of the past few months did not carry through into May and there were some serious setbacks. However, it is hoped that the high morale and improved discipline and leadership which has developed during that period will sustain future GVN efforts...

"June, 1965: During June the military situation in the RVN continued to worsen despite a few bright spots occasioned by RVNAF successes. In general, however, the VC...retained the initiative having launched several well-coordinated, savage attacks in regimental strength...

"July, 1965: An overall analysis of the military situation at the end of July reveals that GVN forces continued to make progress in IV Corps, maintained a limited edge in I Corps with the increased USMC effort and suffered a general regression in the northern portion of III Corps as well as in the central highlands of II Corps.. The VC monsoon offensive, which was so effective in June, faltered during July as VC casualty figures reached a new high...

"August, 1965: An evaluation of the overall military effort in August reveals several encouraging facts. The most pronounced is the steady increase in the number of VC casualties and the

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number of VC "ralliers" to the GVN...In summary, the general increase in offensive operations by GVN, U.S. and Third Country forces and a correlative increase in enemy casualties have kept the VC off balance and prevented his interference with the build-up of U.S. forces. The often spoken of VC "monsoon offensive" has not materialized, and it now appears that the VC have relinquished the initiative in the conduct of the war.

"September, 1965: As the end of the monsoon season approached, the military situation appears considerably brighter than in May when the VC threatened to defeat the RVNAF. Since May the build-up of Free World Military Assistance Forces, coupled with aggressive combat operations, has thwarted VC plans and has laid the foundation for the eventual defeat of the VC...

"October, 1965: ...an increase in magnitude and tempo of engagements as the GVN/FWF maintained the initiative...In summary, the military situation during October continued to favor the Allies as the VC experienced heavy casualties from the overwhelming Allied fire power...

"November, 1965: The increasing tempo of the war was reflected in casualty totals which reached new highs for VC/PAVN and friendly forces...While keeping the enemy generally off balance, GVN/FWMAF were able to maintain and, to some degree, to increase the scope and intensity of friendly-initiated operations.

"December, 1965: Military activity in December was highlighted by an increase in the number of VC/PAVN attacks on isolated outposts, hamlets, and districts, towns, and the avoidance of contact with large GVN and Free World Forces. The effectiveness of this strategy was attested by the highest monthly friendly casualty total of the war, by friendly weapons losses in excess of weapons captured for the first time since July, and by 30% fewer VC casualties than in November...

"January, 1966: The Free World peace offensive, coupled with TET festivities and the accompanying cease-fire, resulted in a period of restricted military activities for both friendly and enemy forces...Despite this decrease in activity, GVN and Free World Forces continued to force inroads into areas long conceded as VC territory..." 49/ [Emphasis Added]

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the reporting of the war, or of the implications of the above-cited evaluations. But several points do seem to emerge:

1. The reports are far too optimistic from January through April, 1965, and a big switch seems to come in June, 1965, when

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General Westmoreland had already made his 44-battalion request and warned of disaster if they were not forthcoming. May's report begins to show the change in mood, but its ambiguous evaluation is in sharp contrast to the brief backward look offered in September.

2. Pacification is mentioned in the January evaluation, but fades away to virtually nothing in the months of the build-up.
3. The evaluations do not suggest that the main force threat is in any way diminishing by the end of 1965. Indeed, they accurately predict larger battles in 1966. They do not suggest, therefore, that the time had come to start emphasizing pacification at the expense of exerting more pressure directly on the enemy. The evaluations do not address this question directly, of course, but they do suggest that if any greater emphasis was to be put on pacification, it could be done only if there was not a corresponding reduction in the attack effort against the VC. This, in turn, would imply that if pacification was to receive greater emphasis at the beginning of 1966, it would require either more Allied troops or else might lead to a lessening of pressure on the VC.

I. HONOLULU



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II. Honolulu

A. The Conference - February 1966

The details of the closed meetings at Honolulu do not appear, in retrospect, to be nearly as important on the future emphasis on pacification as the mere fact that the public statements of all participants carried forward the theme that had been enunciated in the Declaration. This may often be true of conferences; it certainly appears true of this one, which was convened hastily and took place without any preparatory staff work on either side of the Pacific. In addition, the political upheavals in the spring of 1966, which followed the conference closely, contributed to a reduction in the importance of the details of the conference as it related to pacification.

Pacification was discussed frequently during the closed sessions. The first time came during the plenary session, when Ambassador Lodge delivered his statement to the President.

Speaking before a large audience which included General Thieu and Air Vice Marshal Ky, Lodge made a general statement about what he called "the subterranean war," and then discussed the four National Priority Areas which the GVN and the U.S. had established in October 1965:

"I would like to begin by saying that the successes and the sacrifices of the military, both the Vietnamese and the American military, have created a fresh opportunity to win the so-called 'subterranean war'...

"...We can beat up North Vietnamese regiments in the high plateau for the next twenty years and it will not end the war -- unless we and the Vietnamese are able to build simple but solid political institutions under which a proper police can function and a climate created in which economic and social revolution, in freedom, are possible.

"The GVN has organized itself to do this job and you will hear a presentation by General Thang, who is in charge. The American contribution consists of training and equipping of personnel; advice; and material...

"Four priority areas have been chosen. Three are places of great importance and difficulty. The fourth is largely pacified and is the place where they want to get the economic and social development program going. We think the areas are well chosen. The three tough ones are close to the Vietnamese and American armies which means that the military presence helps pacification. And, as pacification gets going, it improves the base for the military.

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"In the four priority areas are 192 hamlets, including 238,600 people, to be secured by the end of 1966. But GVN efforts are not limited to these four priority areas. An effort is underway which aims to raise the percentage of the whole country which is pacified by about 14%; i.e., from the current figure of about 52% to about 66% by the end of the year..." \* 1/

After the statements of Lodge and Westmoreland (who discussed only military matters), the President said:

"I hope that out of this conference we will return with clear views in our own minds as to how we can apply more military pressure and do it better, how we can build democracy in Vietnam and what steps must be taken to do it better, how we can search for peace in the world, honorable and just peace, and do it better.

"If we can do the first, namely, develop better methods for defeating the Viet Cong and better methods for developing a democracy, I have no doubt but that the third will be much easier to do because you can bargain much better from strength than you can from weakness." 3/

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\* On March 4, 1966, Lodge transmitted the text and charts of this briefing to Secretary McNamara and apparently at the same time to the White House, at the request of Jack Valenti. Lodge wrote:

"Dear Bob:

"At the request of Jack Valenti, I have put together a book containing the text and maps used in my presentation at the Honolulu Conference. It is intended to serve as a current indicator of pacification progress being made within the 1966 National Priority Areas...

"I think I should call attention to the fact that for Americans, it is natural to set goals and then work to achieve them by a specific date.

"This, however, is not the traditional Vietnamese way. While they have set a goal of 190 hamlets in the four priority areas, my guess would be that by the end of 1966, they may have achieved somewhat more than this, but not necessarily the ones which are listed here. In fact, if they ran into unexpectedly heavy opposition in one place and find a particularly good and unexpected opportunity elsewhere, they probably ought to change the plan..." 2/

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After a short recess, Secretary Rusk then discussed the reasons why Hanoi was not yet ready to negotiate, and said that if the GVN built "the kind of society which is indestructible," then Hanoi would probably come to the conference table more rapidly. "Anything that can move faster rather than more slowly on our side and your side," he said, "anything that can cause them to realize that an epidemic of confidence is building in the South and that momentum is gathering could hasten the time when Hanoi will decide to stop this aggression." 4/

The President then said: "I hope that every person here from the U.S. side will bear in mind that before I take that plane back, I want to have the best suggestion obtainable as to how we can bring better military pressure on Hanoi and from the pacification side how we can bring a better program to the people of South Vietnam, and finally, third, what other efforts we can make to secure a just and honorable peace. Now, I want to have my little briefcase filled with those three targets -- a better military program, a better pacification program that includes everything, and a better peace program." 5/

General Thang then presented the GVN's pacification plans, in a briefing later made public. Thang said:

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

"...But it is necessary, Mr. President, to define what this means by pacification. In my opinion, that is a failure of the past government, not to define exactly what we mean by pacification...

"I think that it is necessary to...define pacification as an effort to restore the public security first, and carrying out a government policy which aims at improving the standard of living in this area in every respect -- political, economic, social.

"...the prerequisite is security...So our concept of pacification is based on four main points:

Point No. 1: The rural pacification operation can only implement through the real solidarity among the people, the armed forces, and the administration...

Point No. 2: Our government should be very clear when it says that it would like to build a new society for a better life in rural areas. That is meaningless to the peasant if you don't develop that in a concrete package.

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[At this point, Thang launched into a lengthy explanation of what he meant by a new society. In a vague discussion, he described the social, economic, and political attributes of the new society, all of which were general and idealized statements.]

Point No. 3: The clear and realistic policy of the government contributing to a better life in a new society I just mentioned should be widely known among the population and the cadres...

Point No. 4: Rural pacification operations will open lasting peace if the enemy infrastructure is destroyed and permanently followed up, our own infrastructure created and supported by the people...All provinces have promised to the government that 75 percent of the following facts maybe can be accomplished by the 1st of January 1967:

"Pacification of 963 new hamlets; pacification of 1,083 existing hamlets; building of 2251 classrooms; 913 kilometers of roads; 128 bridges; 57 dams; and 119 kilometers of canals ...While we have selected four areas of priority, the pacification operation has been pushed forward as usual, but with less efforts...

"Rural pacification will be a long-term operation. We have modest and practical, rather than spectacular, goals for 1966..." 6/

After General Thang's remarks, the plenary session records show repeated references to the pacification effort, although there is confusion as to what it means. General Thieu made additional summary remarks on pacification, then Minister Ton gave a briefing on the economic situation, followed by David Bell on the same subject.

The next day, February 8, the working groups presented their findings to the President. First, Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Do discussed the session on negotiations. Then General Thang and Secretary Freeman reported on their session on rural construction. The details of the working groups session itself are covered below, but in plenary. Thang emphasized the following points:

Our future should be developed mainly in four priority areas...Handicraft should be introduced and developed in those areas also...Rural electrification should be developed and the number of generators increased in 1967...



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Land reform efforts should be pushed forward...

We ask that construction material and cement be sent to Vietnam as soon as possible so our school programs can be developed...

The training of officials at hamlet and village levels is vital... 7/

Secretary Freeman, who was about to make his first trip to Vietnam, summarized for the Americans:

"Having spent a good deal of time yesterday listening to the very eloquent presentations by the Chairman and the Prime Minister, as well as by Minister Ton, this is pretty much what we would call a nuts and bolts discussion session.

"One thing that was decided for United States purposes, for purposes of phraseology, was that the word 'pacification' really did not have the right tone. The term 'social construction' might better be used...

"There was some discussion, considerable, about the selection of province chiefs. It was strongly emphasized that it was important that the men be of integrity and ability, and that they be selected and maintained and backed up.

"The Prime Minister, General Thieu, and then General Thang both said that you [General Thieu] were personally interested in this, and that you were going to select them shortly, that they would have a duration of at least a year, but would be carefully reviewed and would be changed if they didn't do the job, but wouldn't be changed for other reasons, which we thought was extremely important and we were gratified to find it out.

"You also explained to us, your associates General Ky and General Thang, the change of command, saying in the past they were confused, and that they were now clear, so that everyone knew exactly what their function would be.

"Then you discussed the training of the cadre...

"I want to review the REA question and find out a bit more about why that seemed to have some lag.

"Finally, we discussed the possibility of a joint training program for the village and hamlet chiefs who presumably would be elected, but that some background in the philosophy, purpose and aims of government, and the techniques of governing and administration, were felt to be needed by those people. 8/

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The President then responded to the remarks of Thang and Freeman by urging "all of you connected with our program...to give very special attention to refugee camps and the schools in the refugee camps." 9/ He then turned to Minister Ton and David Bell for a discussion of the economic situation. Then Secretary Gardner, who had co-chaired a working group on health and education -- the distinction between rural construction and the health/education programs was not clarified -- made his remarks. He set out perhaps the most clearly-defined objectives of the session (except for the economic negotiations), describing the new contract with the AMA for training personnel, the new goal for provincial medical teams, and the plans for a new medical logistics system. In large part his goals were more specific than those of the other working group because the USAID Public Health Chief in Saigon, Major General James Humphries, had already laid groundwork for an excellent program of health services and assistance, and Gardner was able to work from a specific plan.

Gardner went on to discuss education, where his goals and objectives were less clear, and the President asked several detailed questions, concluding by asking General Ky to ask the Ambassador to request an educational team to go to Saigon after the agricultural team headed by Secretary Freeman returned.

The Vietnamese then thanked the Americans for the conference, and in turn some of the senior members of the American delegation -- in order, Admiral Sharp, Leonard Marks, General Wheeler, Ambassador Lodge, Ambassador Harriman -- made brief statements about the meaning of the conference. The President then made his final statement:

"...Preserve this communique, because it is one we don't want to forget. It will be a kind of bible that we are going to follow. When we come back here 90 days from now, or six months from now, we are going to start out and make reference to the announcements that the President, the Chief of State and the Prime Minister made in paragraph 1, and what the leaders and advisors reviewed in paragraph 2...You men who are responsible for these departments, you ministers, and the staffs associated with them in both governments, bear in mind we are going to give you an examination and the finals will be on just what you have done.

"In paragraph 5; how have you built democracy in the rural areas? How much of it have you built, when and where? Give us dates, times, numbers.

"In paragraph 2; larger outputs, more efficient production to improve credit, handicraft, light industry, rural electrification -- are those just phrases, high-sounding words, or have you coonskins on the wall...

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"Next is health and education, Mr. Gardner. We don't want to talk about it; we want to do something about it. 'The President pledges he will dispatch teams of experts.' Well, we better do something besides dispatching. They should get out there. We are going to train health personnel. How many? You don't want to be like the fellow who was playing poker and when he made a big bet they called him and said 'what have you got?' He said, 'aces' and they asked 'how many' and he said 'one aces'...

"Next is refugees. That is just as hot as a pistol in my country. You don't want me to raise a white flag and surrender so we have to do something about that...

"Growing military effectiveness: we have not gone in because we don't want to overshadow this meeting here with bombs, with mortars, with hand grenades, with 'Masher' movements. I don't know who names your operations, but 'Masher.' I get kind of mashed myself. But we haven't gone into the details of growing military effectiveness for two or three reasons. One, we want to be able to honestly and truthfully say that this has not been a military build-up conference of the world here in Honolulu. We have been talking about building a society following the outlines of the Prime Minister's speech yesterday.

"Second, this is not the place, with 100 people sitting around, to build a military effectiveness.

"Third, I want to put it off as long as I can, having to make these crucial decisions. I enjoy this agony...I don't want to come out of this meeting that we have come up here and added on X divisions and Y battalions or Z regiments or D dollars, because one good story about how many billions are going to be spent can bring us more inflation that we are talking about in Vietnam. We want to work those out in the quietness of the Cabinet Room after you have made your recommendations, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp, when you come to us..."<sup>10</sup> / Emphasis Added

The President's remarks candidly indicated the type of pressure and the expectations that he had for the effort.

But beyond the high-level interest so clearly demonstrated publicly for the first time at Honolulu, what was accomplished? As mentioned earlier, Honolulu's importance lay in two things: (1) the public support shown for the "other war"; and (2) the sections of the Declaration which committed the GVN to the electoral process. If nothing else was accomplished at Honolulu, that made the conference worthwhile. Thus, it is perhaps petty to criticize the details of the conference. But they do



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suggest an unfortunate failure to come to grips with any of the basic issues concerning pacification, and, moreover, a skillful performance by the GVN to please their American hosts. Thang's statement to the President after the working session, for example, with its emphasis on rural electrification, handicrafts, and the need for "materials and cement" -- none of which were major GVN concerns at that time -- can best be explained, in retrospect, by the Vietnamese desire to emphasize those things they felt the Secretary of Agriculture, the co-chairman of the American working group, was most interested in.

Although the inner workings of the conference do not seem to have had much importance on the development of the pacification effort, a record does remain of the "rural construction working group," and it deserves a brief summary. The meeting is useful to examine not because of its ultimate importance, which was marginal, but because it provides us with a record of a type of discussion between Americans and Vietnamese which has been replayed constantly since (and before). To some weary participants, the very words used have seemed to be unchanged since 1962.

A summary cannot, unfortunately, recapture the flavor of confusion which surrounds the memorandum for the record (A-2254, February 15, 1966). The meeting began with a discussion of terminology (see footnote on "revolutionary development") in which it was decided to use the phrase "social construction" in place of pacification in English. Then, according to the memorandum, everyone lapsed back into using the phrase "pacification."

The American representatives then pressed the issue of the role of the province chief, implying strongly that they thought the province chiefs should have more power and autonomy. The Vietnamese, led by General Co, neatly answered this issue, "referring to the establishment of Rural Construction Councils and Division and Corps levels, where such matters as the disposition and use of military forces are arbitrated and decided upon." When Leonard Unger, asked if the military commanders would be committed to providing the necessary military forces for the pacification effort, "General Co again responded, saying that in the past senior commanders tended to pull troops away from Provincial control for search and destroy operations. This is a natural desire on the part of these commanders who tend to feel that this is a more important role for such troops. Now, however, their missions have changed. These senior commanders are now directly involved in the pacification program, are members of the respective Rural Construction Councils...In other words, things have changed for the better. Ambassador Unger continued to pursue his point, stressing our concern that vestiges of the past may still remain. General Thang re-entered the discussion, explaining that the GVN now has a new chain of command, clear and clean from Saigon to the Corps to the Division to the Province to the District; there is only one channel in the country and it is a military channel...Still on the same subject,



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Mr. Poats raised the question: What is the primary mission of the Division Commander? Is it pacification? General Thang answered in the affirmative."

The discussion continued along these lines, and the airgram candidly concludes: "Generals Co and Thang were being pressed by rather pointed questions at this juncture and seemed to be trying to indicate that pacification is a primary task, although other military tasks must continue to be performed. It was fairly apparent that troops charged with securing the pacification area are liable still to be withdrawn on a temporary basis to meet situations which ARVN senior commanders judge to be critical."

The meeting then discussed the cadre program; the renewed emphasis on village government; the role of the province chief (at this point General Co made his statement that the GVN would appoint province chiefs for one year minimum period, a decision which was never carried out); the introduction of troops; the cadre (again); the six areas where the effort needed improvement (agriculture, handicraft, land reform, rural electrification, construction materials, and training of local officials); land reform (with Minister Tri presenting his four-month old plan again, and Poats expressing "concern about the performance to date"); and the general question of pacification goals.

And then, after reporting back to the President in the meeting described earlier, the participants broke up, returning to Saigon and Washington to give "the other war" a new emphasis; to reorganize the Mission in Saigon; to appoint a new Special Assistant to the President in Washington; to start the quest for coonskins (the phrase was in common use in Saigon within a few days); to await the public and press reaction (see following section); and to walk without warning into a major political crisis which almost brought the government down, set back every time-schedule made at Honolulu, forced a postponement of the next scheduled conference from June-July until October, and -- through an ironic twist of fate -- left the GVN stronger than before, following a remarkably successful election.

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B. Impact on Public in US, on US Mission in Vietnam, and on Vietnamese

"This week the word 'pacification' was on everyone's lips at the Honolulu conference on Vietnam," wrote Charles Mohr in the New York Times, February 13, 1966, "and many important members of the Johnson Administration embraced the idea with all the enthusiasm of a horse player with a new betting system. The main purpose of the Honolulu conference was to dramatize this American enthusiasm for the 1966 rural pacification -- sometimes called 'rural construction' -- program of the Government of South Vietnam and to pledge more American assistance for the program."

Mohr's article may have been slightly exaggerated, but there can be little doubt that the President's pledge on behalf of the U.S. Government to the pacification effort began a new period for the U.S. Government in Vietnam. From Honolulu on it was open and unmistakable U.S. policy to support pacification and the "other war," and those who saw these activities as unimportant or secondary had to submerge their sentiments under a cloud of rhetoric. Despite this fact, of course, many heated discussions still lay ahead of the Mission on program after program, and many major battles remained to be fought. Porter and Komer would fight them, as will be shown later.

This was the great impact of Honolulu -- on pacification. But there were other ramifications of the Honolulu conference which overshadowed the emphasis on non-military activities in the months that followed. Because of these events -- particularly the political upheavals that rocked Vietnam from March until June -- the follow-up conference tentatively planned for June did not take place, and the growth in pacification's importance was probably set back about six months. While this study does not try to cover the concurrent events of the period, it should be emphasized that the most important parts of the Honolulu Declaration were not those dealing with pacification at all, but rather the sections which committed the GVN to "formulate a democratic constitution to the people for discussion and modification; to seek its ratification by secret ballot; to create, on the basis of elections rooted in that constitution, an elected government..." <sup>11/</sup> With these words, the GVN was openly committed, under U.S. pressure, to a process which they probably did not desire or appreciate. In the months that followed, the words of the Honolulu Declaration were used against General Ky by his Buddhist Struggle Movement opponents, to hoist him on his Honolulu petard; but then, in a remarkable about-face, Ky simultaneously cracked down on the Buddhists and held successful elections for a Constitutional Assembly (September 11, 1966).

The following collection of newspaper items is selected to show that there were differing opinions within the U.S. Mission and among Vietnamese, but that in general the message from Honolulu did get through to the Mission. Since almost every reporter in Saigon had sources within some element of the Mission who were telling him their

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honest feelings (the Saigon Mission, it was once said by Barry Zorthian, could not keep a secret 24 hours), the stories from Saigon do reflect what the Mission thought in the days just after Honolulu. The editorials and columnists from Washington indicate to what degree the Administration succeeded in convincing the press corps (which is not, of course, the U.S. public) that the emphasis at Honolulu was really on pacification.

EDITORIAL: The New York Herald Tribune, February 8:

"The meeting presents the prospect of our resuming the war in more favorable circumstances. The meeting of the heads of the American and South Vietnamese governments is a fresh and stronger demonstration of mutual confidence. On this basis they can now proceed to mount measures for dealing with the equally important military and civilian aspects of the war.

"The two are intimately related...the loyalty and support of the peasants in the interior are essential. President Johnson is bidding for them by offering some of the benefits of his Great Society program to the South Vietnamese. It will not be easy, in time of war,...but...they must be pursued with the same vigor as we press the war on the battlefield."

EDITORIAL: The Washington Evening Star, February 7:

"It is particularly significant that the American delegation included HEW Secretary Gardner and Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture. Their presence certainly means that a greater 'pacification' effort will be made as the fighting goes on..."

COLUMNIST: Marquis Childs, February 9 (from Honolulu)

"This conference called by President Johnson is a large blue chip put on the survival value of the wiry, exuberant Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, and the generals who rule with him. It is expected that Ky will not only survive but that with massive economic help from the U.S. the national leadership committee will eventually win the support of the peasant in the countryside...Any sensible bookmaker would quote long odds against the bet paying off. But after so many false starts this seems to be the right direction -- a determined drive to raise the level of living in the countryside and close the gap of indifference and hostility between the peasant and the sophisticated city dweller...Over and over we have been told that only by winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people will

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we achieve a victory that has meaning beyond the grim choice of pulverization of American occupation into the indefinite future ...This is the reason teams of American specialists in agriculture, health, and education are going to Vietnam..."

EDITORIAL: The New York Herald Tribune, February 9:

"Perhaps the most constructive part of the Honolulu conference was the emphasis it placed on this hitherto badly neglected aspect of the Viet Nam war [Pacification]. It is unfortunate that Chief of State Thieu diverted attention from it by heaping more fuel on the controversy over whether the Viet Cong should or should not sit at a peace conference table..."

EDITORIAL: The New York Times, February 9 and 13:

"The Honolulu conference has followed the classic pattern of Summit meetings that are hastily called without thorough preparation in advance; it has left confusion in its wake, with more questions raised than answered...The one important area of agreement at Honolulu, apart from continuation of the military efforts, was on an expanded program of 'rural construction.' The prospective doubling of American economic aid, however, will be futile unless it is accompanied by a veritable social revolution, including vigorous land reform. Premier Ky cast some doubt in his emphasis on moving slowly. His Minister of Rural Pacification envisages action in only 1,900 of South Vietnam's 15,000 hamlets this year.

"Vice President Humphrey evidently has his work cut out for him in his follow-up visit to Saigon. Unless some way can be found to give more momentum to this effort, the new economic aid program may go down the same drain as all previous programs of this kind.

"It would be a cruel deception for Americans to get the idea that social reforms carried out by the Ky government with American money are going to make any perceptible difference in the near future to the Vietnamese people or to the course of the war."

COLUMNIST: Ted Lewis, New York Daily News, February 10 (from Washington):

"Why, all of a sudden, has President Johnson begun to come to grips with the 'other war' in South Vietnam?... Johnson, with his typical oratorical flourishes, has given the impression that he launched something totally new at



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Honolulu...The fact is that for several years this problem of the 'other war' has been recognized as vital by the State Department, the Pentagon and even by the White House. But nobody did much about it, except in an offhand way...

"Johnson is a master of timing. He has definitely gained a political advantage over his Viet policy critics by stressing right now the need of winning over the peasants.../Senator Robert/ Kennedy complained in a Senate speech just ten days ago that there were 'many indications that we have not yet even begun to develop a program...It is absolutely urgent,' the Senator said, 'that we now act to institute new programs of education, land reform, public health, political participation...'."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Richard Critchfield in The Washington Evening Star, February 9 (from Saigon):

"President Johnson's historic decision at Honolulu backing an American-sponsored brand of social revolution as an alternative to communism in South Vietnam was warmly hailed today by veteran political observers. The Honolulu declaration was viewed as ending postwar era of American foreign policy aimed at stabilizing the status quo in Asia.

"The key phrase, in the view of many diplomats here, was the offer of full American 'support to measures of social revolution, including land reform based upon the principle of building upward from the hopes and purposes of all the people of Vietnam.

"...Johnson's decisions to put political remedies on a par with military action are also regarded here as a major personal triumph for Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and his top aide, Major General Edward G. Lansdale, the two main advocates of 'social revolution' in South Vietnam...The Honolulu declaration appears to signify a major shift away from the policy of primarily military support established by President Kennedy in 1961 and closely identified with General Maxwell Taylor, Defense Secretary McNamara, and Secretary of State Rusk...The Lodge-Lansdale formula was a striking departure in that it saw the eventual solution not so much in Hanoi's capitulation as in successful pacification in South Vietnam...The Honolulu declaration amounts to almost a point by point acceptance of this formula and both its phraseology and philosophy bear Lansdale's unmistakable imprint..."

EDITORIAL: The Baltimore Sun, February 10:

"Unless there was more substance to the Honolulu Conference than meets the eye, it could be summed up as much ado -- not

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much ado about nothing but simply much ado...It was all spectacular and diverting but so far as we can see the problem of the war is where it was before the burst of activity began...It is probably worthwhile to have a reiteration of the social and economic measures needed in South Vietnam...It is essential to underscore the political nature of the war, along with the continuing military operations. But these matters were generally understood before the Honolulu meetings. Perhaps events to come will make the purpose of the meeting clearer."

EDITORIAL: The New York Post, February 9:

"The Hawaii meetings were advertised as the beginning of a vast new movement of economic and social reform in Vietnam, President Johnson, we were told, went to Honolulu to launch the new approach with maximum drama.

"Instead, the session inadvertently underscored the lack of interest of the junta in Saigon in anything but military conquest of the Viet Cong, to be carried out by stepped up U.S. armed efforts..."

NEWS STORY: AP, February 10 (from Honolulu):

"Vice President Humphrey left for Saigon today with South Vietnam's top leaders to spur action on programs attacking hunger, disease, and ignorance in that war-torn country..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Charles Mohr, The New York Times, February 10 (from Saigon):

"In the atmosphere of Honolulu, there was much emphasis on form, so much that in some ways it may have obscured substance. The Americans appeared so delighted with Marshal Ky's 'style' -- with his showing as a politically salable young man with the right instincts rather than as a young warlord -- that there seemed to be almost no emphasis on the important differences between the Governments...What Marshal Ky told President Johnson was something he had often said before: South Vietnamese society is still riddled with social injustices and political weaknesses; there is not one political party worthy of the name...The South Vietnamese leaders believe that they could not survive a 'peaceful settlement' that left the VC political structure in place, even if the VC guerrilla units were disbanded. Therefore, the South Vietnamese feel that 'rural pacification,' of which much was said at Honolulu, is necessary not

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only to help them achieve military victory but also to prevent a political reversal of that victory...As the Vietnamese see pacification, its core is not merely 'helping the people to a better life,' the aspect on which many American speakers dwelled, it is rather the destruction of the clandestine VC political structure and the creation of an ironlike system of government political control over the population...

"But the two governments have never been closer than they are in the aftermath of Honolulu, and the atmosphere of good feeling seems genuine..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Roscoe Drummond, February 14 (from Washington):

"...The decisions taken at Honolulu by President Johnson and Premier Ky go to the heart of winning. They were primarily social, economic, and political decisions. They come at a malleable and perhaps decisive turn in the war..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Tom Wicker in The New York Times, February 13 (from Saigon):

"Vice President Humphrey...has left Saigon reverberating with what he said was the 'single message' he had come to deliver. The message was that the war in Vietnam was a war to bring social justice and economic and political progress to the Vietnamese people...Humphrey said at a news conference here: 'Social and economic revolution does not belong to the VC. Non-communist forces are the ones forwarding the revolution.'

"The emphasis on social reform could also quiet critics who contend that Washington has concentrated too much on the military problem and not enough on civic action to win the loyalty of the Vietnamese people..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Charles Mohr, The New York Times, February 13 (from Saigon):

"By giving enormous emphasis and publicity to it, an impression was left that pacification is something new. In a sense, there was some truth in this. The men running the program, both Vietnamese and American, are new. And the 1966 plan itself is a new one in many respects.

"Pacification is vitally important to success in the guerrilla war in South Vietnam. Without it, purely military success becomes empty even if all the battles are 'won'."

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NEWS ANALYSIS: Joseph Alsop, February 14 (from Saigon):

"CART BEFORE HORSE...All that really mattered at Honolulu was a Presidential decision to provide the forces needed to keep the pressure on the enemy here in Vietnam. The odds are heavy that the President, who seems to prefer doing good by stealth, actually took this decision behind the electorate smokescreen of talk about other matters. The question remains whether the needed forces will be provided soon enough. One must wait and see.

"But at the risk of sounding captious, and for the sake of honesty and realism, it must be noted that there was a big Madison Avenue element in all the talk about 'pacification' during the Hawaii meeting and Vice President Humphrey's subsequent visit to Vietnam.

"This does not mean that pacification of the Vietnamese countryside is an unimportant and/or secondary problem. On the contrary, it will eventually be all-important and primary. But one need only glance at the list of priority areas marked for pacification now, to see the adman's touch in the present commotion.

"There are: An Giang Province, which belongs to the Hoa Hao sect and has been long since pacified by the Hoa Hao; the Hop Tac region near Saigon, where General Harkins experimented unhappily with the so-called oil spot technique; parts of Binh Dinh Province along the north-south highway; and the fringes of the Marine enclave at Da Nang.

"Each area differs from the others. In the case of the nine villages on the fringes of the Marines' Da Nang enclave, for instance, pacification is needed to insure airfield security from mortar fire. Most of these villages have been Viet Cong strongholds for over 20 years, and they could be dangerous.

"...Pacification by the Marines looks very fine...But it takes far too many Marines to do the job.

"Nonetheless, the real objections to making a big-immediate show of pacification are quite different. The Hop Tac experience tells the story. Here a great effort was made by the Vietnamese authorities with the strong support of General Harkins. A good deal was initially accomplished. Boasts began to be heard. Whereat the enemy sailed forth from the nearest redoubt area, knocked down everything that had been built up, murdered all the



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villagers who had worked with the government, and left things much worse than they had been before...An attempt to make a big immediate show of pacification needs to be warned against, because of the Washington pressure to do just that. A large element of the U.S. Mission was called home a month or so ago. And in effect, these men were commanded to produce a plan for making a show as soon as possible.

"Fortunately, they had the courage to point out that the cart was being put before the horse once again. Fortunately, Ambassador Lodge is well aware of the dangers of putting the cart before the horse. The pressure for something showy may continue, but it is likely to be resisted.

"If so, the pressure will not be altogether useless. The Vietnamese and the Americans here are getting ready for pacification on a big scale and in an imaginative way, partly because of that pressure.

"It is vital to have everything in readiness to do the job of pacification as soon as favorable circumstances arise. But it is also vital to bear in mind that really favorable circumstances cannot arise until the enemy's backbone of regular units is at last very close to the breaking point, if not actually beginning to break."

EDITORIAL: Christian Science Monitor, February 11:

"If Saigon and Washington fight South Vietnam's economic and social war as vigorously as they fight its military war, the Communist thrust against that country will fail. Yet this is the biggest 'if' of the war. Over and over lip-service has been paid to the inescapable need of winning over the peasantry. But time and again this has come to naught.

"We are cautiously encouraged by the latest steps being taken. The strong emphasis laid in the Honolulu Declaration on civic reforms is a commitment in the right direction. The sending of Vice-President Humphrey to study South Vietnamese reform programs on the spot is an even stronger earnest of America's intention not to let this program slip back into another do-nothing doldrum..."



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III. Honolulu to Manila

A. Saigon: Porter in Charge

"Question. Mr. President, when you were in Los Angeles reporting on the Honolulu Conference, you listed eleven items which you said were discussed, and you said that in all these fields you set targets, concrete targets. Would it be possible to get a list of these concrete targets?

"Answer. I don't have any. I think what I had in mind there was saying that we hoped to make certain progress in certain fields and we expect to have another conference after a reasonable length of time, in which we will take the hits, runs, and errors and see what we have achieved and everybody would be answerable, so to speak, as to the progress they have made and whether or not they are nearing their goals...I hope to be in Honolulu in the next few months, maybe in the middle of the year, and see what has been done. I thought it was good that we could go there and have the Government and the military leader, General Westmoreland, and the Ambassador and the Deputy Ambassador, meet with the Vice President, the Secretary of Agriculture and technicians, and try to expose to the world for three days what this country is trying to do to feed the hungry, and educate the people, and to improve the life span for people who just live to be 35 now...A lot of our folks think it is just a military effort. We don't think it should be that, and we don't want it to be that..." 1/

As the President returned to Washington from Honolulu, the Vice President, Secretary Freeman, and McGeorge Bundy headed up a large list of high-ranking officials that went on to Saigon. Bundy, about to leave the government, carried with him authority from the President to give the Deputy Ambassador wide authority over all aspects of the rural construction program. On February 12, 1966, the President sent Ambassador Lodge a NODIS telegram, which was designed to pave the way for Bundy's reorganization effort:

"QUOTE. I hope that you share my own satisfaction with the Honolulu Conference. The opportunity to talk face to face with you, General Westmoreland and the Vietnamese leaders has given me a much better appreciation of the problems each of you face, but perhaps even more importantly the opportunities open to us. I was particularly impressed with the apparent determination of Thieu, Ky and the other Vietnamese Ministers to carry forward a social policy of radical and constructive change. However, I full well realize the tremendous job that they and we have in putting this into practice. I intend to see that our organization back here for supporting this is promptly tightened and

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strengthened and I know that you will want to do the same at your end. I was impressed with Ambassador Porter and it seems to me that he probably has the necessary qualifications to give you the support you will need in this field. While I know that he is already doing so, I suggest that your designation of him as being in total charge, under your supervision, of all aspects of the rural construction program would constitute a clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu Conference really marks a new departure in this vital field of our effort there. We will of course be glad to give prompt support with whatever additional personnel or administrative rearrangement this might require within the Mission or Embassy. Please let me know your own thoughts on this.

"I hope that in June we can have a full report showing real progress in our war on social misery in Viet Nam. In the meanwhile, I know that you will not hesitate to let me know how we can be of help. UNQUOTE

"The President has instructed that a copy of this message be given to McGeorge Bundy." 2/

The President also sent General Westmoreland a personal telegram that day, which did not mention the matter of civilian organization. To Westmoreland he wrote:

"QUOTE. I want you to know that I greatly enjoyed the opportunity of talking directly with you at Honolulu and I hope you share my own satisfaction on the outcome of that conference. I was much encouraged by your presentation of the military situation and now have even more pride and confidence in what you and your men are doing. I feel that we are on the right track and you can be sure of my continued support.

"I know that you share my own views on the equal importance of the war on social misery, and hope that what we did at Honolulu will help assure that we and the Vietnamese move forward with equal vigor and determination on that front. As I have told Ambassador Lodge and am telling Thieu and Ky, I hope that in June I can have a report of real progress in that field. With continued progress in the military field, we should by that time be able to see ahead more clearly the road to victory over both aggression and misery.

"You have my complete confidence and genuine admiration and absolute support. I never forget that I have a lot riding on you. UNQUOTE." 3/



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After the mood at the Warrenton Conference, the push for reorganization should have come as no surprise to the higher ranking members of the Mission. Discussions centering around the role of the Deputy Ambassador (and earlier, the DCM) as a manager for the mushrooming Civilian Mission had been going on for a long time, as Lodge and Porter well knew. With Bundy in Saigon to ease the issue, Lodge answered the President on February 15, 1966:

"I do indeed want to 'tighten and strengthen the organization for support of the rural construction program at this end,' as you tell me you plan to do at yours. And I applaud your determination to treat 'rural construction' (for which there should be a better name) \* as an end in itself and on a par with the military.

"As you say, Ambassador Porter is already putting a great deal of effort into this work. I have never made a formal announcement of this fact because it seemed to me that the arrangement was working pretty well as it was and that public announcement was unnecessary. Also, I felt the U.S. Government

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\* Lodge had for some time been troubled by the phrase "rural construction" -- the literal translation of the Vietnamese Xay Dung Nong Thon -- which he felt suggested bricks and cement, rather than the entire program of "revolutionary uplift" which he advocated. Right after the Honolulu meeting, he asked each member of the Mission Council for suggestions on how better to translate the Vietnamese phrase. Out of the suggestions that he received (including Westmoreland's recommendation that we ought to leave the phrase alone, just translating the literal meaning of the Vietnamese as accurately as possible), Lodge chose the phrase "Revolutionary Development." At about the same time, the GVN dropped the word "rural" from the name of the Ministry of Rural Construction (thus, Xay Dung Nong Thon was replaced by Xay Dung). Lodge and Ky then announced that henceforth the Vietnamese Ministry would be known in English as the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and the overall program called Revolutionary Development (RD). To this day, the semantic gap remains unbridged: the Vietnamese call it the Ministry of Construction (Bo Xay Dung), except when they are talking in English to an American; the Americans call it the MORD. The same applies to the program: moreover, the confusion is often compounded by the fact that in most informal discussions between Americans and Vietnamese, the term most often used is still "pacification." See, for example, the Working Group session at Honolulu, February 7, 1966: "It is perhaps significant that this was the only time in the course of the meeting, i.e., at the outset, that the newly adopted U.S. term was heard. Throughout the remainder of the Working Group discussion, the term pacification was used almost exclusively. In this connection, the Saigon U.S. representatives present at the meeting are inclined to doubt the actual appropriateness of the new term...)"

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was getting really enthusiastic work without thought of self from both Porter and Lansdale under present conditions. I felt public announcements might make Lansdale feel less important without any gain for Porter who does not need or want a sense of importance. I believe that Americans are pulling together here as never before and that there is a spirit here which is worth more than organization charts.

"But I can see the merit of the idea that a public designation of Porter as being in total charge of the American aspects of the rural construction program would 'constitute a clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu Conference really marks a new departure.'

"There are pitfalls to be avoided. For example, I assume that if Porter's new allocation means that I am so taken up with U.S. visitors that I am in effect separated from 'rural construction,' then we would take a new look at the whole thing. Much of the most time-consuming job out here is not rural construction but is the handling and educating of U.S. visitors. Although it must be done at the expense of the war effort within Vietnam, it is vitally important. But it was not until the end of January that I was free enough of visitors to start holding meetings of U.S. 'rural construction' workers to probe and to prod and to develop the 'check-up' maps which I showed you at Honolulu.

"I suggest, therefore that I make the following announcement: 'I have today designated Deputy Ambassador William Porter to take full charge, under my direction, of all aspects of work of the United States in support of the programs of community building, presently described as rural construction, agreed at the Honolulu Conference. This includes overcoming by police methods the criminal, as distinct from the military aspect of Viet Cong violence; and the training and installation of health, education and agricultural workers and of community organizers. Ambassador Porter will have the support of a small staff drawn from all elements of the U.S. Mission, and he and I will continue to have the help of General Edward Lansdale as senior liaison officer and adviser. Ambassador Porter will continue to serve as my Deputy in the full sense of the word, but he will be relieved as far as possible of all routine duties not connected with the Honolulu program. We are determined that this program for peace and progress shall be carried forward with all the energy and skill of a fully coordinated U.S. Mission effort, always with full recognition that the basic task of nation-building here belongs to the people of Viet Nam and to their government.'

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"I know that you appreciate that this is essentially a Vietnamese program and that what Porter would be supervising would be the American end of it. I recognize the existence of the view that we must in effect impose detailed plans and somehow run the pacification effort ourselves. But I do not share it. Nothing durable can be accomplished that way.

"As far as 'administrative rearrangement' is concerned, I would like Sam Wilson to take the office now occupied by Porter, with the rank of Minister, and to serve as Mission coordinator. I intend to put Habib in the office now occupied by Chadbourn with the rank of Minister....

"As soon as I receive word from you that this is satisfactory, I intend to make the announcement about Porter. The other appointments can be announced later. LODGE" 4/

From the beginning, Lodge, who felt that "a public announcement was unnecessary" except as a "clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu conference really marks a new departure," 4/ was not overly enthusiastic about the public designation of his deputy as being "in total charge" of something. The documentation is virtually nonexistent on the question of whether Lodge's feelings on this point acted as a constraint on Porter, but it is hard to escape the strong impression that from the outset, Lodge was going along with the new authority for Porter only with reluctance -- and that Porter had to keep this in mind whenever he considered putting heavy pressure on an agency.

Porter also had his reservations about his role. Whether these were caused by a feeling that the Ambassador was not going to support him in showdowns with the agencies, or whether his caution came from some more basic feelings, there can be no doubt that he did not, in the period between Honolulu and Manila, perform in his new role as the President and his senior advisors had hoped. And thus once again, at Manila, a reorganization was approved -- this time a much broader and far-reaching one.

Porter's intentions were accurately foreshadowed in his first statement to the Mission Council on the subject, February 28, 1966. He sought then to allay the fears which the announcement had raised in the minds of the agency chiefs in Vietnam:

"Ambassador Porter described briefly his new responsibilities as he sees them in the pacification/rural development area. He pointed out that the basic idea is to place total responsibility on one senior individual to pull together all of the civil



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aspects of revolutionary development. He sees this primarily as a coordinating effort and does not intend to get into the middle of individual agency activities and responsibilities. As he and his staff perceive areas which require attention and action by a responsible agency, he will call this to the attention of that agency for the purpose of emphasis; he intends to suggest rather than to criticize...Ambassador Porter noted that the non-priority areas are still getting the bulk of the resources, which means that we have not yet really concentrated on the priority areas and which also flags the necessity to bring the priority areas into higher focus. He will have a great interest in the allocation of resources such as manpower; yet he recognizes that under wartime conditions which prevail in Vietnam there will always be some inequity." 5/

It is important to emphasize that the appointment of Porter to his new role did indeed improve the organization of the Mission, and that Porter did accomplish some of the things that Washington had hoped he would -- but, under the constraints outlined below, he did not get enough done fast enough to satisfy the growing impatience in Washington with the progress of the effort. This impatience was to lead to the second reorganization and the formation of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) after the Manila Conference. Although the impatience of Washington was justified, the fact is that under the new and limited mandate Porter had, he did begin the process of pulling together CIA, USAID, and JUSPAO, and forcing them to work more closely together. He also tried to focus General Lansdale's liaison efforts with General Thang more closely on items related to our operational objectives. He presented a new and vastly improved image of the civilian mission to the press, many of whom came to regard him as the most competent high official in the Mission. To one semi-official observer, Henry Kissinger, who visited Vietnam first in October of 1965, and then returned in July, 1966, the situation looked substantially improved:

"The organization of the Embassy has been vastly improved since my last visit. The plethora of competing agencies, each operating their own program on the basis of partly conflicting and largely uncoordinated criteria, has been replaced by an increasingly effective structure under the extremely able leadership of Bill Porter. Porter is on top of his job. It would be idle to pretend that the previous confusion is wholly overcome. He has replaced competition by coordination; he is well on his way to imposing effective direction on the basis of carefully considered criteria. At least the basic structure for progress exists. Where eight months ago I hardly knew where to begin, the problem now is how to translate structure into performance -- a difficult but no insuperable task." 6/

Despite Kissinger's hopeful words, there was a growing tendency in Washington to demand more out of the Mission that it was then producing.



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In a paper written in August, 1966, Robert W. Komer, whose role in the re-emphasis of pacification will be discussed in the next section, wrote:

"There is a growing consensus that the US/GVN pacification effort needs to be stepped up, that management of our pacification assets is not yet producing an acceptable rate of return for our heavy support investments, and that pacification operations should be brought more abreast of our developing military effort against the NVA and VC main force. The President has expressed this view, and so has Ambassador Lodge among others." 7/

Why did Porter not live up to the expectations of Washington? While the documentation is weak on this point, the following reasons can be deduced from the available evidence, including discussions with people who worked in both Saigon and Washington:

1. The Ambassador was not fully backing his Deputy, and Porter was never sure of Lodge's support in Mission Council meetings, in telegrams, in discussions with the agencies. Many senior officials of the USG, including the President, had told Porter that he had their full support, and that they expected him to manage the Mission. But on a day-to-day basis, Porter had to get along with the Ambassador, who was still (and legitimately so) the boss. The result was a considerable gap between what high officials in Washington considered Porter's mandate, and what Porter felt he would be able to do without antagonizing the Ambassador. \*

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\* This problem was foreshadowed in a remarkable way in 1963-1964. After visiting Vietnam in December, 1963, the Secretary of Defense sent President Johnson a memorandum in which he pointed out that the Mission "lacks leadership...and is not working to a common plan...My impression is that Lodge simply does not know how to conduct a coordinated administration... This has of course been stressed to him both by Dean Rusk and myself (and also by John McCone), and I do not think he is consciously rejecting our advice; he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now. Lodge's newly-designated deputy, David Nes, was with us and seems a highly competent team player. I have stated the situation frankly to him and he has said he would do all he could to constitute what would in effect be an executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador." It is fairly well established that Nes, whatever his own ability and shortcomings was unable to establish an "executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador," and that, as a matter of fact his every attempt to move in the direction indicated by the Secretary further alienated him from the Ambassador. The presumed lesson in the incident was that it is difficult and dangerous to tell one man's deputy that he has to assume broad responsibility and authority if the top man does not want this designation made.

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2. The agencies involved -- AID, USIA, and CIA -- were hostile to the new designation from the outset. Since every agency paid lip-service to the new role of the Deputy Ambassador, it is difficult to document this fact. But it is virtually self-evident: since every agency was being told that its chief representative in Saigon now worked for the Deputy Ambassador, a career Foreign Service Officer, there was unhappiness with the system in both Saigon and Washington. Men like the Director of JUSPAO, who had served in Vietnam since January of 1964, and the CIA Station Chief, who retained a completely independent communications channel to Washington, were not going to yield any portion of their autonomy without some quiet grumbling and invisible foot-dragging. To overcome this reluctance was not as easy for Porter as Washington had perhaps hoped, particularly in light of Lodge's attitude.
  
3. The Washington organization did not parallel the Saigon structure it was supposed to support, and in fact actually prevented strong and continuous support. With legitimate legal and traditional responsibilities for programs overseas, each agency in Washington was understandably reluctant to channel their guidance through the Deputy Ambassador, whose authority did not seem to be derived from the normal letter of authority to all Chiefs of Mission sent by President Kennedy in 1961. The agencies, moreover, also had a special problem with regard to Vietnam: Congress was being far more rigorous in its review of the Vietnam program than it was in most other areas. The Moss Subcommittee on Overseas Governmental Operations, for example, was sending investigating teams to Saigon regularly, and issuing well-publicized reports criticizing the AID program across a broad front. The Senatorial group that reviews CIA programs was showing considerable concern with the nature and size of the cadre and counter-terror programs. And beyond that, there was the normal budgetary process, in which each agency generally handles its own requests through an extremely complex and difficult process. Each agency was bound to try to communicate as directly as possible with their representatives in Saigon. Thus, while some major conflicting policies which had previously existed were ironed out through the new system (such as the role of the cadre), many smaller, or second-level matters contained to receive the traditional separate agency approach.

A good example of this was the vital issue of improving village/hamlet government. Although consistently identified as a key element in any successful pacification program, improving the war-torn village structure seemed to escape the Mission organizationally. Responsibility for advice and assistance to the GVN Ministry of Interior (later the Commissariat for

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Administration), rested with the USAID Public Administration Division, which in turn was at the third level of the USAID, reporting to the USAID Director only through an Assistant Director for Technical Services. Within the Public Administration Division (PAD) itself, to make matters worse, improving village/hamlet government was only one of a large number of activities for which PAD was responsible -- and in the eyes of many traditionally-minded professional public administrators, it did not automatically come first.

Other issues of obvious importance -- such as budgeting, strengthening the Ministry, improving the National Institute of Administration, sending officials to the U.S. for participant training -- all came within the normal PAD program as outlined in the AID Country Assistance Program (CAP) for FY 67, and, moreover, they required more resources, more Americans, more attention at high levels of AID, than the village/hamlet government problem. When Ambassador Porter directed AID, in May of 1966, to begin massive efforts to improve village government, his orders were obeyed to the extent they could be within the context of previous AID commitments. The result was a further stretching of the already taut USAID/PAD staff, since no previous commitments or programs were cut back to provide man and/or money for village government.

At the same time, other sections of the Mission which were expected to support the renewed emphasis on local government were not producing as requested. JUSPAO, asked to support the effort with psychological operations, agreed in principle but found its existing list of priorities basically unchanged. The Embassy Political Section, which should have supported the effort at least to the extent of urging through its political contacts that the GVN revitalize the village structure, simply had better things to do. The CIA was also asked to support the effort; with their cadre assets, they were in a crucial position on the matter, particularly since some of the critics of the cadre had stated that the cadre actually undercut village government instead of strengthening it (as they claimed). Again, the CIA gave lip service to the idea, without making any significant change in their training of the cadre at Vung Tau.

In this situation, Ambassador Porter tried several times to get action, each time received enthusiastic, but generalized, words of agreement and support from everyone, and finally turned his attention to other matters; with the crush of business, there was always a more immediate crisis.



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B. Washington: Komer as the Blowtorch

The Warrenton conference had discussed not only the reorganization of the Mission in Saigon, but -- far more gingerly -- the need for a more centralized management of the effort in Washington.

After the Honolulu conference the President decided to take action to change the Washington structure on Vietnam, but not in quite the way suggested at Warrenton. While many people at Warrenton, particularly the State representative, had hoped that the President would designate one man, with an interagency staff, as the overseer of an integrated political-military-diplomatic-economic policy in Vietnam, the President decided to reduce the scope of the job, and give one man responsibility for what was coming to be called "The Other War." Thus, for the very first time, there would be a high-ranking official -- a Special Assistant to the President -- whose job would be to get the highest possible priority for non-military activities. In effect, the President had assured a place at the decision councils in Washington for someone with built-in pro-pacification, pro-civil side bias. This was Robert W. Komer, whose strenuous efforts in the next few months were to earn him the nickname of "The Blowtorch" (given to him by Ambassador Lodge, according to Komer).

How much authority the President intended to give Komer is not clear. It is quite likely that the issue was deliberately left vague, so as to see what authority and what accomplishments Komer could carve out of an ambiguous NSAM and his ready access to the President.

On March 23, 1966 -- six weeks after Manila -- Joseph Califano, Special Assistant to the President, sent the Secretary of Defense an EYES ONLY draft of the NSAM setting up Komer's authority. In the covering note, Califano said, "We would be particularly interested in whatever suggestions you would have to strengthen Komer's authority." 8/ In response, the Defense Department (the actual person making suggestion unidentified in documents) suggested only one minor change, and approved the NSAM.

The other departments also suggested minor changes in other parts of the NSAM, and on March 28, 1966, the President issued it as NSAM 343. It said:

"In the Declaration of Honolulu I renewed our pledge of common commitment with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to defense against aggression, to the work of social revolution, to the goal of free self-government, to the attack on hunger, ignorance and disease, and to the unending quest for peace. Before the Honolulu Conference and since, I have stressed repeatedly that the war on human misery and want is as fundamental to the successful resolution of the Vietnam conflict, as our military operations to ward off aggression... In my view, it is



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essential to designate a specific focal point for the direction, coordination and supervision in Washington of U.S. non-military programs relating to Vietnam. I have accordingly designated Mr. Robert W. Komer as Special Assistant to me for carrying out this responsibility.

"I have charged him and his deputy, Ambassador William Leonhart, to assure that adequate plans are prepared and coordinated covering all aspects of such programs, and that they are promptly and effectively carried out. The responsibility will include the mobilization of U.S. military resources in support of such programs. He will also assure that the Rural Construction/Pacification program and the programs for combat force employment and military operations are properly coordinated.

"His functions will be to ensure full and timely support of the U.S. in Saigon on matters within his purview...

"In addition to working closely with the addressee Cabinet officers he will have direct access to me at all times.

"Those CIA activities related solely to intelligence collection are not affected by this NSAM." 9/

Mr. Komer was in business, with a small staff and a mandate, as he saw it, to prod people throughout the government, in both Washington and Saigon. Combined with a personality that journalists called "abrasive," his mandate resulted in more pressure being put on the civilians associated with Vietnam than ever before, and in some understandable frictions.

Komer's significance in the re-emphasis of pacification is important, and must be dealt with briefly, although this section does not relate his story in detail.

First, there was Komer's influence on AID. With little difficulty, he established his ability to guide AID, and began to give them direct instructions on both economic and pacification matters. AID, previously with limited influence in the Mission's pacification policy, found its influence diminished still further.

Of more significance was Komer's emphasis on the RD Cadre program, run by the CIA. Together with Porter, he recommended a premature expansion of the program, in an effort to get the program moving faster. On April 19, 1966, after his first trip to Vietnam, Komer told the President:

"Cadre Expansion. While the RD program has some questionable aspects, it seems the most promising approach yet developed. The RD ministry led by General Thang is better than most, and the Vung Tau and Montagnard training centers are producing 5500 trained men for insertion in 59-man teams into 93 villages every 15 weeks.

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"But Porter sees even this rate as insufficient to keep up with 'the growing military capability to sweep the VC out of key areas.' He urges rapid expansion via building another training center (which he'd like to get Seabees to build). The aim is roughly to double cadre output from 19,000 to 39,000 trained personnel per year. He thinks this rate could be reached by end CY 1966. I agree with Porter and will press this concept at the Washington end." 10/

Plans were approved, and construction began on the second training center. But by the end of 1966 it was recognized that the attempt to double cadre training would only weaken their quality, which was shaky to begin with. The construction of the second center was abruptly halted. Komer and Porter had miscalculated badly.

Komer also sought to influence the military in both Saigon and Washington to give more attention to the pacification effort.

In cables to Saigon -- most of them slugged with his name, and thus known as "Komergrams" -- Komer sought to prod the Mission forward on a wide variety of programs. One of his most recurring themes was the Chieu Hoi program \* and in time his urgings did contribute to a more successful program, with a high-ranking American official in Ambassador Porter's office working on nothing else, in place of the previous ad hoc arrangement between JUSAPO and USAID.

Another recurring theme was refugees, but here he was less successful, particularly since the U.S. Mission was never able to determine whether or not it desired to stimulate more refugees as means of denying the VC manpower. His cables on this complex issue were characterized by an absence of objective, but at least he was addressing frontally questions few other people would raise at all:

"For Porter from Komer: We here deeply concerned by growing number of refugees. Latest reports indicate that as of 31 August, a total of 1,361,288 had been processed...Of course, in some ways, increased flow of refugees is a plus. It helps

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\* For example: "Porter from Komer: Highest authorities interested in stepping up defection programs. While recognizing limitations Chieu Hoi program and inadequacies GVN administration, program has achieved impressive results and shown high return in terms modest U.S. support costs. Greatly concerned by two recent administrative decisions taken by GVN..." 11/ Or: "To Porter from Komer: USIA eager help maximize success both Chieu Hoi and RD programs, in which highest authorities vitally interested..." 12/ Or: "For Mann and Casler from Komer: Would appreciate your following through on coordinated set of action proposals to energize lagging Chieu Hoi program...We are concerned about drop-off in returnees since April...Bell and Marks concur." 13/

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deprive VC of recruiting potential and rice growers, and is partly indicative of growing peasant desire seek security on our side.

"Question arises, however, of whether we and GVN adequately set up to deal with increased refugee flow of this magnitude. AID has programmed much larger refugee program for FY 67, but is it enough?...Only Mission would have answers, so intent this cable is merely to pose question, solicit bids for increased support if needed, and assure you I would do all possible generate such support." 14/

On another controversial issue, Land Reform, Komer repeatedly pressed the Mission for public signs of progress, but by the time he went out to Saigon as General Westmoreland's deputy in 1967, he -- and apparently the President -- were still unsatisfied.

But perhaps the most important role Komer played was to keep the general subject of pacification before the President, to encourage Ambassador Lodge to talk pacification up, and to constitute a one-man, full-time, nonstop lobby for pacification within the USG.

After his first trip to Vietnam, for example, Komer reported to the President that "while our splendid military effort is going quite well, our civil programs lag behind...To achieve the necessary results, we must ourselves give higher priority to (and expand) certain key pacification programs, especially cadres and police -- if necessary at some expense to the military effort." 15/

Komer's memorandum constitutes only a small proportion of the information and suggestions reaching the President and his senior advisors on Vietnam, and the intention of this paper is not to suggest that they were in any sense definitive documents which show the direction of U.S. strategy in Vietnam. But it seems clear that Komer was the first senior official in Washington to make a major effort to put pacification near the top of our combined civil-military effort, and that he had a particularly advantageous spot from which to try. He had authorized back-channel communications with the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador in Saigon, apparent access to the President, and the umbrella of the White House.

His memoranda to the President over his year in Washington showed considerable change in thinking on many issues, but a consistent support for more pacification. A small sample is revealing:

"Key aspects of pacification deserve highest priority -- and greater emphasis. Unless we and the GVN can secure and hold the countryside cleared by military operations, we either face an ever larger and quasi-permanent military commitment or risk letting the VC infiltrate again...I personally favor more



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attention to the Delta (IV Corps) region, which contains eight out of Vietnam's 15 million people and is its chief rice bowl ...Clearly we must dovetail the military's sweep operations and civil pacification. My impression is that, since the military are moving ahead faster than the civil side we need to beef up the latter to get it in phase. There's little point in the military clearing areas the civil side can't pacify. On the other hand, security is the key to pacification; people won't cooperate and the cadre can't function till an area is secure...

"Somehow the civil side appears reluctant to call on military resources, which are frequently the best and most readily available. I put everyone politely on notice that I would have no such hesitations -- provided that the case was demonstrable -- and that this was the express request of the Secretary of Defense." 15/ [Cited Supra.]

In August of 1966, Komer produced the longest of his papers, and the one he considered his most important. Its title was "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification." In addition to discussing the substance of pacification, the paper made some further organizational suggestions, which clearly foreshadowed the second reorganization of the Mission which took place after the Manila conference. It is worth quoting in some length (all underlining is part of the original):

"There is a growing consensus that the US/GVN pacification effort needs to be stepped up, that management of our pacification assets is not yet producing an acceptable rate of return for our heavy investments, and that pacification operations should be brought more abreast of our developing military effort against the NVA and VC main force. The President has expressed this view, and so has Ambassador Lodge among others.

"I. What is pacification? In one sense, "pacification" can be used to encompass the whole of the military, political, and civil effort in Vietnam. But the term needs to be narrowed down for operational purposes, and can be reasonably well separated out as a definable problem area.

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



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

"...Few argue that we can assure success in Vietnam without also winning the 'village war.' Chasing the large units around the boondocks still leaves intact the VC infrastructure, with its local guerrilla capability plus the weapons of terror and intimidation...So winning the 'village war' which I will loosely call pacification, seems an indispensable ingredient of any high-confidence strategy and a necessary precaution to close the guerrilla option.

"...Yet another reason for stressing pacification is that the U.S. is supporting a lot of assets in being which are at the moment poorly employed. Even the bulk of ARVN, which increasingly sits back and watches the U.S. take over the more difficult parts of the war against main enemy units and bases, might be more effectively used for this purpose...Thus, even if one contends that pacification as I have defined it is not vital to a win strategy, stepping up this effort would add little to present costs and might produce substantial pay offs.

"Beyond this, the time is psychologically ripe for greater emphasis on pacification. South Vietnamese confidence is growing as the U.S. turns the tide. New US/FW military forces are arriving to reinforce the campaign against the main force; their presence will release much needed assets to pacification. The GVN, fresh from success against the Buddhist led struggle and confidently facing an election process leading toward a constitution, also has been making the kind of tough decisions -- devaluation, turnover of the Saigon port to military management, etc. -- that will be needed in pacification, too.

"In sum, the assets are available, and the time is ripe for an increased push to win the 'village war.'

"III. What is Holding Up the Pacification Efforts? The long history of the Vietnam struggle is replete with efforts to secure the countryside. Most of them, like Diem's strategic hamlet program, proved abortive. ...Some of the chief difficulties we confront are suggested below:

"A. We had to go after the major VC/NVA units first... It was a matter of first things first...

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"B. The VC/NVA have been able to select the weakest point in any embryonic GVN pacification effort and destroy it with a lightening attack...

"C. There are inherent difficulties in the pacification process itself...

"D. Lack of high quality assets. Pacification has also had to take a back seat in the sense that it generally gets only the lowest grade GVN assets -- and not enough of these...

"E. Last but not least, neither the U.S. nor the GVN have as yet developed an adequate plan, program, or management structure for dealing with pacification...

"1. The JCS and MACV are so preoccupied, however justifiably, with operations against the major VC/NVA units that they are not able to pay enough attention to the local security aspects of pacification...

"2. There is no unified civil/military direction within the GVN...

"3. A similar divided responsibility prevails on the U.S. side...

"4. Nor does there yet appear to be a well-understood chain of command from Porter even to the civilians operating in the field...

"5. There is no integrated civil/military plan for pacification on either the U.S. or GVN side...

"IV. How do we step up Pacification? ...It demands a multi-faceted civil-military response...

"A. Provide more adequate, continuous security for the locales in which pacification is taking place. This is the essential prerequisite. None of our civil programs in the countryside can be expected to be effective unless the area is reasonably secure. Nor, unless the people are protected, and their attitudes likely to change in favor of the GVN... To provide security requires the assignment on a long term basis of enough assets to defeat these resident VC companies and battalions, in addition to providing 24-hour security to the people until they are able to assist in providing their own protection. This is primarily the task of RF and PF, supported by the RD cadres and police...Some knowledgeable

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experts contend that even if we improve the...RF, PF, police, and cadre, they are together insufficiently to extend local security much beyond existing secured areas. They feel that lacking mobility and heavy firepower, these forces must be thickened with a liberal sprinkling of regular ARVN units working in the area outside the immediate area undergoing pacification. I do not suggest that ARVN regulars gainfully employed in battle against the enemy main forces be so diverted. I do urge that those ARVN forces not now fully engaged -- a substantial fraction of the total be used to contribute directly to improving local security.

"B. We must devote more effort to breaking the hold of the VC over the people...

"C. Carry out positive revolutionary development programs to win active popular support. The cliché of winning support by offering the people a better life through a series of inter-related RD programs has great relevance in Vietnam...

"D. Establish functioning priorities for pacification...

"E. Better Area Priorities... A greater stress on pacification logically means greater stress on the Delta...

"F. Concentrate additional resources on pacification... Arguments made in the past that pacification is a delicate subject to be approached only with care and precision have lost some of their relevance as the intensity of warfare has increased...Increase:

Police...  
RD Cadre...  
Material Support for Pacification...  
The U.S. Agricultural Effort...  
Chieu Hoi...  
Village/Hamlet Administration...

"G. Set more performance goals...

"H. Rapidly extend the security of key roads...

"I. Systematize the flow of refugees...

"J. Get better control over rice...

"V. How can Pacification be Managed More Effectively?

"A. Restructuring the GVN...

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- Place the RD and PF under the RD Ministry...
- Establish a single line of command to the province chiefs...
- Remove the Division from the pacification chain of command...
- Strengthen the authority of the Province Chiefs...
- Appoint civilian chiefs in selected provinces and districts...

"B. Parallel strengthening of the structure is essential. U.S. leadership has often sparked major pacification steps by the GVN. The structure for managing pacification advice to the GVN, and direct U.S. military/civilian support, have evolved slowly as the U.S. contributions have grown. Once it was possible to coordinate the U.S. pacification effort through an interagency committee for strategic hamlets. Later the Mission Council concept was used extensively. In the wake of the Honolulu Conference, the President appointed Ambassador Porter to take charge of the non-military effort in Vietnam. Several highly qualified people now give Porter the nucleus of a coordination and operations staff. However...the U.S. management structure must be strengthened considerably more.

"There are three basic alternatives, each building on the present structure, which could provide the needed result. Two of them are based on the principle of a 'single manager' over both civilian and military assets by assigning command responsibility either to Porter or Westmoreland. The third accepts a continued division between the civil and military sides for numerous practical reasons, but calls for strengthening the management structure of both.

"Alternative No. 1 -- Give Porter operational control over all U.S. pacification activity...

"Alternative No. 2 -- Retain the present separate civil and military command channels but strengthen the management structure of both MACV and the U.S. Mission. This option, recognizing the practical difficulties of putting U.S. civilian and military personnel under a single chief, would be to settle for improved coordination at the Saigon level.

"To facilitate improved coordination, however, it would require strengthening the organization for pacification within MACV and the U.S. Mission. MACV disposes of by far the greater number of Americans working on pacification in the field. It has advisory teams spending most of their time on pacification in 200 out of 230 districts and in all 43 provinces. These teams -- not counting



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advisors at division, corps and all tactical units down to battalion -- number about 2000 men compared with about one-eighth this number from all other U.S. agencies combined.

"However, the senior officer in MACV dealing with pacification as his principal function is now a colonel heading the J33 staff division. Moreover, with 400,000 U.S. troops soon to be committed, General Westmoreland, his subordinate commanders, and his principal staff officers must spend increasing time on military operations associated with defeating the VC/NVA main formations. Therefore, management of the tremendous advisory resources with MACV inevitably suffers regardless of General Westmoreland's personal effort to give balanced attention to both.

"Hence there might be merit in COMUSMACV having a senior deputy to manage pacification within MACV and pacification advice to the JCS, as well as throughout the Vietnamese military chain of command. Key staff sections, such as J33, Polwar Directorate, Senior Advisor for RF/PF, could be controlled by a chief of staff for pacification responsive to the Deputy. Advisory teams at corps and division would receive guidance and orders on pacification from the Deputy. Province and district advisors would receive all orders, except routine administrative instructions, through the pacification channel.

"To parallel the MACV organization and provide a single point of liaison on the civil side, Ambassador Porter should have his own field operations office formed by merging USAID Field Operations, JUSPAO Field Services and CAS Covert Action Branch. Control over the people assigned would be removed, as in Alternative No. 1, from their parent agency. All civilian field personnel in the advisory business would also receive their guidance and orders from the Deputy Ambassador.

"For this dual civilian-military system to operate effectively, the closest coordination would be required between the offices of the MACV Deputy and the Deputy Ambassador. Since it is difficult and dangerous to separate military and civilian aspects of pacification at the province level, most policy guidance and instructions to the provinces hopefully would be issued jointly and be received by the senior military and civilian advisors who would then develop their plans together.

"I would still favor a single civil/military team chief in the province, even though he would have two bosses in Saigon talking to him through different and parallel chains of command. Alternatively, since MACV already has a senior advisor in each province, it would be possible similarly to assign a single civilian as the

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Vietnamese province chief's point of contact on all non-military matters. All other civilians in the province would be under his control.

"Alternative No. 3 -- Assign responsibility for pacification civil and military, to COMUSMACV. This is not a new suggestion, and has a lot to recommend it. In 1964, General Westmoreland proposed that he be made "executive agent" for pacification. MACV at that time had an even greater preponderance of field advisors than it does today, and was devoting the bulk of its attention to pacification. Since the military still has by far the greatest capacity among U.S. agencies in Vietnam for management and the military advisors outnumber civilians at least 8 to 1 in the field, MACV could readily take on responsibility for all pacification matters.

"Turning over the entire pacification management task to COMUSMACV would require him to reorganize his staff to handle simultaneously the very large military operations business involving U.S., Free World and Vietnamese forces and the civil/military aspects of pacification at the same time. The USAID, JUSPAO, and CAS Covert Operations staffs would come under COMUSMACV's control where they would be used as additional "component commands." In this case, it might be desirable to have a civilian deputy to COMUSMACV for pacification.

"Also appropriate under this concept would be a single U.S. advisory team, under a team chief, at each subordinate echelon. The result would be a single chain of command to the field and coordinated civilian/military pacification planning and operations on the U.S. side. The U.S. Mission would speak to Vietnamese corps and division commanders, province chiefs and district chiefs with a single voice." 16/

In the latter part of this lengthy memorandum, Komer clearly foreshadowed both the formation of OCO after the Manila conference -- his Alternative No. 2 -- and the merger of OCO and MACV into MACCORDS after Guam -- his Alternative No. 3. But when he sent the paper to Saigon with his deputy in mid-August, the reaction from Lodge, Porter, and Westmoreland was uniformly negative: they asked him, in effect, to leave them alone since they were satisfied with their present organization.

But Komer had also distributed his paper around Washington, and was lobbying for another change in the structure of the Mission, although he remained, in August, vague as to which of the three alternatives he put forward he personally favored. When other senior officials of government began to voice feelings that additional organizational changes were necessary in the Mission in Saigon, the die was cast.

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Another major attribute of Komer was his strong public and private optimism. He produced for any journalist willing to hear him out facts and figures that suggested strongly that the war was not only winnable, but being won at an accelerating pace.

To the President he sounded the same theme:

"After almost a year full-time in Vietnam, and six trips there, I felt able to learn a good deal more from my 11 days in country, 13-23 February. I return more optimistic than ever before. The cumulative change since my first visit last April is dramatic, if not yet visibly demonstrable in all respects. Indeed, I'll reaffirm even more vigorously my prognosis of last November (which few shared then) that growing momentum would be achieved in 1967 on almost every front in Vietnam." 17/

Komer believed in the concept of "sheer mass" -- that in time we would just overwhelm the Viet Cong:

"Wastefully, expensively, but nonetheless indisputably, we are winning the war in the South. Few of our programs -- civil or military -- are very efficient, but we are grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass. And the cumulative impact of all we have set in motion is beginning to tell. Pacification still lags the most, yet even it is moving forward.

"Indeed, my broad feeling, with due allowance for oversimplification, is that our side now has in presently programmed levels all the men, money and other resources needed to achieve success..." 18/

In summary, Komer's 13 months in Washington were spent steadily raising the priority of the pacification and other non-military efforts in Vietnam. While he never was in a controlling position within the Washington bureaucracy, he succeeded in making those who were more aware of the "other war" (a term he used continually until Ambassador Bunker announced in May of 1967 that he did not recognize that there was such a thing). While it can be no more than speculation, it would also appear that Komer played an important role in inserting into high-level discussions, including Presidential discussions, the pacification priority. Thus, when General Westmoreland visited the President at the LBJ ranch in August, 1966, Komer put before the President a series of pacification-related subjects to be used during the discussions. This happened again at Manila, where some of the points in final communique were similar to things Komer had been pushing earlier, as outlined in his August memorandum.



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C. Study Groups and Strategists: Summer 1966

In the aftermath of Honolulu, task forces and study groups were suddenly assembling, producing papers on priorities, on organization of the Mission, on the role and mission of various forces. They were all manifestations of the new mood that had come over the Mission and Washington on pacification. The advocates of pacification -- with their widely differing viewpoints -- all saw their chance again to put forward their own concepts to a newly interested bureaucracy, starting with Komer and Porter.

The most important of the numerous studies were:

1. The Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (Short Title: PROVN) -- commissioned by the Army Chief of Staff in July of 1965, completed and submitted in March 1966;
2. The Priorities Task Force -- formed in Saigon in April 1966 by Deputy Ambassador Porter, completed in July 1966;
3. The Inter-Agency "Roles and Missions" Study Group -- formed by Porter in July 1966, completed in August.

While the recommendations of these studies were never accepted in toto, they all play key roles in the development of strategic thinking in Washington and Saigon during the latter part of 1966, and they continue to be influential today.

PROVN -- As early as the summer of 1965, General Johnson saw the need to select a superior group of officers, and set them to work on a long-term study of the problem in Vietnam. The study was intended for internal Army use, and was for a while after its completion treated with such delicacy that Army officers were forbidden even to discuss its existence outside DOD. This was unfortunate, because in content it was far-ranging and thoughtful, and set a precedent for responsible forward planning and analysis which should be duplicated in other fields.

PROVN was charged with "developing new sources of action to be taken in South Vietnam by the United States and its allies, which will, in conjunction with current actions, modified as necessary, lead in due time to successful accomplishment of U.S. aims and objectives." With this broad mandate, PROVN staff spent eight months questioning returning officers from Vietnam, studying the history of the country, drawing parallels with other countries, analyzing the structure of the U.S. Mission; and making recommendations. In the end, the PROVN team decided that there was "no unified effective pattern" to the then-current efforts in Vietnam, and submitted a broad blueprint for action. Its thesis was simple:

"The situation in South Vietnam has seriously deteriorated. 1966 may well be the last chance to ensure eventual success. 'Victory' can only be achieved through bringing



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the individual Vietnamese, typically a rural peasant, to support willingly the GVN. The critical actions are those that occur at the village, district, and provincial levels. This is where the war must be fought; this is where that war and the object which lies beyond it must be won. The following are the most important specific actions required now:

- Concentrate U.S. operations on the provincial level to include the delegation of command authority over U.S. operations to the Senior U.S. Representative at the provincial level.
- Reaffirm Rural Construction as the foremost US/GVN combined effort to solidify and extend GVN influence.
- Authorize more direct U.S. involvement in GVN affairs at those administrative levels adequate to ensure the accomplishment of critical programs.
- Delegate to the U.S. Ambassador unequivocal authority as the sole manager of all U.S. activities, resources, and personnel in-country.
- Direct the Ambassador to develop a single integrated plan for achieving U.S. objectives in SVN.
- Reaffirm to the world at large the precise terms of the ultimate U.S. objective as stated in NSAM 288:  
A free and independent non-communist South Vietnam..." 19/

Beyond this frank and direct summary, the study had hundreds of recommendations, ranging from the specific and realizable to the vague and hortatory.

In summary, the PROVN was a major step forward in thinking. Although as mentioned above, its value was reduced for a long time by the restrictions placed on its dissemination, the candor with which it addressed matters was probably possible only because it originated within a single service, and thus did not require the concurrences of an inter-agency study.

For example, the PROVN study addressed directly a point of such potential embarrassment to the U.S. Government that it is quite likely an inter-agency group would not have addressed it except perhaps in oblique terms:

"A PROVN survey...revealed that no two agencies of the U.S. Government viewed our objectives in the same manner. Failure to use that unequivocal statement of our fundamental objective -- a free and independent, non-communist South Vietnam -- set forth in NSAM 288, hinders effective inter-agency coordination and the integrated application of U.S. support efforts." 20/

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As for the study's "highest priority" activities, PROVN recommended:

"(1) Combat Operations -- the bulk of U.S. and FWMA Forces and designated RVNAF units should be directed against enemy base areas and against their lines of communication in SVN, Laos, and Cambodia as required; the remainder of Allied force assets must ensure adequate momentum to activity in priority Rural Construction areas.

"(2) Rural Construction -- in general, the geographic priorities should be, in order, the Delta, the Coastal Lowlands, and the Highlands; currently the highest priority areas are the densely populated and rich resource Delta provinces of An Giang, Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, and the Hop Tac area surrounding Saigon.

"(3) Economic Stability -- current emphasis must be directed toward curbing inflation and reducing the excessive demands for skilled and semi-skilled labor imposed upon an over-strained economy..."

On the management of the United States effort -- which PROVN found extremely poor -- the recommendation was to create a single manager system, with the Ambassador in charge of all assets in Vietnam and the mission of producing a single integrated plan. PROVN suggested major steps in the direction of giving the Ambassador a stronger hold over the military.

Of greatest importance -- aside from the reorganizational suggestions -- was the PROVN conclusion on the supremacy of Rural Construction activities over everything else:

"Rural Construction must be designated unequivocally as the major US/GVN effort. It will require the commitment of a preponderance of RVNAF and GVN paramilitary forces, together with adequate U.S. support and coordination and assistance. Without question, village and hamlet security must be achieved throughout Vietnam...RC is the principal means available to broaden the allied base, provide security, develop political and military leadership, and provide necessary social reform to the people..." 21/

To this end, PROVN suggested a division of responsibility among the forces:

"The need to sustain security pervades every ramification of RC...The various forces capable of providing this environment must be unified...at the province level. They must include the ARVN as a major component -- as many of its battle-tested units as can possibly be devoted to this mission. These integrated national security forces must be associated

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and intermingled with the people on a long-term basis. Their capacity to establish and maintain public order and stability must be physically and continuously credible. The key to achieving such security lies in the conduct of effective area saturation tactics, in and around populated areas, which deny VC encroachment opportunities." 22/

Finally, the study advocated a far stronger system of leverage for American advisors in the field -- "mechanisms for exerting U.S. influence must be built into the U.S. organization and its methods of operation." 23/

The PROVN study concluded with a massive "Blueprint for National Action" which was never implemented. But the influence of the study was substantial. Within the Army staff, a responsible and select group of officers had recommended top priority for pacification. Even if the Army staff still rejected parts of the study, they were on notice that a study had been produced within the staff which suggested a substantial revision of priorities.

The PROVN study had some major gaps. Proceeding from the unstated assumption that our commitment in Vietnam had no implicit time limits, it proposed a strategy which it admitted would take years -- perhaps well into the 1970's -- to carry out. It did not examine alternative strategies that might be derived from a shorter time limit on the war. In fact, the report made no mention of one of the most crucial variables in the Vietnam equation -- U.S. public support for the Administration.

Further, the report did little to prove that Vietnam was ready for pacification. This "fact" was taken for granted, it seems -- a fault common to most American-produced pacification plans. While PROVN did suggest geographic priorities, they were derived not even in part from the area's receptivity to pacification but exclusively from the location and strategic importance of the area. Thus, the same sort of error made in Hop Tac was being repeated in PROVN's suggestions.

MACV analyzed the report in May of 1966, calling it "an excellent overall approach in developing organization, concepts and policies..." In a lengthy analysis of PROVN, MACV cabled:

"As seen here, PROVN recommends two major initiatives essential to achieving U.S. objectives in South Vietnam: creation of an organization to integrate total U.S. civil-military effort, and exercise of greatly increased direct U.S. involvement in GVN activities.

"MACV has long recognized need for the greatest possible unity of effort to gain U.S. objectives in South Vietnam. MACV agrees with PROVN concept to achieve full integration of effort in attaining U.S. objectives in South Vietnam. Evolution of U.S. organization in Saigon is heading towards this goal. Deputy Ambassador now has charge of revolutionary



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and economic development programs and MACV is charged with military programs. In addition, special task force has been established by Deputy Ambassador to draft mission-wide statement of strategy, objectives, and priorities. In effect, this task force is engaged in integrated planning which under PROVN concept would be performed by supra-agency staff. PROVN proposal for designation of a single manager with supra-staff is a quantum jump to achieve the necessary degree of military-civil integration. This final step cannot be implemented by evolutions here in Saigon. It would have to be directed and supervised from highest level in Washington.

"MACV is in complete agreement with PROVN position that immediate and substantially increased United States direct involvement in GVN activities in form of constructive influence and manipulation is essential to achievement of U.S. objectives in Vietnam. PROVN emphasizes that "leverage must originate in terms of reference established by government agreement," and "leverage, in all its implications, must be understood by the Vietnamese if it is to become an effective tool." The direct involvement and leverage envisioned by PROVN could range from skillful diplomatic pressure to U.S. unilateral execution of critical programs. MACV considers that there is a great danger that the extent of involvement envisioned could become too great. A government sensitive to its image as champion of national sovereignty profoundly affected by the pressure of militant minorities, and unsure of its tenure and legitimacy will resent too great involvement by U.S. Excessive U.S. involvement may defeat objectives of U.S. policy: development of free, independent non-communist nation. PROVN properly recognizes that success can only be attained through support of Vietnamese people, with support coming from the grass roots up. Insensitive U.S. actions can easily defeat efforts to accomplish this. U.S. manipulations could easily become an American takeover justified by U.S. compulsion to "get the job done." Such tendencies must be resisted. It must be realized that there are substantial difficulties and dangers inherent in implementing this or any similar program.

"Several important aspects of proven concept require comment, further consideration and resolution or emphasis. Some of the more significant are:

"Regarding U.S. organization, MACV considers that any major reorganization such as envisioned by PROVN must be phased and deliberate to avoid confusion and slow-down in ongoing programs...



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"There appears to be an overemphasis on military control in PROVN which may be undesirable. For instance, the study states that all senior U.S. representatives (SUSREPs) initially will be U.S. military officers. This should not necessarily be stated policy. The senior U.S. representative, particularly at province level, should be selected on basis of major tasks to be performed, program emphasis in a particular area and other local considerations. PROVN also limits U.S. single manager involvement in military activities. If single manager concept of a fully integrated civil-military effort is to be successful, military matters, such as roles and missions, force requirements, and deployments must be developed in full coordination and be integrated with civil aspects.

"PROVN proposal for enlarged U.S. organization for revolutionary development, particularly at sector and sub-sector levels, will require both military and civilian staff increases. It will necessitate further civilian recruiting and increased military input. Present shortage of qualified civilian personnel who desire duty in Vietnam must be considered. It may fall to the military, as it is now happening to some degree, to provide personnel not only for added military positions, but also for many of civilian functions as well.

"Regardless of what U.S. might desire, however, our efforts to bring about new Vietnamese organizational structure must be tempered by continuous evaluation of the pressure such change places on Vietnamese leaders. Our goals cannot be achieved by Vietnamese leaders who are identified as U.S. puppets. The U.S. will must be asserted, but we cannot afford to overwhelm the structure we are attempting to develop.

"Accordingly, MACV recommends that PROVN, reduced primarily to a conceptual document, carrying forward the main thrusts and goals of the study, be presented to National Security Council for use in developing concepts, policies, and actions to improve effectiveness of the American effort in Vietnam." 24/

The "Priorities Task Force" -- This group was set up at Ambassador Porter's direction in April 1966, following Komer's first trip to Vietnam, during which Komer had strongly urged that the Mission try to establish a set of interagency priorities. The actual work of this task force, which had full interagency representation, was considered disappointing by almost all its "consumers," particularly Komer, since it failed to come up with a final list of priorities from which the Mission and Washington could derive their programs. But it was by far the most ambitious task force the Mission had ever set up, and it provoked considerable thought in the Mission.

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Its introductory section was a rather gloomy assessment of the situation. As such, it was at variance with the then current assessment of the situation -- but in retrospect, it is of far greater interest than the recommendations themselves!

"After some 15 months of rapidly growing U.S. military and political commitment to offset a major enemy military effort, the RVN has been made secure against the danger of military conquest, but at the same time it has been subjected to a series of stresses which threaten to thwart U.S. policy objectives...

"The enemy now has a broad span of capability for interfering with progress toward achievement of U.S. objectives. He can simultaneously operate offensively through employment of guerrilla and organized forces at widely separated points throughout the country, thus tying down friendly forces, while concentrating rehearsed surprise attacks in multi-battalion or even multi-regimental strength. ...The war will probably increase in intensity over the planning period (two years) though decisive military victory for either side is not likely. Guerrilla activity will make much of the countryside insecure. More of the rural population will be directly affected, and the number of refugees and civilian casualties on both sides seem bound to rise...

"Reasons for lack of success of the overall pacification program -- including all the stages from clear and secure operations to sustaining local government -- were varied. First, the primary hindrance to pacification was the low level of area security given active Viet Cong opposition. Second, political instability prevented continuing and coherent GVN direction and support of any pacification program. Third, pacification execution has been almost wholly Vietnamese and can be supported only indirectly by the U.S. This has made it less susceptible to American influence and more subject to political pressures and the weaknesses of Vietnamese administration and motivation. Fourth, no pacification concept since the strategic hamlet program has been sufficiently clear in definition to provide meaningful and consistent operational guidance to those executing the program. Fifth, given the pressure for success and the difficulty of measuring progress the execution of pacification failed to emphasize the political, social and psychological aspects of organizing the people and thus eliciting their active cooperation. The material aspects, being both visible and less difficult to implement, have received too much attention. Sixth, there was an absence of agreed, definitely stated pacification roles and missions not only within the GVN and the U.S. Mission but also between

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the GVN and the U.S. Mission. This absence caused proliferation of various armed and unarmed elements not clearly related to each other. Seventh, a quantitative and qualitative lack of trained and motivated manpower to carry out pacification existed. In addition, insufficient emphasis has been given to training and orientation of local officials associated with the pacification program. Eighth, lack of a well defined organizational structure in the U.S. Mission created some confusion and conflicting direction of the pacification effort...

"During 1965, military plans were developed to support revolutionary development; national priority areas were selected where special emphasis would be placed on revolutionary development, and a structure was established by the GVN extending an organizational framework for revolutionary development from national to district levels. Meanwhile, the U.S. Mission has begun action to centralize direction for revolutionary development to ensure coordination of all Mission activities in support of revolutionary development.

"A new approach was also taken in 1965 to bring coherence to the use of cadre in the pacification process. Drawing on a concept of armed political action teams, whose relative success locally was at least partly owing to direct U.S. sponsorship and control, a combined cadre team approach was developed. A new organization, the Revolutionary Development Cadre, was established, which brought together and replaced a number of disparate cadre organizations. The combined cadre team approach includes armed units and special skills of relating to and assisting the people. The combined teams form the basis of the present pacification program.

"While these measures have helped to alleviate some of the problem areas which previously frustrated pacification efforts, some areas of major concern remain: First area security where Revolutionary Development is being initiated is not always adequate because of manpower problems; second, continued existence of various overlapping security forces further reduces effectiveness; third, approved pacification concepts, roles, and missions agreed to by the U.S. and the GVN are lacking; fourth, the effectiveness of the new RD cadre teams remain to be tested and evaluated; fifth, extensive training of local and other officials associated with RD still must be accomplished; sixth, emphasis on rapid expansion and the desire for immediate visible and statistical progress would operate against lasting results; and, seventh, organizational development and functioning on both the GVN and U.S. sides are as yet incomplete. 25/

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"The situation described above suggests that the course of events in Vietnam during the next two years will be significantly influenced by the following principal current trends.

"The war can be expected to increase in intensity, but decisive military victory should not be expected. It will be basically a war of attrition. Troop casualties should increase on both sides, and civilian casualties and refugees as well. The enemy can, if he chooses, increase still further the rate of his semi-covert invasion and the level of combat.

"The enemy will continue to build up his forces through infiltration from NVN and recruitment for main force VC units in SVN to achieve a favorable relationship of forces.

"At the same time, he will continue to reinforce his capabilities for political action in the urban areas, to exploit anticipated future political disturbances, to increase his terrorist acts in the cities, and to isolate the urban population from the countryside.

"GVN control of the countryside is not now being extended through pacification to any significant degree and pacification in the rural areas cannot be expected to proceed at a rapid rate. A new approach to pacification has been developed, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness. In addition, important problems requiring resolution remain...

"The Vietnamese will continue to face grave problems in creating an effective system of government. Under present conditions we cannot realistically expect a strong GVN to emerge over the planning period, nor can we expect political unity or a broadening of the base of popular support. The increased American presence, rising inflation and an image of considerable corruption are issues which will be increasingly exploited by unfriendly and opportunistic elements. U.S. influence on political events continues to be limited while our responsibility for Vietnam's future is increasing." 26/

The Task Force divided all activities in Vietnam into categories of importance, and assigned them priorities in groups. Unfortunately, the divisions were either too vague to be useful, or else they designated specific activities, such as agriculture, to such a low position that Washington found the selection unacceptable. In its first rank of importance the Task Force placed:

- "1. Those activities designed to prepare a sound pacification program primarily through strengthening the human resources element of pacification, and through coordinated planning...



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- "2. Those activities which draw strength away from the enemy and add to GVN's strength and image of concern for all its citizens...
- "3. Those psychological activities that support the war effort...
- "4. Those activities that persuade the people that RVNAF is wholly on the side of the people and acting in their interests...

down through:

- "16. Those activities which develop the leadership and organization of non-governmental institutions, particularly youth groups..." 27/

It was scarcely a list from which one could assemble a coherent program. Moreover, the above list of 16 "highest priority" tasks, was followed by a group of ten "high priority" tasks -- including strengthening provincial governments, autonomous municipal governments, better budgetary procedures, better refugee programs, minority programs, and so on. These, in turn, were followed by a nine-point list of "high priority programs." Into at least one of the 35 highest, high, or just plain priority activities, one could fit every program and project then being pursued in Vietnam. Furthermore, the proposal seemed to confuse inputs and outputs, placing in the same category "wishes" like "minimizing the adverse impact of and exploiting the opportunities provided by the American presence" (which was only "high priority") with "programs" like "creating a sound base for agricultural development."

The Priorities Task Force recommendations were used, unlike those of PROVN. In the FY 67 Country Assistance Program (CAP), submitted by AID to Congress that fall, the Task Force Strategy statement was used as a foreword, with Ambassador Lodge's approval. Moreover, the concept of priorities outlined in the final paper was applied to the AID program in Vietnam, with each activity being placed in one of the categories of priority. This did not result, however, in the original objective of reducing the size of the program and focusing it: instead, the AID program more than doubled in 1967, and a year later people were still complaining about the lack of clear-cut priorities. (As a matter of fact, when Deputy Ambassador Eugene Locke returned to Washington in September of 1967 with a "Blueprint for Vietnam," he was told that it lacked any sense of priorities, and was too much of a "shopping list.")

The "Roles and Missions" Study Group -- One of the Priority Task Force recommendations was that the Mission should establish another group to examine the question of the proper role of each military and paramilitary and police and civilian force in the country. This group was set up, under the chairmanship of Colonel George Jacobson in July of 1966, and submitted its final

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report to the Mission Council on August 24. The group was once again interagency, and it produced a paper of considerable value -- indeed, a paper which could well have served as a basic policy document for the Mission and Washington.

The Study Group made 81 recommendations, of which 66 were acceptable to all agencies of the Mission. But even these 66 were not immediately adopted as basic doctrine. Because of inertia and weariness, rather than deliberate sabotage, the recommendations were never treated as basic policy, and simply were carried out or not depending on the drive and desire of the individual officials associated with each individual recommendation.

The report began, as almost all Vietnam studies seem to, with a definition:

"Revolutionary Development consists of those military and civil efforts designed to liberate the population of South Vietnam from communist coercion; to restore public security; to initiate economic and political development; to extend effective GVN authority throughout SVN; and to win the willing support of the people to these ends." 28/

From there it developed the most logical and coherent approach to returning an area to GVN control and then gaining its support that had yet been produced by a group in either the Mission or Washington. The report was hailed by Porter, by Komer, and by various mid-level officials. Jacobson himself was to be named Mission Coordinator four months later, a position from which he could present his ideas directly to the Ambassadors.

While, as mentioned above, the recommendations were never issued as Mission policy in a group, many of them found their way into the main stream of the Mission through other means. Some of the more controversial ones -- for example: "that Division be removed from the RD Chain of Command" -- remained as potent ideas to be discussed within the government and with the Vietnamese, and to be acted on slowly.

Since the report foreshadowed several major developments in pacification, and since it still has today an intrinsic value of its own, it is worth quoting some of its major points:

"High hopes are now pinned on the RD cadre, as the critical element of success in RD. Unfortunately, there is a real danger it is being regarded as a panacea with curative powers it does not, of and by itself, possess. The introduction of RD Cadre cannot alone achieve success in any of the tasks discussed above. Even cadre such as may be available in six months...cannot compensate for the current failings and limitations of other fundamental elements bearing directly on the RD process.

"...RD demands for its success radical reform within the GVN including its Armed Forces. This reform must start

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at the top...These radical changes in the GVN and RVNAF seem most unlikely to occur without a strong, focused and coordinated exertion of U.S. influence at high levels...

RECOMMEND: -- That FWMAF give increased emphasis to improving the performance and conduct of GVN military forces through combined operations...

-- That as the increase in FWMAF strength permits, these forces engage with RVNAF in clearing operations in support of RD with the primary objective of improving the associated GVN forces...

-- That in view of the deployment and capabilities of FWMAF in Vietnam and recognizing the necessity for increased security support to RD, the bulk of ARVN Divisional combat battalions be assigned to Sector commanders with only those Divisional battalions not so assigned to be under the control of Divisions...

-- That the Division be removed from the RD chain of command...

-- That Ranger units because of their frequently intolerable conduct toward the populace, be disbanded with individual Rangers reassigned \* ...

-- That RF and PF become Provincial and District Constabulary...

-- That the Constabulary be placed under the Ministry of RD...

-- That National Police (Special Branch) assume primary responsibility for the destruction of the VC "infrastructure"...

-- That Police Field Force be integrated into the Constabulary...

-- That the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS) terminate its rural information cadre operations and assume a supporting role...for RD Cadre, technical cadre, and hamlet officials..." 29/

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\* This was a recommendation which MACV particularly opposed, arguing that it "would seriously reduce ARVN combat strength." Westmoreland added that he could not countenance the disbanding of units which had just received a Presidential Unit Citation.



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And so on. What lay behind each recommendation was an effort to unify the various GVN agencies and ministries working on pacification, streamline their operations, and, at the same time, increase U.S. influence over those operations.

While many items the Study Group recommended have still not been carried out, there has been growing acceptance of the bulk of the recommendations. In its initial reaction to the paper, MACV's Chief of Staff wrote to Ambassador Lodge "that many actions have been taken or are being considered by MACV which support and complement the overall objectives envisioned by the report. There are, however, certain recommendations with which we do not agree." 30/

The most important reservation that MACV had, concerned the allocation of resources for the RD effort:

"We are confronted with a determined, well-organized force operating in regimental and division strength. As long as this situation exists, it is imperative that the regular military forces retain first priority for the available manpower. Once the threat of the enemy's regular forces has diminished and the defeat of external aggression is accomplished, then other programs should have the first priority for recruiting...

In addition, MACV opposed the removal of Division from the RD chain of command; suggested a further task force to examine the Constabulary issue in detail; and opposed the suggestion that Special Branch Police -- which meant on the American side the CIA -- take over the anti-infrastructure effort. (On this latter point, the issue was finally resolved by an ingenious compromise structure under Westmoreland and Komer called ICEX -- Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation -- in July 1967.) Finally, Westmoreland rejected any internal changes in the MACV structure, as suggested by the Study Group. These had included:

" -- the establishment at MACV Division advisory level of a Deputy Senior Advisor for RD, at Corps a Deputy Senior Advisor for RD, and at COMJSMACV level a Deputy COMJSMACV for the entire MACV advisory effort and for RD...

" -- changes in the advisory rating system to emphasize the quality of the advice and the accuracy of reports, rather than the performance of the organization/Vietnamese they advise..." 31/

USAID reacted favorably to the study. In his memo to Lodge, the Acting USAID Director said that the report "presents an antidote to our having been too indulgent with the GVN in the past to our peril and theirs." Once again, however, as with MACV, USAID added some reservations -- and the reservations all fell in areas in which USAID would have the action responsibility if something was to be done. USAID feared that the report



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recommended steps that would give the Ministry of RD too much strength, reflecting the worry of their Public Safety Division. The Constabulary recommendations, which had far-reaching implications, were given a particularly rough going-over. For example, to protect its own embryonic structure, the Police Field Force USAID made the following comment on the recommendation that the PFF be integrated as units into the Constabulary:

"USAID concurs with the reservation that PFF remain a separate entity with its essential police powers." 32/

The CIA also thought the report was "constructive and helpful," but listed a few "disagreements." Once again, these pertained to those items in which the ICA had a strong vested interest. They opposed strenuously, for example, the suggestion that the MACV subsector advisor -- the only American at the district level in almost every district -- "be given primary responsibility for monitoring the activities of the cadre." Using the argument that everything possible be done to retain the civilian nature of the cadre, the CIA refused to let the MACV subsector advisors do what they were already doing in many cases.

The CIA and MACV both opposed the suggestion that a single Director of Intelligence be appointed to command civilian and military intelligence structures. The CIA said that this was "unwieldly and unworkable" because "this is not a theater of war." 33/

The Political Section of the Embassy also thought the study was "valuable," but added that "it appears to neglect a number of political considerations." Beyond that, they supported every specific suggestion, while noting how hard it would be to carry some of them out.

JUSPAO shared the fears of USAID that the report would concentrate more power in the hands of the Ministry of RD than it could usefully employ. JUSPAO thought that the Constabulary should be created, therefore, but placed under the Ministry of Defense. JUSPAO also found the removal of the Division from the RD chain of command "hardly feasible or realistic at this juncture" -- begging the issue of whether or not the United States should seek this as a valuable objective.

When the exercise was over, there were many in the Mission in Saigon who felt that the Study Group recommendations should have formed a blueprint for action throughout the Mission. They pointed out that almost all the recommendations were concurred in by every agency, and that these could be carried out immediately. The remaining 15 which were still not unanimously accepted could then be discussed and perhaps resolved.

In Washington, at least one high official, R.W. Komer, felt the same way, and urged the Mission to use the recommendations as policy. But somewhere between August 24, when the paper was submitted, and the end of 1966, the paper was relegated to the useful but distinctly secondary role of another "study group," as its name suggests. While everyone was

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complimentary about the paper, no machinery was set up in Ambassador Porter's office to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. While the agencies said that they agreed with most of the recommendations, the all-important decisions as to how fast and how hard to push forward with each recommendation was left to whichever agency "had the action" on it. This in effect left some crucial decisions -- the variables in our effort -- outside the Deputy Ambassador's hands. He had no machinery for checking to see what the agencies were doing to carry out the suggestions they said they agreed with. He had virtually no staff to observe how the agencies were actually handling each problem, although it was obvious that success or failure on each item lay to a large extent in the method it was handled. Indeed, Porter had no good way to even find out whether the agencies really did accept the recommendations. He was reliant on a knowledgeable but small staff which could only meddle in the internal matters of other agencies to a limited degree.

It was these shortcomings in the new mandate to Porter that were becoming evident in the late summer of 1966, and pressure began to build in Washington for another reorganization.

The pressure and emphasis on pacification was also producing visible results in MACV. On August 8, 1966, the J-3 of MACV, Major General Tillson, briefed the Mission Council on how MACV intended to "give maximum support to RD." The briefing was general, simplistic, and shallow, but it was a clear indication that General Westmoreland and MACV were beginning to respond to the pressure from outside their command that they should give RD more support. As such, it marked a major step for MACV. Tillson said that "military operations must be used to assure the security necessary for RD to begin. All military operations are designed towards this goal..."

He then went on to trace the degree to which criticism of ARVN was justified, and examine the suggestion that ARVN be re-oriented to support RD -- something which was to become part of the Manila communique only two months later:

"The ARVN has been at war continuously for a period of over ten years...The fact that ARVN today even exists as an organized fighting force is a tribute to its stamina and morale.

"Since its inception, ARVN has been oriented, trained, and led towards the task of offensive operations...It is difficult, in a short period of time, to redirect the motivation and training of years, and to offset the long indoctrination that offensive action against the VC is the reason for the existence of the Army...

"In the 1967 campaign plan, we propose to assign ARVN the primary mission of providing direct support to RD and US/FW Forces the primary mission of destroying VC/NVA main forces and base areas. Agreement has been reached between

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General Westmoreland and General Vien that, in I, II and III Corps areas, ARVN will devote at least 50% of its effort directly in support of the RD program. In IV Corps, where there are no U.S. forces, it was agreed that ARVN might have to devote up to 75% of its effort to offensive operations...

"[General Vien has issued a directive that] flatly states that, while some progress has been made, desired results are still lacking on RD. It emphasizes that RD efforts must be on a par with efforts to destroy the enemy...These directives of General Vien resulted from his conversations with General Westmoreland..." 34/ [Emphasis Added]

This was by far the strongest verbal support that MACV had ever given pacification, and it actually contained the kernel which developed into the important passage in the Manila communique that committed the RVNAF to support of RD.

The change in mood in Saigon among the Americans was reflected by Ambassador Lodge in his Weekly NODIS to the President. On August 31, 1966, he began his cable with:

"The biggest recent American event affecting Vietnam was giving pacification the highest priority which it has ever had -- making it, in effect, the main purpose of all our activities..."

"The above was brought about in several ways -- by word in General Westmoreland's "Concept of Military Operations in South Vietnam" of August 24, and by the deeds of the U.S. 1st and 25th Divisions and the III MAF. There has also been the new MACV proposal to revamp ARVN and turn it into a force better suited to pacification. Also at a special meeting of the Mission Council a stimulating paper was presented by the "Interagency Roles and Mission Study Group" which would take RF and PF, now a part of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, make them into a "constabulary" and call it that. Police Field Force would also be included in the Constabulary under this concept." 35/

A week earlier, Westmoreland had sent forward to CINCPAC and JCS a broad strategy statement for the coming year. He saw the time as "appropriate in light of the fact that we are on the threshold of a new phase in the conflict resulting from recent battlefield successes and from the continuing FWMAF buildup." After reviewing the course of battle since the introduction of U.S. troops, Westmoreland projected his strategy over the period until May 1, 1967, as "a general offensive with maximum practical support to area and population security in further support of RD." He then added:



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"The growing strength of US/FW Forces will provide the shield and will permit ARVN to shift its weight of effort to an extent not heretofore feasible to direct support of RD. Also, I visualize that a significant number of US/FW maneuver battalions will be committed to tactical areas of responsibility (TAOR) missions. These missions encompass base security and at the same time support RD by spreading security radially from the bases to protect more of the population...

"The priority effort of ARVN forces will be in direct support of the RD program; in many instances the province chief will exercise operational control over these units... This fact notwithstanding, the ARVN division structure must be maintained..." 36/

This long message, with its "new look" emphasis on pacification, was sent apparently not for CINCPAC's routine consideration, as would be the normal case in the military chain of command, but for the edification of high-ranking civilian leaders in Washington. It ended with a comment added by Ambassador Lodge -- an unusual procedure in a military message:

"I wish to stress my agreement with the attention paid in this message to the importance of military support for RD. After all, the main purpose of defeating the enemy through offensive operations against the main forces and bases must be to provide the opportunity through RD to get at the heart of the matter, which is the population of SVN." 37/

The new emphasis on RD/pacification was thus coming from many sources in the late summer of 1966. Porter and Komer, pushing the civilians harder than they had ever been pushed before, had not only improved their performance, but also to create pressures inside MACV for greater emphasis on RD. Westmoreland, responding to the pressure, and finding the VC/NVA increasingly reluctant to give battle, was planning a two-pronged strategy for late 1966-early 1967: attack and destroy enemy base areas, and use more forces to protect and build up and expand the GVN population centers.



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D. The Single Manager

By the late summer of 1966, as has been shown in detail in the preceding sections, the flaws in the structure of the U.S. Mission had been openly criticized in studies or reports by the U.S. Army Staff (in PROVN), by the Priorities Task Force and by the Roles and Missions Study Group in Saigon, by Robert Komer in repeated memoranda, and by various other visitors and observers. In addition to the written record, there were undoubtedly numerous private comments being made both in Saigon and Washington, some of which were reaching senior officials of the government.

The options before the USG were, in broad outline, fourfold. The Mission could either remain unchanged, or else it could reorganize along one of the three general lines which Komer had outlined in his August 7, 1966 memorandum:

Alternative One -- Put Porter in charge of all advisory and pacification activities, including the military;

Alternative Two -- Unify the civilian agencies into a single civilian chain of command, and strengthen the military internally -- but leave civilian and military separate;

Alternative Three -- Assign responsibility for pacification to Westmoreland and MACV, and put the civilians in the field under his command.

The Mission, as usual, argued for leaving the structure the way it was. Their arguments in this direction were unfortunate, because in Washington the mood was certainly in favor of some further changes, and by resisting all suggestions uniformly, the Mission was simply causing friction with Washington and reducing influence on the ultimate decisions.

The issue was joined more rapidly than anyone in Saigon had expected, because in mid-September, 1966, the Secretary of Defense weighed in on the issue in a direct way, producing a Draft Presidential Memorandum which advocated handing over responsibility for pacification to COMUSMACV.

McNamara's draft said:

"Now that a Viet Cong victory in South Vietnam seems to have been thwarted by our emergency actions taken over the past 18 months, renewed attention should be paid to the longer-run aspects of achieving an end to the war and building a viable nation in South Vietnam.

"Central to success, both in ending the war and in winning the peace, is the pacification program. Past progress in

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pacification has been negligible. Many factors have contributed, but one major reason for this lack of progress had been the existence of split responsibility for pacification on the U.S. side. For the sake of efficiency -- in clarifying our concept, focusing our energies, and increasing the output we can generate on the part of the Vietnamese -- this split responsibility on the U.S. side must be eliminated.

"We have considered various alternative methods of consolidating the U.S. pacification effort. The best solution is to place those activities which are primarily part of the pacification program, and all persons engaged in such activities, under COMUSMACV...In essence, the reorganization would result in the establishment of a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in command of all pacification staffs in Saigon and of all pacification activities in the field.

"It is recognized that there are many important aspects of the pacification problem which are not covered in this recommendation, which should be reviewed subsequent to the appointment of the Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification to determine whether they should be part of his task -- for example, the psychological warfare campaign, and the Chieu Hoi and refugee programs. Equally important, is the question of how to encourage a similar management realignment of the South Vietnamese side, since pacification is regarded as primarily a Vietnamese task. Also not covered by this recommendation are important related national programs...Finally, there is the question of whether any organizational modification in Washington is required by the recommended change in Vietnam.

"I recommend that you approve the reorganization described in this memorandum as a first essential step toward giving a new thrust to pacification. Under Secretary Ball, Administrator Gaud, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director Helms, Director Marks, and Mr. Komer concur in this recommendation." 38/

This memorandum was apparently never sent to the President, but it was distributed, with a request for comments and concurrence, to Ball (Rusk being out of the country), Gaud, the JCS, Helms, Marks, and Komer. Only Komer and the JCS concurred, with the others producing alternate suggestions. The entire question was handled as an "EYES ONLY" matter.

The positions that were taken were:

State opposed the recommendation. In informal discussions with Komer, Alexis Johnson cited the failure of Hop Tac (which seems irrelevant), the

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"optics" of militarizing the effort, and the need to check with Lodge as reasons against actions. 39/

AID agreed that the present program had its faults, but resisted the idea of a MACV takeover. Instead, they proposed a complex system of committees and deputies for RD, who would report to a Deputy Ambassador for Pacification. 40/

The JCS found that the proposal "provides an excellent rationale for an approach to the problem of appropriately integrating the civil and military effort in the important field of pacification" and concurred in the idea of a Deputy COMUSMACV for RD. 41/

CIA and USIA both opposed the reorganization, although their written comments are not in the files. 42/

Komer weighed in with a lengthy rationale supporting the idea. Although he may not have known it at the time, he was talking about the organizational structure he was going to fit into later. After agreeing that the need to get pacification moving was great, and that "the military are much better set up to manage a huge pacification effort," he said that 60-70% of "real job of pacification is providing local security. This can only be done by the military..." Komer then raised some additional points:

1. The Ambassador should remain in overall charge.
2. MACV should not assume responsibility for everything, only the high payoff war-related activities.
3. Logistic support should remain a multi-agency responsibility. 43/

As the discussions on the subject continued, Deputy Ambassador Porter arrived in the United States for a combined business-personal trip. When he found out what was being considered, he immediately made strong representations to McNamara, Komer, and Rusk. He also sent a personal cable back to Lodge, alerting him for the first time to what was afoot in Washington:

"Principal topic under discussion here is DOD proposal to bring both U.S. military and U.S. civilian resources needed to advance RD program under direction of Deputy COMUSMACV. This plan will be discussed with you during McNamara visit. It would detach all civilian field operations from direct control of Saigon civilian agencies and would place them under Deputy COMUSMACV for RD. In addition to controlling civilian field resources, latter would also manage U.S. military resources with view to increasing their effectiveness in furthering RD programs. Deputy COMUSMACV would be responsible to Ambassador or Deputy Ambassador through COMUSMACV. This at least is my understanding of proposal which is being strongly pushed here.



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"I have taken position that this proposal and certain counter proposals put forward by civilian agencies here require careful field study. In its existing form, as I understand it, it does not take into account the fact that militarization of our approach to this important civilian program runs counter to our aim of de-militarizing GVN through constitutional electoral process...

"I have been stressing here that our military are already heavily loaded with responsibility for achieving military measures required to further civilian RD programs, such as evoking adequate cooperation from RVN...I have emphasized need for MACV to grapple with problem of VC guerrilla activity during night, as distinct from main force activity during daytime which we now know can be dealt with. These areas would appear to offer great possibilities for application of military talent and I repeat that in my view question of burdening MACV further with complex programs (cadre, police, etc.) requires careful field study which I would have done promptly, if you agree, by group similar to that which carried out 'Roles and Missions' study." 44/

This was the background as Secretary McNamara, Under Secretary Katzenbach, General Wheeler, and Mr. Komer went to Saigon in October. The issue had been deferred, and when the visitors returned, they would make recommendations to the President. Katzenbach, making his first trip as Under Secretary, was requested to look at the problem with a new eye and no prior prejudices.

When they came back from Saigon, Katzenbach and McNamara both sent the President an important memorandum. Katzenbach argued for a strengthening of Ambassador Porter's role, and a deferral of the question of turning the RD effort over to MACV. McNamara concurred, but with a different emphasis. The memorandums were dated October 14 and 15, 1966, less than two weeks before the Manila conference, and the recommendations were accepted by the President. Katzenbach's memorandum was, for a first effort after a short VIP trip, an unusually interesting one. Excerpts:

"...I believe decisive, effective RD depends on a clear and precise common understanding of the security as we all recognize to be the foundation of success in the 'other war.'

"To illustrate the divergency of meanings, let me report briefly on a conversation I had with a small group of reporters in Saigon. It quickly degenerated into a debate, not between the reporters and me, but between Ward Just of the Washington Post and Charles Mohr of the New York Times.

"Just argued heatedly that RD could not begin to be effective unless security were first guaranteed both to the peasants



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and to RD workers. 'An AID man cannot do his job,' he said, 'while being shot at by the VC.'

"Mohr responded just as heatedly, that security could not come first -- because security from guerrillas is meaningless and impossible until the peasant population is motivated to support the GVN and deprive the guerrillas of havens, secrecy, and resources.

"Obviously, the easy answer to this circular chicken-egg debate is to say that both are necessary -- military protection and public motivation against the VC. And yet even that answer is incomplete for it defines security only in the American frame of reference...

"I know of no one who believes we have begun effectively to achieve the goal of gaining the population's active support, despite a series of pacification programs and despite even the budding early efforts of Ambassador Porter's new program.

"The Military Aspect. Secretary McNamara, Mr. Komer, Ambassadors Johnson, Lodge, and Porter, Mr. Gaud, I, and all others who have approached the problem are perfectly agreed that the military aspect of RD has been spindly and weak." 45/

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"This probably is the result of the entirely understandable preoccupation by MACV in recent months with the main force military emergency. However justifiable this has been, a major effect has nonetheless been our failure effectively to press RVNAF to even start meeting their crucial RD responsibilities.

"(I know of no one who believes that these should be met principally by American forces -- unless we should wish the whole RD effort to collapse once we leave.)

"The Civil Aspect. Similarly, the work of civilian agencies has fallen short -- largely, but not only because of the failure of RVNAF to provide a military screen behind which to work...

"Rather than engage in a civil-military debate, I think we should devote our efforts toward trying to devise an administrative structure that capitalizes on the assets each agency can offer to RD.

"What should be the elements of an ideal organization?

"1. It should have maximum leverage on RVNAF to engage in clear and hold operations in direct support of RDM efforts.

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"2. It should have a single American "negative," anti-VC channel -- that is a single commander for all action against communist guerrilla forces. This commander would calibrate and choose among the various force alternatives -- depending on whether he believed the need to be military, para-military, or police.

"This command would include complete responsibility for all anti-VC intelligence -- that is, concerning all VC suspects either in the infrastructure or in guerrilla units.

"3. It should have a single, unified channel for all 'positive' pro-people aspects of RD, irrespective of the present lines of command within civilian agencies, allowing a single commander to calibrate and assign priorities to relevant positive programs on behalf of the peasantry.

"This, too, would include the immediate expansion of and control over all 'pro-people' intelligence -- that is, detailed district-by-district and province-by-province reporting on the particular gains most wanted by the populace (land reform, for example, in one province; or schools in another; or agricultural assistance in another).

"4. Sensitivity to political inputs and wise political guidance of the whole process are needed to ensure that military programs support rather than negate efforts to win public support and participation. Failure to assure this -- which characterized French efforts in Indochina and Algeria, in contrast to civil-led, successful, British efforts in Malaya and the Filipino campaign against the Huks -- means that the very process of gaining security would be weakened and prolonged, at increased cost in Vietnamese and American lives.

"Thus, overall civilian command of the RD program is needed for fundamental practical reasons, by no means for considerations of international image alone (though on the latter point, it must be observed that as soon as we put 'the other war' under obvious military control, it stops being the other war). In particular, it is important not to block or reverse -- by the way we organize our efforts -- the current genuinely hopeful Vietnamese trend toward increased civilian influence and participation in government.

"In short, it is not the precise form of organization or the precise choice of flow chart that is important. What is important is:

"1. An immediate and effective military screen for RD efforts; and

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"2. Authoritative and compelling administration of the efforts of civilian agencies.

"I believe we can institute effective administration of the RD program -- which Ambassador Lodge has aptly described as the heart of the matter -- achieving all of these ideals:

"1. Maintain the effect and the appearance of civilian control by immediately assigning overall supervision of all RD activities to Ambassador Porter (and assigning a second deputy to Ambassador Lodge to absorb the substantial other responsibilities now met by Ambassador Porter).

"2. That the several civilian lines of command within agencies be consolidated into one. Thus, USAID, JUSPAO, OSA, and the Embassy personnel assigned to RD all would continue under the nominal administrative control of their respective agencies but full, unified operational control would rest solely with Ambassador Porter.

"3. That Ambassador Porter's authority be made clear and full to each constituent agency of the RD team, including:

- relocation of personnel;
- the establishment of priorities irrespective of agency priorities;
- and the apportionment of the funds allocated by each agency to Viet-Nam, bounded only by statutory limitations.

"4. That MACV immediately give highest-level command focus and consolidation to its RD concerns and staff, now that it is no longer so completely distracted from RD by the compelling requirements of main force combat. This would be organized around the thesis that the central need is the most effective persuasive power or leverage on RVNAF. This thesis is strengthened substantially by:

- The firm intent, expressed to us in Saigon last week, of President Thieu and Prime Minister Ky to shift ARVN infantry to revolutionary development work starting in January;
- The enhanced powers they intend to give to General Thang, already an able chief of RD for GVN.

"5. That the MACV effort embrace at least advisory control over all levels of force -- starting with ARVN but also including RF, PF, CIDG, and the para-military operations of the RD cadre, PFF, and PRV.

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"These steps would greatly strengthen both the military and civil lines of command. They would contribute significantly to the success of RD. But not even these changes would be decisive without a strong link between them.

"The civil side requires the capacity to influence military movement which no organizational chart can provide. The MACV side requires the political and substantive expertise which a military organization does not -- and is not expected to -- possess.

"Thus the fundamental recommendation I would make is:

"6. To appoint, as principal deputy and executive officer to Ambassador Porter, a general of the highest possible ability and stature -- of two, three or even four-star rank. To do so would win the following advantages:

"a. Compelling indication of the seriousness with which the Administration regards RD.

"b. The rank, and stature to insure optimum RD performance from MACV.

"c. The rank and stature to afford maximum impact on GVN military leaders and capacity to persuade them properly to prod RVNAF when necessary.

"d. Demonstrated command administrative capacities with which to assist Ambassador Porter, while bridging the inevitable institutional difficulties that might well otherwise develop from one arm of MACV's taking orders from a civilian.

"e. A solution to the military control image problem, by which the advantages of close military support would be veiled by civilian control.

"f. The capacity and position to formulate an effective qualitative plan encompassing both military and civil realities. Previous plans have focused on numbers of provinces, volume of RD cadre trained, and so on. They have put an unrealistic premium on quantitative, "statistical" success. Meaningful criteria, however, must be qualitative. I would envision such a qualitative plan intended to cover at least the next 12 months.

"There would be an additional prospective advantage as well. If it should later be found that dual lines of authority -- even given this strong link -- are not successful, then we could more readily fall back to a unitary, military command structure -- with the new RD general taking charge.



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"He would have the benefit, in that situation, of having been under civilian control and his relationship to RD would already be evident, making the change to military control less abrupt and less susceptible to criticism." 46/

Secretary McNamara's memorandum -- sent the day before Katzenbach's -- was of greater importance, and stands out as one of the most far-reaching and thoughtful documents in the files. While this study concentrates on pacification, it is necessary to view McNamara's remarks about pacification in this memorandum within the context of the entire paper.

He said that the military situation had gone "somewhat better" than he had anticipated a year earlier, and that "we have by and large blunted the communist military initiative." But he found little cause for hope that the overall situation would turn dramatically in our favor within the next two years. "I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon," he said, and described the enemy strategy as one of "keeping us busy and waiting us out (a strategy of attriting our national will)."

"Pacification is a basic disappointment. We have good grounds to be pleased by the recent elections, by Ky's 16 months in power, and by the faint signs of development of national political institutions and of a legitimate civil government. But none of this has translated itself into political achievements at Province level or below. Pacification has, if anything, gone backward..."

Thus, the Secretary found us "no better, and if anything worse off -- from the point of view of the important war (for the complicity of the people)."

He did not think at that time that major increases in U.S. force levels or bombing programs would make a big difference in the short run. Rather, he suggested a series of actions designed to emphasize to Hanoi that we were setting definite limits on the cost in men and money of the war, while settling down for the long haul -- "a posture that makes trying to 'wait us out' less attractive." His strategy was "five-pronged."

First, he suggested that we stabilize U.S. force levels in Vietnam, barring a dramatic change in the war. The limit he proposed was the 470,000 total then under consideration. (CINCPAC had requested 570,000 by end 1967). This limit would "put us in a position where negotiations would be more likely to be productive, but if they were not we could pursue the all-important pacification task with proper attention and resources and without the spectre of apparently endless escalation of U.S. deployments."

Second, he recommended a barrier near the DMZ and "across the trails of Laos."

Third, he suggested that we "stabilize the Rolling Thunder program against the North." He thus recommended against the increase in the level

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of bombing and the broader target systems that the JCS was then requesting. Again, his reason was to "remove the prospect of ever-escalating bombing as a factor complicating our political posture and distracting from the main job of pacification in South Vietnam."

Fourth, he said, we should "pursue a vigorous pacification program."

"The large-unit operations war, which we know best how to fight and where we have had our successes, is largely irrelevant to pacification as long as we do not lose it. By and large, the people in rural areas believe that the GVN when it comes will not stay but that the VC will; that cooperation with the GVN will be punished by the VC; that the GVN is really indifferent to the people's welfare; that the low-level GVN are tools of the local rich; and that the GVN is ridden with corruption.

"Success in pacification depends on the interrelated functions of providing physical security, destroying the VC apparatus, motivating the people to cooperate, and establishing responsive local government. An obviously necessary but not sufficient requirement for success of the RD cadre and police is vigorously conducted and adequately prolonged clearing operations by military troops who will 'stay' in the area, who behave themselves decently and who show respect for the people.

"This elemental requirement of pacification has been missing. In almost no contested area designated for pacification in recent years have ARVN forces actually 'cleared and stayed' to a point where cadre teams, if available, could have stayed overnight in hamlets and survived, let alone accomplish their mission...

"Now that the threat of a communist main-force military victory has been thwarted by our emergency efforts, we must allocate far more attention and a portion of the regular military forces (at least half of ARVN and perhaps a portion of the U.S. forces) to the task of providing an active and permanent security system behind which the RD teams and police can operate and behind which the political struggle with the VC infrastructure can take place.

"The U.S. cannot do this pacification security job for the Vietnamese. All we can do is 'massage the heart.' For one reason, it is known that we do not intend to stay; if our efforts worked at all, it would merely postpone the eventual confrontation of the VC and GVN infrastructures. The GVN must do the job, and I am convinced that drastic reform is needed if the GVN is going to be able to do it.

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"The first essential reform is in the attitude of GVN officials. They are generally apathetic, and there is corruption high and low. Often appointments, promotions, and draft deferments must be bought; and kickbacks on salaries are common. Cadre at the bottom can be no better than the system above them.

"The second needed reform is in the attitude and conduct of the ARVN. The image of the government cannot improve unless and until the ARVN improves markedly. They do not understand the importance (or respectability) of pacification nor the importance to pacification of proper, disciplined conduct. Promotions, assignments and awards are often not made on merit, but rather on the basis of having a diploma, friends, or relatives, or because of bribery. The ARVN is weak in dedication, direction and discipline.

"Not enough ARVN are devoted to area and population security, and when the ARVN does attempt to support pacification, their actions do not last long enough; their tactics are bad despite U.S. prodding (no aggressive small-unit saturation patrolling, hamlet searches, quick-reaction contact, or offensive night ambushes); they do not make good use of intelligence; and their leadership and discipline are bad.

"Furthermore, it is my conviction that a part of the problem undoubtedly lies in bad management on the American as well as the GVN side. Here split responsibility -- or 'no responsibility' -- has resulted in too little hard pressure on the GVN to do its job and no really solid or realistic planning with respect to the whole effort. We must deal with this management problem now and deal with it effectively.

"One solution would be to consolidate all U.S. activities which are primarily part of the civilian pacification program and all persons engaged in such activities, providing a clear assignment of responsibility and a unified command under a civilian relieved of all other duties. (If this task is assigned to Ambassador Porter, another individual must be sent immediately to Saigon to serve as Ambassador Lodge's deputy.) Under this approach, there would be a carefully delineated division of responsibility between the civilian-in-charge and an element of COMUSMACV under a senior officer, who would give the subject of planning for and providing hamlet security the highest priority in attention and resources. Success will depend on the men selected for the jobs on both sides (they must be among the highest rank and most competent administrators in the U.S. Government), on complete cooperation among the U.S.



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elements, and on the extent to which the South Vietnamese can be shocked out of their present pattern of behavior. The first work of this reorganized U.S. pacification organization should be to produce within 60 days a realistic and detailed plan for the coming year.

"From the political and public-relations viewpoint, this solution is preferable -- if it works. But we cannot tolerate continued failure. If it fails after a fair trial, the only alternative in my view is to place the entire pacification program -- civilian and military -- under General Westmoreland. This alternative would result in the establishment of a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in command of all pacification staffs in Saigon and of all pacification staffs and activities in the field; one person in each corps, province and district would be responsible for the U.S. effort."

"(It should be noted that progress in pacification, more than anything else, will persuade the enemy to negotiate or withdraw.)"

Fifth, the Secretary recommended a renewed effort to get negotiations started, by taking steps "to increase our credibility" with Hanoi, by considering a shift in the pattern of our bombing program considering the possibility of cessation of bombing, by trying to "split the VC off from Hanoi," and by "developing a realistic plan providing a role for the VC in negotiations, postwar life, and government of the nation."

His summation was somber. While repeating his prediction that the next two years would not see a satisfactory conclusion by either large-unit action or negotiations, McNamara advocated pursuing both routes although "we should recognize that success from them is a mere possibility, not a probability."

"The solution lies in girding, openly, for a longer war and in taking actions immediately which will in 12 to 18 months give clear evidence that the continuing costs and risks to the American people are acceptably limited, that the formula for success has been found, and that the end of the war is merely a matter of time. All of my recommendations will contribute to this strategy, but the one most difficult to implement is perhaps the most important one -- enlivening the pacification program. The odds are less than even for this task, if only because we have failed so consistently since 1961 to make a dent in the problem. But, because the 1967 trend of pacification will, I believe, be the main talisman of ultimate U.S. success or failure in Vietnam, extraordinary imagination and effort should go into changing the stripes of that problem.



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The memorandum closed with a comment on the thoughts of Thieu and Ky:

"They told me that they do not expect the enemy to negotiate or to modify his program in less than two years. Rather, they expect the enemy to continue to expand and to increase his activity. They expressed agreement with us that the key to success is pacification and that so far pacification has failed. They agree that we need clarification of GVN and U.S. roles and that the bulk of the ARVN should be shifted to pacification. Ky will, between January and July 1967, shift all ARVN infantry divisions to that role. And he is giving Thang, a good Revolutionary Development director, added powers. Thieu and Ky see this as part of a two-year (1967-1968) schedule, in which offensive operations against enemy main force units are continued, carried on primarily by the U.S. and other Free World forces. At the end of the two-year period, they believe the enemy may be willing to negotiate or to retreat from his current course of action." 47/

McNamara's memorandum marked a strong new emphasis on pacification by him, and the ripples that this new emphasis set off were inevitably to spread throughout the USG, changing emphasis and official rhetoric up and down the line. His first reactions were official: comments on his memorandum from George Carver, Helms' Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs at the CIA; and from the JCS. Carver agreed with the evaluation of the situation, but objected to some of the recommended actions, particularly the "press for negotiations" items which he felt would be "counter-productive." Carver made the provocative statement that he considered the prognosis "too gloomy." If the odds for enlivening the pacification program are indeed "less than even, present U.S. objectives in Vietnam are not likely to be achieved."

In his memorandum, Carver took issue with McNamara on pacification. Carver felt that "despite the errors and administrative weaknesses of present programs, in the concept of RD we have found the right formula, a catalyst that is potentially capable of inspiring the Vietnamese into effective action...Serious and systematic effort in this field is really a post-Honolulu Conference development and it would be unrealistic to expect dramatic, readily quantifiable progress in the short span of eight months."

Carver supported the new stress on pacification, adding that he would support "wholeheartedly" a "real reorganizational change under which the civilian director would have a joint staff of sufficient scope to enable him to plan, control, and direct the U.S. effort and have operational control over all -- not just civilian -- elements engaged in RD..." He opposed a "carefully delineated division between the civilian in charge and an element of COMUSMACV under a senior officer."

"A civilian pacification structure cannot be given a 'fair trial' unless the civilian director has the necessary authority," Carver said. "Also, the

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trial will not be fair if major quantifiable results are anticipated in a matter of months."

Carver's vision of pacification rested to a large degree on the idea of gaining the active support of the population. He seemed opposed to the use of troops to merely protect terrain and the people who lived on it, saying, "If an attempt is made to impose pacification on an unengaged populace by GVN or U.S. military forces, that attempt will fail."

He concluded, as he had begun:

"We agree with Secretary McNamara's prognosis that there is little hope for a satisfactory conclusion of the war within the next two years. We do not agree that "the odds are less than even" for enlivening the pacification program. If this were true, the U.S. would be foolish to continue the struggle in Vietnam and should seek to disengage as fast as possible. We think that if we establish adequate management and control on the U.S. side and ensure that the Vietnamese follow through on redirecting their military resources as promised, there are at least fair prospects for substantial progress in pacification over the next two years." 48/

The JCS review of McNamara's memorandum was far more severe. While agreeing that "There is no reason to expect that the war can be brought soon to a successful conclusion," the Chiefs made a strong case, as usual, for increased bombing, no predetermined force ceilings, and stated several times in different ways that the war was going very well indeed -- although this same point had been made by McNamara. The Chiefs also disagreed strongly with the move for negotiations which McNamara had suggested. Any bombing pause, they said, would be regarded by Hanoi, by the GVN, and by our Allies, as "renewed evidence of lack of U.S. determination to press the war to a successful conclusion."

On pacification, the JCS "adhered to their conclusion" that "to achieve optimum effectiveness, the pacification program should be transferred to COMUSMACV. However, if for political reasons a civilian type organization should be considered mandatory by the President, they would interpose no objection.

"Nevertheless, they are not sanguine that an effective civilian-type organization can be erected, if at all, except at the expense of costly delays. As to the use of a substantial fraction of ARVN for pacification purposes, the JCS concur. However, they desire to flag that adoption of this concept will undoubtedly elicit charges of a U.S. takeover of combat operations at increased cost in American casualties." 49/

The JCS requested that their views be brought to the attention of the President.

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On the record, Secretary McNamara and Under Secretary Katzenbach had been quite frank in telling the American public that they had found pacification lagging during their October trip to Vietnam. Katzenbach said he was "concerned" and, after emerging from the meeting with the President, told the White House press corps that "We have to do a good deal more to get the 'other war' moving and I think we can." 50/ Even Komer, who remained more optimistic than McNamara and Katzenbach, was quoted as "acknowledging" that pacification was lagging.

While "military progress has exceeded our expectations," the Defense Secretary said, progress in pacification has "been very slow indeed." His trip also raised fears, for the first time, in Saigon that the military would take over the pacification effort. Thus, at almost the very moment that the President was hearing Katzenbach's recommendation that the civilians be reorganized and given a last chance (see previous action), Ward Just was writing from Saigon:

"McNamara left behind the impression that his visit to South Vietnam last week marked the beginning of the end of civilian supremacy in the American effort...

"Sources here were saying today that McNamara, a stickler for detail, was unimpressed with civilian descriptions of progress, or lack of it, in the pacification effort. The American who bears most of the authority for that, Deputy Ambassador William C. Porter, was in the U.S. during the McNamara visit.

"There has always been, as one official here put it, a 'military component' to pacification. But it is understood now that that component will be increased and the military will more and more take control of pacification -- the task called nation-building.

"...The other likely outcome of McNamara's four days in Vietnam is that the role of ARVN will change.

"Informed sources said that McNamara heard no complaints whatsoever from American military sources regarding the performance of the ARVN, but the fact is that he did. It has been an open secret in Saigon that the role of the ARVN would change next year. Their work would be in pacification, not in striking at main force units...

"There is now increased certainty that the war effort despite public homage to the 'other war' and the 'hearts and minds of the people' is more thoroughly military than ever -- and more thoroughly American.

"In the end, the military is thought to have carried the day not by force or logic or force of wisdom, although their

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position here can be argued plausibly with both logic and wisdom, but by sheer weight of what one official called the juggernaut...

"Westmoreland says do this, do that, and something happens,' one informed observer said. 'When Lodge says do this, do that, sometimes something happens, and sometimes it doesn't happen.'

"The men here who wanted to see one ideology beaten by a better one, to see the Vietnamese character (not to mention the countryside) preserved and not submerged by the war, who viewed the struggle as an exercise in counterinsurgency, have now certainly lost...

"It remains to be seen whether the problems of Vietnam lend themselves to military solutions and whether changing conditions in this war are better handled by colonels than diplomats." 51/

Just's article was wrong, of course, since the decision to give MACV responsibility for pacification had not been made. Indeed, within a few days this fact had also leaked to the press, and stories in the New York Times, datelined Saigon, spoke of the "abortive effort" by MACV to take over the effort. But the importance of the stories was not in their accuracy or inaccuracy, but in the fact that they indicated the emotions that had been raised by the subject during and after the McNamara-Katzenbach-Komer visit. In truth, no one in Saigon, not even Lodge and Westmoreland, knew at this time what the final decision was to be. But the subject was up for discussion, and the pressure from Washington had been measurably increased.

With the McNamara and Katzenbach memoranda in hand, the President apparently indicated tentative agreements to give the civilians a short trial period to get pacification moving. Then he left for his Asian tour, which was to climax with the Seven-Nation Conference at Manila. He left behind him instructions to prepare a message to Lodge and Porter and Westmoreland, instructing them in his decision. Since the message was drafted and sent on to the President in Wellington on October 18, before Manila, but not sent on to Lodge and Porter in Saigon until November 4, after Manila, there apparently remained some uncertainty as to his decision, which was not clarified until most of the principals were united briefly in Manila. But this is of marginal importance. The fact was that the President had approved the idea of giving the civilians a final chance.

The Cable Exchange: November, 1966

By October 18, McNamara, Katzenbach, and Komer had an agreed-upon telegram for the President to send Lodge. It was forwarded to Wellington, where the President had begun his Asian tour:

"State/Defense and Komer recommend your concurrence in the general plan recommended by both Secretary McNamara and



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Under Secretary Katzenbach regarding reorganization on the American side of the administration of the Revolutionary Development (RD) program in Viet-Nam. We therefore recommend that you approve our sending the following State-Defense message to Ambassador Lodge:

BEGIN TEXT

"Personal For Lodge. You have described the RD program as the heart of the matter in SVN. We agree. Also, you have reported and we agree that progress in the RD program so far has been slight and unsatisfactory. We all agree that progress must be made in this crucial area if the war is to be won in the South and if the North is to be persuaded to negotiate. It is clear to us that some organizational changes are required on the American side to get RD moving -- to bring harder pressure on the GVN to do its job and to get solid and realistic planning with respect to the whole effort.

"We had considered putting the entire program under COMUSMACV to achieve these ends; and this may ultimately prove to be the best solution. But recognizing certain objections to this approach, we are prepared to try a solution which leaves the civilian functions under civilian management. As we see it, the trial organization would involve the following changes:

"1. The several civilian lines of command within U.S. agencies would be consolidated into one. Thus, line responsibility for all personnel assigned to RD civilian functions would rest solely with one high-ranking civilian. (We presume this man would be Ambassador Porter. If so, he would have to be relieved of all other duties, and you would have to have another deputy assigned to absorb the substantial other responsibilities now met by Ambassador Porter.) The authority of this civilian would be made clear and full to each constituent agency of the civilian RD team, including relocation of personnel, the establishment of priorities irrespective of agency priorities, and the apportionment of the funds allocated for RD by each agency to Viet-Nam (bounded only by statutory limitations).

"2. To strengthen Porter administratively, it might be well to assign him a competent Principal Deputy and Executive Officer -- a military officer of two or three-star rank. If this officer is desired, General Westmoreland can supply him or, if he requests, the officer can be provided from here. This officer would not be to command U.S. military forces or operations or to perform MACV's functions of advising and prodding the ARVN, but would be to provide administrative strength on the civilian side and to serve as a bridge to MACV, ensuring efficient interface between the civilian and military structures.

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"3. We understand General Westmoreland is already considering a MACV Special Assistant for Pacification or a Deputy for Pacification. We presume that the appointment of such a Special Assistant or Deputy could be timed to coincide with the changes on the civilian side, making possible the highest-level command focus and consolidation to MACV's RD concerns and staff.

"4. Careful definition and delineation of responsibilities of the U.S. civilian and U.S. military sides would be necessary in the whole RD establishment in South Viet-Nam to ensure that nothing falls between the stools and that the two efforts fully mesh.

"We are most anxious, as we know you are, to make progress in RD. So this new organizational arrangement would be on trial for 90-120 days, at the end of which we would take stock of progress and reconsider whether to assign all responsibility for RD to COMUSMACV." 52/

As mentioned above, this cable was not repeated to Saigon until after the Manila Conference. Presumably, in the intervening period, the President had had a chance to talk directly to Lodge and Westmoreland about the matter, since they were both at Manila (Porter was not). In addition, Komer had gone from Manila back to Saigon for a week's stay, and had given Porter a clear warning that the reorganization was impending. When he left, Komer left behind two members of his staff to assist Porter with the planning for the reorganization, although Porter and Lodge, for some reason not clear today, still seemed doubtful that the reorganization Washington was pressing on them was really necessary, and really desired by the President.

The cable -- unchanged from the text cited above -- arrived in Vietnam on November 4, 1966. 53/ It was slugged "Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador from Secretary, SecDef, and Komer," and because Lodge decided to interpret that slug line literally, the entire process was delayed one week -- a sorry spectacle and wholly unnecessary on all counts. When Lodge answered the cable by requesting permission to discuss it with his assistants, there was an understandable suspicion in Washington that he was simply doing so to delay action a little while longer. But on the other hand, the cable had received the highest slug normally available to State Department messages -- "Literally Eyes Only" -- and Lodge could say truthfully that he was just following instruction.

In any event, Lodge sent his answer to Washington November 6:

"I agree that progress has been 'slight and unsatisfactory' and, undoubtedly some organizational changes can be helpful. However, before commenting on that I would like to set out some basic considerations.

"Crux of the problem is not defective organization. It is security. Civilian reorganization can affect progress only

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indirectly, because security will remain outside civilian purview...

"To meet this need we must make more U.S. troops available to help out in pacification operations as we move to concentrate ARVN effort in this work. U.S. forces would be the catalyst; would lead by example; and would work with the Vietnamese on the 'buddy' system. They would be the 10 percent of the total force of men under arms (90 percent of whom would be Vietnamese) which would get the whole thing moving faster.

"This has been done on a small scale already by elements of the U.S. Marines, 1st and 25th U.S. Infantry Divisions, and the Koreans. We think it can be made to work and the gains under such a program, while not flashy, would hopefully be solid. Everything depends on whether we can change ARVN habits. Experiments already made indicate that U.S. casualties would be few. While it would take time, it would be clear to everyone at home that time was working for us and it might create a 'smell of victory.' It would eventually get at Viet Cong recruiting -- surely an achievement which would fundamentally affect the course of the war.

"I wonder whether the above result could not be achieved if the phrase 'offensive operations' were to be redefined so that instead of defining it as meaning 'seek out and destroy,' which I understand is now the case, it would be defined as 'split up the Viet Cong and keep him off balance.'

"This new definition of the phrase 'offensive operations' would mean fewer men for the purely 'military war, fewer U.S. casualties and more pacification.

"It would also hasten the revamping of the ARVN, which Ky says is now due to have been completed by normal Vietnamese bureaucratic methods by July 1967 (which seems optimistic to me). What I propose in this telegram would in effect revamp the ARVN by 'on-the-job-training.' It is the only way that I can think of drastically to accelerate the present pace.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The question of transferring Revolutionary Development civilian functions to COMUSMACV raises questions and I understand you recognize certain objections. I doubt whether it would solve any existing problems, and it would certainly create many new ones. I agree with your second paragraph in which you say civilian functions should be left under civilian management.

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"I agree that civilian lines of command within U.S. agencies dealing with Revolutionary Development should be consolidated under Ambassador Porter. He should take unto himself the direct operation of the five categories of manpower now in the field. I refer to USAID public safety, USAID province reps; JUSPAO; CIA and the civil functions performed by the military advisers. They would all stay exactly where they are as far as rationing, housing and administration is concerned. Porter would have the operational authority and responsibility.

"I am not clear what another Deputy Ambassador would do and advise against such an unnecessary and unwieldy structure. Ambassador Porter does not now absorb 'substantial other responsibilities' which distract his attention from revolutionary development. Administrative matters involving the U.S. Mission as a whole are handled by the Mission Coordinator, and political affairs are handled by me with close support from the political counselor. Economic affairs, in which Porter as the man responsible for revolutionary development is intimately and necessarily involved, are well covered by AID and the Economic Counselor. Public affairs not connected with field operations associated with revolutionary development are well in hand and do not take Ambassador Porter's time.

"The only 'substantial other responsibility' which Porter carries outside of RD, is to take charge in my absence. I see no need, and would find it most inappropriate, for this to be changed.

"I think there is great merit in the idea of having a high-ranking military man involved in pacification work. He should be in charge of all the military aspects of pacification -- working with ARVN and selecting, expediting, and assigning the U.S. troops who would operate as suggested in para 3 above. He should be an officer with proper knowledge of and talent for the subject and I, of course, think of General Weyand. If the decision is made by all hands to put the military into pacification as suggested in para 3, the decision as to where to place such a general should not be too difficult.

"I agree that careful definition and delineation of responsibilities of the U.S. civilian and military sides is necessary. We intend that the two efforts fully mesh.

"Clearly there is very little that can be done economically, socially, psychologically, and politically for the 'hearts and minds' of men, if these men have knives sticking into their collective bellies. The knife must first be removed. It is



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not the case -- as has so often been said -- of which came first, the hen or the egg...

\* \* \* \* \*

"This is obviously not reflected in our present organization under which, nonetheless, much has been accomplished. When Mac Bundy told me in February, after the Vice President's visit, of the decision to relieve Porter of all of his duties as Deputy (except that of being Charge d'Affaires in case of my absence) so that he could take charge of the civilian aspects of pacification, I did not at first welcome the idea. I must, however, recognize that under Porter a real asset has been built.

"To sum up, therefore, the first priority is more U.S. troops to be allotted to pacification as set forth in paragraph 3; the second priority is better operation and tightening up of the present organization; thirdly, are organizational changes.

"Considering that your message was "EYES ONLY," I request authority to discuss it and my comments and plans with the heads of the different Mission agencies involved here. We are all anxious to make progress in RD, and the effort will involve all of us. It requires security and time. Whatever the trial period may be, I suggest we maintain a constant taking stock of progress and of problems. Lodge." 54/

Back came Washington's answer on November 12, giving Lodge permission to discuss the matter and show the cables to Porter, Westmoreland, and "once plans mature, inform members Mission Council." With the civilians in Washington already feeling that their trial period was underway, they sought to get the Mission moving faster to reorganize. The cables became a series of hints and threats and detailed guidance. The difficulty in communication was quite high. Thus, the November 12 cable, drafted by Ambassador Unger and cleared with McNamara, Helms, Gaud, Komer, Marks, Katzenbach, and Rusk, and slugged "for Ambassador from Secretary, SecDef, and Komer," laid out for Lodge and Porter a detailed description of how the new structure should look -- although everyone knew that the plans had already been drawn up and were sitting on Lodge and Porter's desks in Saigon -- and began with this warning-hint:

"Following steps need to be taken promptly if we are, in the time available, to give adequate test to organization which is intended to keep RD civilian functions under civilian management, an objective to which we know you attach considerable important." 55/

The cable went on to outline the organization, and discuss the question of the use of U.S. troops:

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"...We understand General Westmoreland plans use of limited number U.S. forces in buddy system principle to guide and motivate ARVN in RD/P. However, we have serious doubts about any further involvement U.S. troops beyond that in straight pacification operations. We fear this would tempt Vietnamese to leave this work more and more to us and we believe pacification, with its intimate contact with population, more appropriate for Vietnamese forces, who must after all as arm of GVN establish constructive relations with population. Hence we believe there should be no thought of U.S. taking substantial share of pacification. The urgent need is to begin effectively pressing ARVN." 56/

In Saigon, the Mission moved slowly. Three days later, with still no answer from Saigon, the State Department sent out the following very short and curt cable:

"Personal for Lodge and Porter from the Secretary

"Ref State 83699

"REFTEL was discussed today at highest levels, who wished to emphasize that this represents final and considered decision and who expressed hope that indicated measures could be put into effect just as rapidly as possible." 57/

This produced, at last, two long answers from Lodge and Porter, which laid out what the new structure was going to look like, and added some personal comments from Lodge:

"FOR THE SECRETARY, SECDEF AND KOMER

"NODIS

"1. This is in reply to your 83699 as amended by your 85196 concerning which General Westmoreland, Porter and I have had extensive consultation.

"2. We will, of course, carry out your instructions just as rapidly as possible, and our planning is already far advanced.

"3. It is very gratifying that you feel as we do on the urgent need to revamp the ARVN, on the importance of putting all civilians in the field under Porter and of having single civilian responsibility in province and corps -- measures which we have long advocated. Doubt whether we can change over night habits and organization of ARVN acquired during the last ten years. Unless our success against main force daytime activity is equalled by success against guerrillas during the night, swift improvement cannot be expected to result simply by reorganization on the U.S. civilian side. It is our ability to infuse

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courage and confidence into all the Vietnamese under arms who are involved in pacification -- both military and police -- which is at stake.

"4. As regards your instruction for a military deputy for Porter, General Westmoreland proposes Major General Paul Smith, who is acceptable to Porter. Porter believes General Smith should be attached to civilian agency (State Department - Embassy Saigon) while on this duty, along lines precedents already established. He could wear civilian or military garb as circumstances require.

\* \* \*

"6. General Westmoreland does not wish to have a separate deputy for Revolutionary Development, but has nominated Brigadier General William Knowlton as Special Assistant for Pacification.

\* \* \*

"8. Concerning paragraph 4(c). Mission directive will state clearly that Deputy Ambassador Porter will be primarily occupied with RD and that other Mission business will be handled by appropriate sections of Mission. There are certain other aspects to consider, however. Porter has assumed charge when I have been absent. Any change in that respect could only derogate from his position in eyes of American community and GVN. He believes, and I concur, that his assumption of charge cannot be 'nominal' without risk of downgrading him in local eyes. Additionally, it is essential that there be a point of decision in Mission, without ambiguity. In practice, Porter intends to leave routine functions of Mission (political, protocol, administrative, personnel, consular, visitors, etc.) to sections normally handling them. He expects, however, to remain closely cognizant of political developments and together with political counselor and CAS chief to consult and decide course of action to take or recommend to department as circumstances dictate. I believe this is reasonable approach and have full confidence in his intention to concentrate on RD.

\* \* \*

"10. Your paragraph 5. I have always believed that Revolutionary Development/Pacification must be carried out by Vietnamese forces, who, as you say, must establish constructive relations with the population. I have never advocated U.S. forces taking on 'substantial' share of this task. I do believe, however, that an American presence in this field amounting to a very small percentage of the total manpower involved could induce ARVN to take the proper attitude by 'on the job' training and could give the necessary courage and confidence to the Vietnamese. Lodge" 58/

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"FOR THE SECRETARY, SECDEF AND KOMER

"NODIS

"1. Herewith I transmit our recommendations carrying out your 83699 and 85196. This is the best we can do in the immediate future and we think it is a forward step. But I believe that you may wish to change it as we advance along this untrod path and learn more about circumstances and people. Our proposal is as follows:

"a. The establishment of an office of operations, headed by a Director of Operations. This headquarters office of operations will include the present staff of: (1) USAID/Field Operations; (2) USAID/Public Safety; (3) USAID/Refugees; (4) JUSPAO/Field Services (minus North Viet-Nam branch); (5) CAS/Cadre Operations Division. The Office of Operations will be organized so that the above offices will not necessarily remain intact when they are merged into a single office. For example, I intend to disband USAID/FO's cadre office, and put those people now representing AID on cadre affairs directly under the cadre office. Thus there may be a net saving in manpower.

"b. All other divisions of AID and JUSPAO will remain under the control of their respective directors -- MacDonald and Zorthian -- who will be responsible to Porter, as they are now, for their operations. (I exempt from this the special question of press relations, on which Zorthian will continue to report to me directly.) Thus, for example, MacDonald will continue to oversee to Agriculture, Education, Health, Industry, etc., Divisions, as well as continue, along with the economic counselor Wehrle, to be responsible for the anti-inflation efforts. The Director of USAID will be freed from responsibilities for the field operations, but his job continues to be one of vast importance. I think it will now become more manageable.

\* \* \*

"d. At province level we will select a single civilian to be in charge of all other U.S. civilians in the province, in same way as MACV senior advisor is responsible for the military involved in the advisory effort in the province. This senior civilian representative will be the U.S. counterpart for civilian affairs to the VN province chief and, together with the MACV senior advisor (sector) and the province chief, will form the provincial coordinating committee. The practice of assaulting the province chief with a multiplicity of advisors, often giving conflicting advice, should cease under this arrangement. The senior civilian representative will write the efficiency reports of the American civilians in the province,



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regardless of their parent agency, and those reports will be reviewed by Porter's office, which will also control transfers and assignments.

\* \* \*

"f. At the more complex region/corps level, we will consider a similar system, with a senior civilian representative responsible for the overall U.S. civilian effort in the corps area. He will work with the MACV senior advisor, and will in effect be my agent (and Bill Porter's) at the corps. I have long believed in the need for a sophisticated politically-minded man in charge of our effort with the politically volatile corps commanders, and this is a step in that direction. Porter and I will be looking carefully for the best men for these four difficult jobs...

"2. I do not want another deputy Ambassador. I intend to provide office space for Porter in the new chancery (his present office will remain at his disposal even after he moves). There is simply no job for another deputy Ambassador, particularly since the present political counselor works closely with me, reporting directly.

"3. There is no doubt that the steps mentioned above are major ones. Clearly I cannot predict now how long they will take to achieve, or how much disruption they will cause in their early stages. For one thing, I feel that a physical relocation of certain offices now spread out across the city is vital, and we are now studying the details of how to do this. Porter will probably need to establish his offices in a building other than the Chancery, in order to give the office of operations a firm guiding hand. He will, however, keep an office close to me, and he will be kept closely informed of policy developments.

\* \* \*

"5. I will need your personal support during the period which lies ahead. I am sure that all hands here, regardless of agency affiliation, will support this effort to unify the U.S. team. The same must be true of the agencies that must continue to backstop us in Washington. Personnel recruitment will remain in your hands, and it ultimately determines the caliber of our efforts. Porter will send you separate messages on the question of personnel, so that new guidance and requirements can be put into effect as quickly as possible.

"6. We look forward through reorganization to tightening and simplifying contacts, advice and coordination with GVN authorities responsible for RD. 59/

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E. The Manila Conference

President Johnson arrived in Manila on October 23, 1966, to attend the seven-nation conference of troop contributing countries to the Vietnam war. While the meeting was hectic and short, it did produce a communique which contained some major statements about policy, strategy, and intentions. The three most important points in the communique of October 25 were:

a. The pledge that "allied forces...shall be withdrawn, after close consultation, as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides. Those forces will be withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions have been fulfilled."

b. The announcement of a new program, which had been thought up in Washington, for "National Reconciliation." Since the GVN was not in genuine agreement with the idea, but under great pressure from the Americans to commit themselves to it, the communique was quite vague on what difference there was, if any, between the new National Reconciliation program and the old Chieu Hoi program.\*

c. The formalization, in public, of the move towards getting ARVN more deeply involved with the RD program: "The Vietnamese leaders stated their intent to train and assign a substantial share of the armed forces to clear-and-hold actions in order to provide a shield behind which a new society can be built." This public confirmation of the tentative steps that MACV had been taking was important. Classified documents could not be used as the basis for a far-reaching reform of the ARVN; they would never have received wide enough distribution, nor would they have been fully accepted as doctrine by the doubters within both the RVNAF and MACV. But here was a piece of paper signed by the President and by General Thieu which said in simple language that a new direction and mission was given to the ARVN. After Manila, MACV and the JCS began in seriousness the formation of the mobile training teams which were designed to retrain every RVNAF unit so that it was more aware of the importance of the population.

\*Those Americans who hoped that National Reconciliation would become a major new appeal to VC at middle and higher levels were to be in for a disappointment in the year following Manila. The GVN did not agree with the philosophy behind total forgiveness to the enemy, and continually hedged its statements and invitations to the VC so that they resembled surrender with amnesty rather than "national reconciliation." In fact, the GVN did not make an internal announcement on the National Reconciliation program until Tet, 1967, almost four months after the Manila conference, and three months after the GVN had "promised" the U.S. that it would make the announcement. Then, when the Vietnamese finally did make the announcement, they used the phrase "Doan Ket," which is accurately translated as "National Solidarity," rather than "National Reconciliation." The difference in meaning is, of course, significant, just as the earlier mistranslation of "Xay Dung" into "Revolutionary Development" reflected a divergence of views.

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The reasoning behind the move to commit more troops to the relatively static missions involved in pacification had been laid out in documents and briefings by people as varied as Major General Tillson, in his August briefings of the Mission Council (cited in Section III.C.7) and Robert Komer, in his memorandum to the President. But a key assumption underlying the new emphasis on population control was the growing belief, in late 1966, that the main force war was coming to a gradual end. No other single factor played as great a role in the decision to commit troops to pacification as the belief that they were going to be less and less needed for offensive missions against main force units. The enemy-initiated large unit action statistics showed a sharp drop all through 1966, with a low point of less than two battalion sized or larger enemy initiated actions per month in the last quarter of 1966. There was increasing talk of the "end of the big battalion war," both in the press and in the Mission. Moreover, the first big U.S. push into VC base areas was getting under way, and it was possible to believe that when operations like Junction City and Cedar Falls were completed, the VC would have few placed left to hide within the boundaries of South Vietnam. Thus, some people were arguing in late 1966 and early 1967 that the number of troops that could be committed to RD was considerably higher than the amount that General Westmoreland was then contemplating; that the "substantial number" of the Manila communique could well be over half of all ARVN. These arguments were usually made orally and tentatively, rather than in formal written papers, since they usually raised the ire of the military. When military opposition to such a large RD commitment stiffened, the suggestions of civilians were often hedged or partially withdrawn. But nonetheless, the fact remains that the undeniable success against the main forces in 1966 was the major justifying factor for those advocating increased commitment of regular units -- even some U.S. units -- to pacification. At that time, officials were less worried about the possibility of a major resurgence of the enemy than about the possibility of a new guerrilla war phase. The fighting in and near the DMZ during Operations Hastings and Prairie (August-December 1966) had been the heaviest of the war, and had been judged not only as a major defeat for the enemy but as a possible turning point for the enemy, after which he "had begun to shift some of his effort away from conventional, or 'mobile warfare,' toward the more productive (from his standpoint) guerrilla tactics." 60/ The Marines considered Hastings and Prairie a foolhardy aberration on the enemy's part, although they noted that the region of the DMZ "is remote, favoring him with interior lines and working to our disadvantage through extension of our own supply lines." 61/

The Marines felt that the enemy attacks at the DMZ had been designed primarily to draw down resources from the Marine pacification efforts near Da Nang, an interesting example of how important they thought their embryonic pacification effort was. But, the Marines added, whenever the enemy probed or patrolled, he was "pursued by Marine infantry and pounded by air, artillery, and naval gunfire. The effort cost him an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 NVA troops killed or disabled and 414 weapons lost...and meant a severe loss of prestige, and a further erosion of the morale of his troops." 62/

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Thus, the slowdown in large enemy actions, according to the Marine estimate, and signs that the future would see an increase in guerrilla activity -- "Major main force and NVA formations have been relatively inactive since September, as far as large unit actions are concerned. However, by the end of December, corresponding increases were already beginning to appear in rates of guerrilla activity." 63/

To what extent other military and civilian leaders accepted the Marine assessment of enemy capability and intentions is not clear from the documents, but the mood of the time was not far removed from the sentiments cited above. The end of the "big war" was coming, and pacification was the next step. It all fueled the proponents of greater pacification efforts by regular troops, and now, after Manila, the debate was already being conducted on terrain favorable for the first time to the pro-pacification advocates.



IV. OCO TO CORDS

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IV. OCO to CORDS

A. OCO on Trial: Introduction

With the cable exchange completed, except for a few minor matters, Ambassador Lodge announced the formation of the Office of Civil Operations on November 26, 1966 -- one month after the original go-ahead signal had been given in Washington, and three weeks after the cable to Lodge telling him that the President wanted rapid action. While delays of this kind are common in government and do not normally affect events, in this case the delay got OCO off to a visibly slow start despite the fact that the President had clearly indicated to Lodge and Porter that he was putting OCO on trial and would review its accomplishments in a fairly short time.

The reasons for the Mission's slow start revealed again just how far apart Washington and its representatives in Saigon were in their philosophy and approach to the war.

Washington officials consistently underestimated the difficulty of the actions they wanted the Mission to do, and continually expected movement at speeds literally beyond the capability of the Mission. They held these ambitious expectations and exerted pressure accordingly -- not primarily because of the situation in the pacification program in South Vietnam (which was fairly static), but because of growing pressure from the public, the press, and Congress for visible progress in the war, because of growing American domestic dissatisfaction with the course of the war. If the American public could not see progress in Vietnam, the support the Administration had for the war would drop steadily.

In its efforts to show progress some members of the Administration were continually interpreting statistics and events in the most favorable light possible, and its critics -- particularly the press -- were interpreting the same events in the most unfavorable light possible. Since events in Vietnam were usually open to at least two different interpretations, the gap between the Administration and its critics over the basic question of How are We Doing? grew steadily during 1966 and 1967. But beyond the disagreements over facts and statistics, there was a continual effort by Washington officials to prod Saigon forward at a faster pace. Thus, if the Mission had just started a crash program at the highest speed ever achieved by the Mission, Washington officials, particularly Komer, acting (he said) in the President's name, would demand that the Mission redouble its efforts again. Komer, in a reflective moment, called it "creative tension."

The Saigon Mission responded to this pressure with resistance and hostility towards its Washington "backstops." When warned, for example, that the President was giving OCO 90 to 120 days to prove itself, Lodge and Porter both shot back pointed comments to the effect that this was an inadequate time period, and at the end of it results would probably

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not yet be visible. They were right, of course, but being right was not good enough. They fought the time deadline with too great a vehemence and did not do enough to "prove" OCO's worth. The result was the decision of March 1967 to put OCO under MACV.

The Mission thought that because they were "on the ground" they had a unique understanding of the problems of Vietnam, and that because they were on the ground they were the only accurate judges of the rate at which events needed to move. This point of view did not take into account domestic pressures in the United States; or, worse, it deliberately disregarded them. Thus, the Mission in Vietnam has generally tended to formulate strategy as though the United States will be fighting a slow war in Indochina for decades, while the Washington policymakers and strategists have tended to behave as though time runs out in November of 1968. (The mood of the Mission towards Washington is seen more clearly in press leaks than in cables. Thus, for example, the Evans and Novak column, from Saigon, on November 30, 1966, as OCO was being formed and the trial period beginning: "A note of quiet desperation is creeping into the top echelons of the U.S. Mission charged with winning the war in Vietnam. It grows partly out of frustration with what one top Embassy official describes as 'the hot blow torch on our rear ends' that comes from Washington, and, particularly, from the White House in search of ever-new victory proposals...Much of this frustration and gloom would vanish if attention in Washington were centered not on impossible trance tables for ending the war next month or next year but on a realistic projection of the modest gain now being made at great and painstaking effort." The difference in mood is reinforced by the climate of Vietnam, which is sluggish and humid, and by the influence of the Vietnamese, who after many years of war are rarely ready to race out and seek instant immortality on the field of battle or in the Ministries.

The one exception to this dangerous generalization has often been the individual American officer, usually military, serving in advisory or combat positions. There, with a 12-month tour standard, the Americans have pushed their Vietnamese counterparts hard, and often encountered great resistance. Indeed, the Americans in Vietnam often think they are already pushing the Vietnamese as hard as is desirable, and that Washington is asking the impossible when they send out instructions to get more out of the Vietnamese.

These were some of the background factors which were playing themselves out in late 1966 and early 1967. While tension between Washington and Saigon had existed before, and is inevitable between headquarters and the field, the pressure had by now reached a level higher than ever before. (It is ironic to note that the same tensions that exist between Washington and Saigon tend to exist between the Americans in Saigon and the Americans in the field. The phrase "Saigon commando" is used continually to castigate the uninformed officials in Saigon. There are too few people serving in Saigon with previous field experience, an unavoidable by-product of the 12-month tour, and this increases the gap.)

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So Washington officials talked about the lack of a sense of urgency in the Mission in Vietnam, and the Americans in Saigon talked about the dream world that Washington lived in, and the Americans in the provinces talked about the lack of understanding of the Americans in Saigon who had never seen the real war. Washington was dissatisfied with the progress in Vietnam, and since it could not influence the real obstacle, the Vietnamese, except through the American Mission, it deliberately put extra heat on the Mission. At least one high official involved in this period in Washington felt that it was a necessary and deliberate charade, and that only by overdoing its representations to the Mission could Washington assure that some fraction of its desires got through. More than one high-ranking official in Saigon felt that the only way to handle Washington was to hold out to them promises of progress and generally calm the home front down, or else run the risk of inflaming Washington and bringing still more reorganization down upon the Mission's head.

Rather than try to apportion responsibility for this sorry state of affairs, it would be useful to see the situation as the by-product of tensions produced by the Viet Cong strategy of survival and counter-punching at GVN weak spots, and the GVN's inability to be as good as we dream they should be. The United States could perhaps live with these problems in an age in which communications were not instantaneous, and publicity not so unrelenting.

Beyond this broad philosophical point, however, the fact is that the Mission in Vietnam was badly organized to conduct almost any kind of large and complex operation, let alone a war. Thus Washington was right to reorganize the Mission, and Saigon's reaction to each reorganization inevitably suggested that still more was needed.

Beyond that, the Mission in Vietnam did not have the full confidence of the Washington bureaucracy and Porter still lacked Lodge's full support.



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B. OCO on Trial: Too Little Too Late -- Or Not Enough Time?

With the formation of OCO in late November the civilian mission began to move at a more rapid pace than it had in the post-Honolulu period. Most of this motion, of course, was internal to the U.S. Mission and could not produce visible results against the VC, an understandable fact when one considers the amount of work that the decision involved.

First, a Director of Civil Operations had to be chosen. Since Washington demanded rapid action, it was decided that the choice had to be someone already in Vietnam and ready to work, which sharply narrowed the list of possible men. The final selection was L. Wade Lathram, who had been the deputy director of USAID. Lathram was to prove to be the wrong man at the wrong time, a methodical and slow worker with strong respect for the very interagency system that he was supposed to supercede. In normal bureaucracies, Lathram could, and had, compiled excellent records, but OCO was demanding extraordinary results, and these required leadership and drive which Lathram did not possess.

It had been anticipated that Porter, a popular Ambassador and a knowledgeable and realistic man, would supply that leadership and drive, and that Lathram would simply run the OCO staff below Porter. But neither Porter nor Lathram saw their roles that way. Once OCO was formed, Porter to an unexpected degree stayed away from the day to day decisions, leaving them to Lathram. And Lathram simply did not have the position nor the stature to stand up to the full members of the Mission Council, whose assets he now partially controlled. (There was continued confusion over what was the responsibility of OCO and what remained under the control of the USAID, CIA and JUSPAO directors, and this confusion was never resolved -- and continues today under the CORDS structure.)

Moreover, Porter, who had not wanted a second Deputy Ambassador to come in to relieve him of all non-RD matters, soon found himself tied down in the business of the Embassy. Lodge went on a long leave shortly after the formation of OCO, taking about one month's vacation in Europe and the United States. This left Porter with responsibility for the full gamut of Ambassadorial activities, and he unavoidably became less and less concerned with the progress of OCO, even though it was in its first critical month. He had been given an office in the new OCO building (appropriated from AID), but he rarely used it, staying in the Embassy in another part of Saigon, and showing, in effect, by his failure to use his OCO office often that he could not devote much time to OCO.

The failure, therefore, to isolate Porter from all non-RD matters and provide Lodge with a full time DCM turned out to be a serious error. McNamara had clearly foreseen this in his 15 October memorandum to the President. In retrospect, we can see that Porter should have been given one job or the other, and the vacancy filled -- as Washington had suggested.

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But Washington had just finished cramming an unpleasant action down the Mission's throat, and it was felt that there were limits to how much the Mission should be asked to take, especially since Lodge and Porter were so adamant on the subject. 1/ Also, no one could foresee how diverting other matters would become to Porter, or how much he would delegate to Lathram.

The second major decision for OCO was the selection of the Regional Directors -- men who would be given full control over all American civilians in their respective regions. Here Porter presented Lathram with three nominees (II Corps was left unfilled until a few weeks later) and the choices appeared to be quite good ones: in I Corps, Porter's former Assistant Deputy Ambassador, Henry Koren; in III Corps, the former MACV Division Senior Advisor, then with AID, John Paul Vann; and in the Delta, the CIA's former support chief, Vince Heymann. These were three respected men, and they came from three different agencies, which emphasized the interagency nature of OCO. In picking Vann, Porter had made a major decision which involved possibly antagonizing both the CIA and MACV, for Vann was without question one of the most controversial Americans in Vietnam. He stood for impatience with the American Mission, deep and often publicly-voiced disgust with the course of the past five years, strong convictions on what needed to be done, driving energy and an encyclopedic knowledge of recent events in Vietnam -- and was a burr in the side of the CIA, with which he had frequently tangled, particularly over the cadre program, and MACV, with which he had fought ever since disagreeing publicly with General Harkins in 1963 (a fight which led to his resignation from the Army and was extensively discussed in David Halberstam's book, The Making of a Quagmire.)

The importance of the appointments was not lost on the Mission or the press. While Lathram's appointment had stirred the bureaucracy but not the press, the regional directors came as a surprise and a major story. In a front-page story in The Washington Post, Ward Just described Vann as "one of the legendary Americans in Vietnam," and said that Koren's appointment indicated the great importance the Mission attached to the jobs. Just added that "there were indications that, if OCO did not succeed, the military command would take charge of pacification, or 'Revolutionary Development.'" 2/

Next came the selection of OCO Province Representatives, to be chosen out of the available talent in each province. Here the slowness of the civilians began to tell, and it was not until January that the appointments could be made for every province. Trying to pick men on the basis of their knowledge and ability takes time and requires trips to each province, consultations with other Mission Council members, etc., and the civilians set out to do all this.

Meanwhile, a huge job which no one in Washington could fully appreciate was underway -- the physical relocation of offices that Lodge had

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described as necessary in his November 16 cable. Even in Washington it may be difficult to get furniture and phones moved, except for very high-ranking people; in Saigon a major relocation was more difficult to mount than a military operation. While this was going on, involving literally over one thousand people, work in OCO was even more confused and sporadic than usual.

None of these minor organizational events would be of any importance if it were not for the fact that they were eating away at the meager time allotted to the civilians to prove that OCO should remain independent of MACV. But they did consume time, and this was to prove to be a factor in evaluating OCO.

The documents do not answer the question of whether or not OCO ever really had a chance to survive, or whether it was just allowed to start up by people who had already decided to turn RD over to MACV in a few months. Both possibilities fit the available facts. An educated guess would be that the decision to give Westmoreland control was tentatively made by the President in the late fall of 1966, but that he decided he would gain by allowing the civilians to reorganize first. If OCO proved to be a major success, he could always continue to defer his decision. If OCO fell short of the mark, then it still would be an organization in-being ready to be placed into MACV without further internal changes, and that in itself would be a major gain. Moreover, if the changes came when Lodge and Porter were gone, there would be less difficulties.

If OCO moved too slowly for Washington's satisfaction, it nonetheless accomplished many things which had previously been beyond the Mission's ability:

-- Uniting personnel from AID, CIA, and JUSPAO into a single Plans & Evaluations Section, OCO produced the first integrated plans for RD on the U.S. side. These plans were ambitious and far-reaching, and required MACV inputs. The fact that the civilians were asking MACV for inputs to their own planning, rather than the reverse, so startled MACV that MACV, in turn, began more intensive discussions or plans. The planning effort involved several military officers on loan to OCO, a fact which further heightened tension between OCO and MACV. When the plans first formulated were presented to General Westmoreland, he indicated that he was not going to be bound by any plans which reduced his flexibility and ability to respond to military pressure whenever and wherever it occurred; that is, he was reluctant to commit many military assets to permanent RD support activities. But the relentless pressure from OCO, from Komer in Washington, and even from the public attention focused on the issue by Article 11 of the Manila communique ("The Vietnamese leaders stated their intent to train and assign a substantial share of the armed forces to clear-and-hold actions in order to provide a shield behind which a new society can be built") all were working against General Westmoreland, and towards the assignment of ARVN units to RD missions.



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-- The civilians in the provinces spoke with a single voice for the first time. The province chiefs welcomed the change for this reason, according to most observers. Within the American team in each province, there was now a built-in obligation to consult with each other, instead of the previous situation in which more and more agencies were sending down to the provinces their own men who worked alone on their own projects.

-- The very act of physical relocation of the five major branches of OCO into a single building changed attitudes and behavior patterns in the civilian mission. Public Safety and the Special Branch advisors, for example, now were co-located, and began working together closely. Previously, they had both advised the same people through completely separate channels which met only at the top; i.e., when the chief of the Public Safety branch and the deputy CIA station chief had something specific and urgent they had to resolve. On the day-to-day matters, there had actually been a deliberate compartmentalization before OCO was formed.

These examples of gains could be repeated across a broad front. They were first steps in a direction which might ultimately have created a strong civilian mission, given time, better leaders, and more support from Washington. But even without these things, OCO was a definite plus.

The period between December and April was a period in which everyone paid lip service to the idea of supporting OCO, but in reality it was sniped at and attacked almost from the outset by the bureaucracies. In Saigon, Zorthian, and Hart, Directors of JUSPAO and CIA, respectively, made it clear that they wanted to remain very much involved in any decision affecting their respective fields of endeavor. While this was a reasonable point of view, it meant that CIA and even USIA officers in the field often refused to accept any guidance from the OCO representative, and cases began to come to light in which major actions were being initiated by the CIA without any consultation with OCO. (The CIA reasoning and defense rested on the fact that one of Hart's deputies was ostensibly an assistant director of OCO.)

In Washington, there was open skepticism to OCO from almost all quarters, particularly AID, which found itself footing most of the bill. USIA and CIA both indicated that they would continue to deal directly with their field personnel. In theory, everyone in Washington was to participate in the backstopping of the interagency OCO, but in practice, without a single voice in charge, this meant that no one was helping OCO, no one was trying to sell them as a going concern in Washington. Komer's role here was ambiguous; he supported OCO as long as it was in operation, and probably contributed more to its achievements than anyone else in Washington, but at the same time he was already on the record as favoring a military takeover, which was the very thing OCO sought to avoid.



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Washington had decreed OCO, and had given Porter great responsibility. Unfortunately, they had failed to give him authority and stature needed to make the agencies work together.

As pointed out before, this might well have been overcome if time had not been so short. The slow methodical way of moving bureaucracies may be more effective than sweeping changes, anyway, if one has time. But in Vietnam no one was being given much time.

Shortly after OCO was formed, Komer's deputy, Ambassador William Leonhart, visited Vietnam, and when he returned, wrote the following penetrating assessment, which was sent to the President, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and Mr. Gaud and Mr. Helms:

"Whether Porter's new Office of Civil Operations (OCO) is viewed as a final organizational solution or as an inevitable intermediate step it is achieving a number of useful purposes. It establishes, on the civil side for the first time, unified interagency direction with a chain of command and communication from Saigon to the regions and provinces. It centralizes US-GVN field coordination of civil matters in one US official at each level. It affords a civil-side framework which can work more effectively with US military for politico-military coordination and more integrated pacification planning.

"At the time of my visit, OCO's impact had been felt mainly in Saigon. Its headquarters organization was largely completed. Three of the four Regional Directors had been named, all were at work, and one was in full time residence in his region. Regional staffs were being assembled but not yet in place. At province level, teams were being interviewed for the selection of Provincial Representatives. Porter expects them to be designated by January 1. Some slippage is possible, and it may be 90 days or so before the new organization is functioning. I participated in the initial briefings of the province teams I visited, passing along and emphasizing Bob Komer's admonitions against over-bureaucratization of effort and for fast and hard action. These were well-received. Morale was good. All the GVN Province Chiefs with whom I talked thought the new structure a great improvement." 3/

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C. Time Runs Out

The decision to turn pacification over to MACV, with an integrated civil-military chain of command, was announced in Saigon on May 11, 1967, by Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. In his announcement, Bunker said that the decision was entirely his.

But Bunker had been in Vietnam as Ambassador for less than two weeks, and he was therefore clearly acting under strong guidance, if not orders, from Washington. The decision to give MACV responsibility had actually stemmed from the clear and unmistakable fact that the President now considered such a reorganization highly desirable.

It is not clear when the President decided this in his own mind. The documents do not shed any light on this point, and, indeed, they simply fail to discuss the pros and cons of the decision in the early months of 1967, when the subject was a hot one in Washington and Saigon. This all suggests that whatever consideration of the issue was going on was confined strictly to private sessions between principals, and that the staff work previously done on a highly restricted basis was no longer considered necessary by the principals.

It has been suggested that the President had been strongly in favor of the move for months before he finally gave the go-ahead signal, and that he was held back by the strong opposition from Lodge and Porter, from Katzenbach, from the agencies in Washington -- and by the fact that it would appear to be a further "militarization" of the effort. This may well be the case; certainly nothing in the record disproves this possibility. But since there is no way that this study can answer the question, it must be left undecided.

Whenever the President made his decision in his own mind, he chose the Guam meeting as the place to discuss with a group of concerned officials outside his own personal staff. In a private meeting on March 20, or 21, 1967, with senior officials from Washington and Saigon, the President indicated that he felt the time had come to turn pacification over to MACV. The President enjoined those in the room at that meeting not to discuss the decision with anyone until it was announced, and he did not inform the GVN.

At the end of the Guam meeting, the President sent Komer back to Saigon with Westmoreland and Lodge, and Komer spent a week there, working out preliminary details of the reorganization. By this time Komer knew that he was to become Deputy to General Westmoreland, although many details remained to be ironed out.

When Komer returned to Washington, with the preliminary plans, a period followed during which no further action on the reorganization was taken. In all, nearly two months went by from the President's statement

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at Guam to the public announcement, during which only a handful of people in Washington and Saigon knew what was going to happen. The delays were caused by a combination of factors: Bunker's understandable desire to spend some time on personal business before going to Saigon, the President's desire to have Bunker make the final announcement himself after he had reached Saigon, the need to work out final details. Since the President was the man who had pressed everyone else working on Vietnam to greater and greater effort, and since he stood to lose the most from loss of time, it is surprising that he was now willing to see two months lost, with a tired and lame-duck Mission in Vietnam, waiting for the new team in a highly apprehensive state, and confusion at the higher levels. But for reasons which are not readily apparent, the President did not push his new team, and it was not until May 13, 1967, that Bunker made his announcement (which had been drafted by Komer):

"Since being appointed U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam I have been giving a great deal of thought to how to organize most effectively the U.S. Advisory role in support of the Vietnamese government's Revolutionary Development effort. Like my predecessor, I regard RD -- often termed pacification -- as close to the heart of the matter in Vietnam.

"Support of Revolutionary Development has seemed to me and my senior colleagues to be neither exclusively a civilian nor exclusively a military function, but to be essentially civil-military in character. It involves both the provision of continuous local security in the countryside -- necessarily a primarily military task and the constructive programs conducted by the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, largely through its 59-member RD teams. The government of Vietnam has recognized the dual civil-military nature of the RD process by assigning responsibility for its execution to the Corps/Region Commanders and by deciding to assign the bulk of the regular ARVN, as well as the Regional and Popular forces, to provide the indispensable security so that RD can proceed in the countryside. As senior American official in Vietnam, I have concluded that the U.S. Advisory and supporting role in Revolutionary Development can be made more effective by unifying its civil and military aspects under a single management concept. Unified management, a single chain of command, and a more closely dovetailed advisory effort will in my opinion greatly improve U.S. support of the vital RD program. Therefore, I am giving General Westmoreland the responsibility for the performance of our U.S. Mission field programs in support of pacification or Revolutionary Development. To assist him in performing this function, I am assigning Mr. Robert Komer to his headquarters to be designated as a deputy to COMUSMACV with personal rank of ambassador.

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"I have two basic reasons for giving this responsibility to General Westmoreland. In the first place, the indispensable first stage of pacification is providing continuous local security, a function primarily of RVNAF, in which MACV performs a supporting advisory role. In the second place, the greater part of the U.S. Advisory and Logistic assets involved in support of Revolutionary Development belong to MACV. If unified management of U.S. Mission assets in support of the Vietnamese program is desirable, COMUSMACV is the logical choice.

"I have directed that a single chain of responsibility for advice and support of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Development program be instituted from Saigon down to district level. Just as Mr. Komer will supervise the U.S. Advisory role at the Saigon level as Deputy To General Westmoreland, so will the present OCO regional directors serve as deputies to U.S. field force commanders.

"At the province level, a senior advisor will be designated, either civilian or military, following analysis of the local situation.

"While management will thus be unified, the integrity of the Office of Civil Operations will be preserved. It will continue to perform the same functions as before, and will continue to have direct communication on technical matters with its field echelons. The present Revolutionary Development support division of MACV will be integrated into OCO, and its chief will serve as deputy to the Director of OCO. Such a unified civil/military U.S. advisory effort in the vital field of Revolutionary Development is unprecedented. But so too is the situation which we confront. RD is in my view neither civil nor military but a unique merging of both to meet a unique wartime need. Thus my resolution is to have U.S. civilian and military officials work together as one team in order more effectively to support our Vietnamese allies. Many further details will have to be worked out, and various difficulties will doubtless be encountered, but I am confident that this realignment of responsibilities is a sound management step and I count on all U.S. officers and officials concerned to make it work effectively in practice." 4/

Bunker outlined to Washington the line he proposed to take during a question and answer period with the press:

"Besides the above announcement, I intend to stress the following basic points in answer to press questions, or in backgrounding: (a) I made this decision not because I think



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that U.S. civilian support of RD has been unsatisfactory -- on the contrary I am pleased with progress to date -- but because I think it is essential to bring the U.S. military more fully into the RD advisory effort and to pool our civil/military resources to get optimum results: (b) indeed I regard all official Americans in Vietnam as part of one team, not as part of competing civilian and military establishments: (c) as senior U.S. official in Vietnam, I intend to keep a close eye on all U.S. activities, including pacification -- I am not abdicating any of my responsibilities but rather am having the entire U.S. pacification advisory effort report to me through General Westmoreland rather than through two channels as in the past: (d) during 34 years in the business world I have learned that unified management with clear lines of authority is the way to get the most out of large scale and highly diversified programs: (e) since continuous local security, which RVNAF must primarily provide, is the indispensable first stage of the pacification process, the MACV chain of command can obviously be helpful to the RVNAF: and (f) I intend to see that the civilian element of the U.S. effort is not buried under the military -- in many instances soldiers will end up working for civilians as well as the reverse -- in fact Ambassador Komer will be General Westmoreland's principal assistant for this function while General Knowlton will be deputy to Mr. Lathram of OCO. I intend to keep fully informed personally about all developments in this field and to hold frequent meetings with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer for the purpose of formulating policy." 5/

The reaction of the civilians in Vietnam to the announcement of Ambassador Bunker was one of dismay. In the first confused days, before details of the reorganization could be worked out and announced, the press was able to write several articles which probably were accurate reflections of the mood of most civilians:

"Civilian reactions today ranged from the bitter ('We don't think they can do their own job -- how can they do ours?') to the resigned ('I'll be a good soldier and go along') to the very optimistic ('We've finally got a civilian in among the generals'). Almost nowhere was there much enthusiasm for what Bunker called 'a unique experiment in a unique situation.'

"Nor was there jubilation at the American military command. Westmoreland, who wanted to take charge of the pacification program two years ago, is now reported to be deeply skeptical of the possibility of producing the kind of quick results the White House apparently wants.

"'I did not volunteer for the job,' he is reported to have said privately this morning, 'but now that I've got it, I'll do my best with it.'

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"...Serious officials -- both civilian and military -- realize there are limitations on how far an officer will go in reporting 'negative' information, and how hard a civilian, now his subordinate, will fight for realism.

"...Officials today sought to mitigate the effect of the announcement by saying that Komer and his staff, physically located in the American Military Command in Saigon, will be in a far better position to influence the course of Pacification than he would among 'all the guys with glasses and sack suits' in the Office of Civil Operations." 6/

The Vietnamese reaction to the reorganization was more difficult to gauge. Ward Just, in the same story cited above, said "There was surprisingly little comment today from South Vietnamese, who have seen so many efforts at pacification and so many efforts to attempt to organize and reorganize themselves. One high American who professed to have spoken with the South Vietnamese command reported they are 'delighted.'" But Komer's talk with General Nguyen Duc Thang, the Minister for Construction (RD), did not reveal any delight on Thang's part. Indeed, Thang's first reaction was that the GVN should emulate the U.S. and turn pacification over to the Ministry of Defense -- an action which would have run directly counter to the U.S. objective of encouraging civilian government in Vietnam.

There is no telegraphic record of the first series of talks that Komer and Bunker had with Ky, Thieu, Vien, and Thang on the reorganization. Not until a Komer-Ky talk of May 15 does the cable traffic reflect the GVN reaction to the reorganization. By this time, it should be noted, the GVN knew that the U.S. did not want the GVN to follow suit, and it knew all our arguments and could play them back to us with ease:

"Ky said that General Thang had suggested that the RD effort be brought under Defense Ministry to conform to the U.S. reorganization. Ky and General Vien had demurred on grounds that such a reorganization on the GVN side would be far more complex than on U.S. side, would disrupt RD process, and would stretch General Vien and MOD too thin. Besides it would not be politically advisable at the very time when there was a hopeful trend toward a more civilianized and representative government. Komer agreed with Ky-Vien reasoning..." 7/

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D. The CORDS Reorganization

With Bunker's announcement, the Mission began its second massive reorganization in five months. This time, the reorganization was accompanied by one of the periodic turnovers in Mission Council personnel which have characterized the Mission: for some reason, the tours of many high-ranking officers seem to end at roughly the same time, and thus, in 1964, 1965, and again in the spring of 1967, several key members of the Mission Council all left within a few weeks of each other. This time, in addition to Ambassador Lodge, Porter, Habib, and Wehrle all left within a short period of time, and only a high-level decision -- announced by Bunker at the same time as the reorganization -- kept Zorthian and Lansdale on for extensions. Into the Mission came Bunker, Locke, Komer, General Abrams, the new Deputy COMUSMACV, and Charles Cooper, the new Economic Counselor, and Archibald Calhoun, the new Political Counselor.

Despite the turnover, the reorganization seemed to proceed with comparative ease. Perhaps the fact that OCO had already been formed was critical here, since it meant that instead of MACV dealing with three agencies simultaneously, the first discussions could be restricted primarily to MACV and OCO. Moreover, because OCO was already a going concern, the civilians were better organized than ever before to maintain their own position in dealings with the military.

But above all, it was the decision by Westmoreland and Bunker to let Komer take the lead in the reorganization which was important. Komer now made major decisions on how the new structure would look which were usually backed up by Westmoreland. The result looked much better than many people had dared hope.

The details of the reorganization are not worth detailed discussion here. But one point can illustrate the way CORDS could resolve previously unresolved issues: the question of the role of the ARVN Division in the chain of command.

As noted in an earlier section, study groups had over the years advocated removing the ARVN Divisions from the chain of command on Pacification/RD. But MACV had large advisory teams with the Divisions and these teams controlled both the sector (Province) advisory teams and Regimental advisory teams below them. The structure followed normal military lines, and made good sense to most of the officers in the higher levels of MACV.

The counter-argument was that Division was a purely military instrument and could not adequately control the integrated civilian-military effort that was needed at the Province level. Thus the Roles and Missions Study Group, for example, had recommended that "Division be Removed from the RD Chain of Command...that the role of the Province

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Chief be upgraded...that Province Chiefs have operational control (as a minimum) of all military and paramilitary forces assigned to operate exclusively in their sector." 8/ The Study Group recognized that "the power structure being what it is in the GVN, major progress toward this goal will not be short range or spectacular." But, they urged, the U.S. should begin to push forward on it.

MACV had nonconcurrent in this recommendation. General Westmoreland, in a memorandum to Lodge on September 7, 1966, had said that he did not agree with the idea, and that, if carried out, "the Corps span of control would be too large for effective direction." The suggestion, he added, was "illogical." 9/

This was still the position of MACV when Komer arrived. In his attempts to find a workable civilian-military chain of command, he received two suggestions on the difficult question of the role of the Division advisory teams. The first, and more routine, was to continue the existing MACV system -- in which, no matter how good or bad the GVN chain of command may be, the U.S. simply duplicates it on the advisory side. This would mean that all American civilians and military at the Province level would come under the Division-Corps chain of command. The MACV staff assumed that this would happen.

John Paul Vann and a few colleagues had a different suggestion. Vann maintained that the evidence suggested that when the Americans made their desires known clearly to the Vietnamese, without the vagueness and contradictoriness which so often characterized them, then the Vietnamese usually would follow suit after a suitable period of time. Thus, said Vann, if the Americans remove the Division advisory team from the U.S. chain of command, except for tactical matters and logistical support, the GVN may follow, and reduce the power of their politically potent Divisions.

The thesis Vann was putting forward -- that the GVN would follow a strong U.S. example -- was untested and hotly disputed. Secondly, there was the matter of MACV's stand against downgrading the role of the ARVN Divisions. Few people observing the discussions thought that the Vann suggestion had a chance of success.

But Komer, persuaded by the argument, did overrule many of his staff and make the recommendation to Westmoreland. Westmoreland approved it, and in June, 1967, the new chains of command were announced to the U.S. Mission. After years of arguing, during all of which the trend had been towards stronger ARVN Divisions, the U.S. had suddenly reversed course on its own, without waiting for the Vietnamese to act. The change was so complete that it even extended to that last (and, to career officers, most important) question: who writes the efficiency report. Under the new MACV guidance, the Senior Province Advisor would be rated



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not by the Division Senior Advisor, but by the Deputy for CORDS and the Corps level -- thus confirming the new command arrangements.

While it is still too early to tell if the GVN will completely follow the U.S. lead, the early evidence suggests that the Vann hypothesis was correct, and that following the U.S. action, the GVN has begun to reduce the role of their Divisions in RD. There are now indications that the GVN is seriously considering a plan in which the Divisions would no longer have area responsibility but rather be reduced to support of their forward units, and operational command on large operations of troops.

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E. The Mission Assessment as CORDS Begins

The situation that CORDS and Ambassador Komer inherited was not a very promising one. Despite all the lip service and all the "top priorities" assigned RD by the Americans in the preceding 18 months, progress in the field was not only not satisfactory, it was, according to many observers, nonexistent. The question of whether we were inching forward, standing still, or moving backward always seemed to the Mission and Washington to be of great importance, and therefore much effort was spent trying to analyze our "progress."

A strong case can be made for the proposition that we have spent too much time looking for progress in a program in which measurements are irrelevant, inaccurate, and misleading. But, nonetheless, the Mission did try to measure itself, and in May of 1967, as OCO turned into CORDS, produced the following assessment of RD for the first quarter of 1967.

"In truth, there has been little overall progress in RD activities, and the same must be said for the painful process of building a meaningful dialogue between the government and the people. A number of factors have been reported from Region III to account for this unhappy situation, but they might well apply to the rest of the country:

"a. The RD program for 1967 involved many new and different concepts, command arrangements, administrative and procedural functions and allocation of resources. Only recently have the majority of provincial officials involved become aware of the program.

"b. Many Ap Doi Moi (Real New Life Hamlets), through guidance from MORD, were located in fringe security areas. In most of these cases a great deal of military and jungle clearing operations were necessary. These take time, and, as a result, the deployment of the RD teams often were delayed.

"c. The hobbling effect of ineffectual officials has retarded the program.

"d. The people have had to develop new working relationships with the RD workers,\* the ARVN, and the RF/PF. During this process, there has been a 'wait and see' attitude.

\* "Workers" was another one of the special words the U.S. began using instead of accurate translations of the Vietnamese. This one was also Lodge's idea, as a more understandable word than "cadre" to describe the members of the 59-man teams.

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"If, however, the picture is sombre, it is not unrelieved. The 1967 program may look at this point unencouraging statistically, but its progress is of a different and more important sort. In critical areas, progress has been registered. There has evolved an implicit understanding by many in the GVN that RD is a longer-term progress than hitherto believed, requiring a greater concentration of resources. In fact, there is increasing evidence that programming for 1967 has so concentrated scarce resources in the 11-point Ap Doi Moi that the GVN presence and services are spread very thin indeed in areas of lower priority. The fact that in general each RD team will remain in each hamlet for six months throughout the year, is a fundamental improvement in the program.

"As a result of the finer definition of the intent of RD and more interest in its possibilities, the 1967 program has become more vital than its predecessors. This vitality has produced new ideas, an increasing flexibility, which marks important progress in the program. Moreover, what the country has been engaged in is the process of laying a base for development; a long drawn out process which sees little initial reward, but without which nothing of permanence will be achieved. In other words, the first quarter of the year has not been witness to a vital social revolution, but has instead found evidence of a growing understanding of the nature of the revolution to come, and in so doing has taken a further step in the painful process of building a nation." 10/

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With the formation of CORDS, this history becomes current events. CORDS is charged now with solving what have previously been unsolvable problems -- energizing the GVN to do things which it is not as interested in as we are; winning the hearts and minds of people who do not understand us or speak our language; working under intense pressure for immediate results in a field in which success -- if possible at all -- may require years. We have concentrated on the history of the United States bureaucracy in this study because that, in retrospect, seems to have been where the push for pacification came from -- not the Vietnamese. We have not been able to analyze properly the actual course of the effort in the field, where contradictory assessments of progress have plagued the U.S. In the final section which follows, we try to draw a few lessons from the course of events described in this study.

When completed, CORDS had produced a structure in which, regardless of civil-military tensions that cannot be wished away, all hands were working together under a single chain of command. The structure was massive, so massive that the Vietnamese were in danger of being almost

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forgotten -- and for that there can be no excuse. But at least the Mission was better run and better organized than it had ever been before, and this fact may in time lead to a more efficient and successful effort. Without a unified voice in dealing with the Vietnamese, we can never hope to influence the GVN to do the things we believe they must do to save their own country.



**VI. FOOTNOTES**

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VI. FOOTNOTES

I. THREADS THAT MET AT HONOLULU

1. Ambassador Lodge memorandum to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and Ambassador Taylor, June 19, 1964
2. Message, SAIGON 1035 to Washington, October 6, 1964, EXDIS
3. MACV Command History, 1964, p. 68
4. Message, SAIGON 1000, October 7, 1964
5. MACV Command History, 1964, p. 68
6. Memorandum, February 1966 - Report of Meetings on Rural Construction, February 1-4, 1966
7. Idem.
8. Idem.
9. Mission Council Minutes, September 15, 1965
10. McGeorge Bundy memorandum for the President, February 7, 1965
11. MACV Overall Monthly Evaluation, June 1965
12. Private Assessment of Hop Tac to Ambassador Lodge from Embassy Personnel, September 10, 1965
13. Mission Council Minutes, September 15, 1965
14. Mission Council Minutes, July 7, 1966
15. President Johnson's letter to Ambassador Lodge, July 1965
16. Message, SAIGON 2761, February 1, 1966, NODIS to the President
17. President Johnson letter to General Taylor, July 2, 1964
18. Ambassador Lodge quoted in memorandum for record, September 27, 1965; Special Meeting in Embassy Conference Room; p. 1
19. See, for example, SAIGON 4323, August 24, 1966, NODIS to the President

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20. Ambassador Lodge memorandum dated June 19, 1964
21. Message, SAIGON 1100, September 30, 1965, NODIS to the President
22. Message, STATE 367, August 7, 1965, to Ambassador Lodge
23. Message, SAIGON 716, September 2, 1965, NODIS to the President
24. Message, SAIGON 952, September 18, 1965, NODIS to the President
25. Message, SAIGON 1059, October 4, 1965, NODIS to the President
26. Message, SAIGON 1190, October 6, 1967, NODIS to the President
27. Message, SAIGON 1273, October 13, 1965, NODIS to the President
28. Message, SAIGON 1377, October 21, 1965, NODIS to the President
29. USMC Historical Branch Study: "US Marine Corps Civic Action Efforts in Vietnam, March 1965-March 1966," (MC History), prepared in early 1967 (Draft with Unnumbered Pages).
30. General Krulak, CG of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Monthly Report on Activities of III MAF, September 1965, p. 4
31. General Krulak's report on III MAF, October 1965, p. 12
32. MC History (See Footnote 29)
33. Embassy POL Study of Quang Nam, February 15, 1966, p. 5
34. Message, STATE 2087, May 26, 1964, Personal from the President
35. Message, SAIGON 071010Z, July 7, 1964, to Secretary of State
36. Alexis Johnson letter to Ambassador Durbrow, November 26, 1965; Official-Informal
37. Warrenton Conference Study, January 22, 1965, Annex D, par.1
38. Ibid., Annex D, par. 2
39. Ibid., Annex D, par. 9
40. Ibid., Annex D, p. 4
41. Record of Mission Liaison Group Meeting, prepared by Colonel Sam Karrick, SLO, January 27, 1966

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42. Warrenton Conference Report, Annex E, contains all the proposals brought to Warrenton
43. Warrenton Conference Report, Annex D, par. 14
44. Message, STATE 951, October 4, 1965, LIMDIS
45. The Washington Post editorial, February 1, 1966
46. President Johnson's Press Conference, February 4, 1966
47. The New York Times editorial, February 6, 1966
48. The New York Times, Charles Mohr, February 7, 1966
49. MACV Monthly Evaluation Report, 1965

II. HONOLULU

1. Ambassador Lodge's briefing to Honolulu Conference, February 1966
2. Ambassador Lodge's letter to Secretary McNamara, March 4, 1966
3. President Johnson's comments to Honolulu Conference February 1966
4. Secretary Rusk's comments to Honolulu Conference, February 1966
5. President Johnson's comments to Honolulu Conference, February 1966
6. General Thang briefing to Honolulu Conference, February 7, 1966
7. Honolulu Conference, Plenary Documents, February 8, 1966
8. Secretary Freeman's comments to Honolulu Conference, February 8, 1966
9. President Johnson's comments to Honolulu Conference, February, 1966
10. President Johnson's final statement to Honolulu Conference, Plenary Documents, February 9, 1966
11. Declaration of Honolulu, Part II, February 8, 1966



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III. HONOLULU TO MANILA

1. President Johnson's Press Conference in Saigon, February 11, 1966
2. Message, STATE 2368, February 12, 1966, NODIS
3. Message, SAIGON 2365, February 12, 1966, NODIS
4. Message, SAIGON 2959, February 15, 1966, NODIS
5. Mission Council Minutes, February 28, 1966
6. Henry Kissinger letter to Robert W. Komer, August 8, 1966,  
EYES ONLY
7. Robert W. Komer paper, "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification,"  
August 7, 1966
8. Joseph Califano memorandum to Secretary of Defense, March 23, 1966  
EYES ONLY
9. NSAM 343, March 28, 1966
10. Robert W. Komer memorandum to the President, April 19, 1966, p. 3
11. Message, STATE 3214, April 26, 1966
12. Message, STATE 3344, May 7, 1966
13. Message, STATE 3760, June 4, 1966
14. Message, STATE 83089, November 10, 1966
15. Robert W. Komer memorandum to the President, April 19, 1966
16. Robert W. Komer paper, "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification,"  
August 7, 1966
17. Robert W. Komer memorandum to the President, February 28, 1967
18. Idem.
19. PROVN Study Team Summary Statement, March 1966, pp. 1-2
20. Ibid., pp. 46-47
21. Ibid., p. 67

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22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Message, MACJ33 18244, May 12, 1966
25. Priorities Task Force Summary, July 1966
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Roles and Missions Study Group Report, p. 1
29. Ibid.
30. Roles and Missions Study Group memorandum to Ambassador Lodge September 7, 1966
31. Roles and Missions Study Group Report, Section V, pp. 2-4, August 1966
32. USAID memorandum to Ambassador Lodge, September 8, 1966
33. CIA comments on Roles and Missions Study Group Recommendations
34. Major General Tillson (J-3, MACV) briefing to Mission Council, August 8, 1966
35. Message, SAIGON 4923, August 31, 1966, NODIS to the President
36. Message, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC 260242Z, August 1966
37. Ibid.
38. Draft Presidential memorandum by Secretary of Defense, September 15, 1966
39. Ibid., State Department's opposition
40. Ibid., AID's recommendation
41. Ibid., JCS concurrence in idea of a Deputy COMUSMACV for RD
42. Ibid., CIA and USIA opposition
43. Robert W. Komer memorandum to Secretary McNamara, September 22, 1966

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44. Message, STATE 61251, October 6, 1966 to Ambassador Lodge
45. Mr. Katzenbach's memorandum to the President, October 15, 1966, "Administration of Revolutionary Development"
46. Ibid.
47. Secretary McNamara's memorandum to the President, October 14, 1966
48. Mr. George Carver's memorandum to Richard Helms (Director of CIA), October 15, 1966, Reference Footnote 47.
49. JCSM-572-66, October 14, 1966
50. The Washington Evening Star article on President Johnson's meeting with White House Press Corps, October 15, 1966
51. Ward Just article, The Washington Post, October 17, 1966
52. Message, STATE 68390, October 20, 1966, NODIS
53. Message, STATE 78865, November 4, 1966
54. Message, SAIGON 10204, November 6, 1966, NODIS to the President
55. Message, STATE 83699, November 12, 1966, to Ambassador Lodge
56. Ibid.
57. Message, STATE 85196, November 15, 1966
58. Message, SAIGON 11124, November 17, 1966, NODIS
59. Message, SAIGON 11125, November 17, 1966, NODIS
60. III MAF Summary of 1966 Operations by FMF/Pacific, December 1966, p. 22
61. Ibid., p. 21
62. Ibid., p. 21
63. Ibid., p. 22

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IV. OCO to CORDS

1. Messages, SAIGON 11124 and 11125, 1966 (See Footnotes 58 and 59, of III., above)
2. The Washington Post article by Ward Just, December 3, 1966
3. William Leonhart memorandum for the President, December 30, 1966
4. Ambassador Bunker statement in Saigon, May 13, 1967
5. Ambassador Bunker Press Conference in Saigon, May 13, 1967
6. Ward Just, The Washington Post, May 12, 1967
7. Message, SAIGON 25839, May 16, 1967
8. Roles and Missions Study Group, Appendix A, August 1966 (Saigon)
9. General Westmoreland memorandum to Ambassador Lodge, September 7, 1966
10. U.S. Mission Assessment of RD for 1st Quarter of 1967 (A-662, May 12, 1967)