REORGANIZING FOR PACIFICATION SUPPORT



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by

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CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY
UNITED STATES ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C., 1999

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Scoville, Thomas W.
Reorganizing for pacification support.

Bibliography: p.
1. United States. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Civil Operations and Rural Development Support. 2. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961–1975—United States. 3. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961–1975—Underground movements. I. Title.
DS558.2.S27 959.704'3373 81–10204
AACR2

First Printed 1982 - CMH Pub 90 - 27

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Foreword

This study describes the background and implementation of President Lyndon Johnson's decision in May 1967 to create a civil/military organization, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support—CORDS, to manage U.S. advice and support to the South Vietnamese government's pacification program. It focuses on the years 1966–68 when the organization was conceived and established, and it relates events both from the perspective of government leadership in Washington and the U.S. mission in Saigon. Over these years, the organization changed three times, culminating in CORDS. Each change is examined with special emphasis on the role of important officials, such as General Westmoreland, Ambassador Komer, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and President Johnson.

The author served in CORDS from December 1967 to June 1968, while in the U.S. Army, and worked as a historian with the Center of Military History from 1969 to 1972. His extensive first-hand knowledge of the program and personal acquaintance with key figures concerned make this a study of exceptional value.

Two volumes, now being prepared for the Center of Military History's series, THE U.S. ARMY IN VIETNAM, will deal comprehensively with all aspects of the U.S. Army's role in pacification. In the interim, this work should prove useful to those interested in the history of the Vietnam war and its administrative problems.

Washington, D.C.
December 18, 1981

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Preface

As Communist insurgency swept the Republic of Vietnam, one of the South Vietnamese government's key responses was a "pacification" program. Along with the military effort to suppress the insurgency, the United States provided advice and support for the pacification effort, but for over ten years that assistance was provided by a number of agencies without central coordination. To remedy this situation, President Lyndon B. Johnson on 9 May 1967 directed formation of an organization, to be composed of both civilian and military members, to provide American advice and support to the South Vietnamese pacification program. The organization's title, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support—CORDS—combined the names of two separate staffs then providing support for pacification: a civilian Office of Civil Operations and a military Revolutionary Development Support Directorate. (To denote changed emphasis, the title was altered in 1970 to Civil Operations and Rural Development Support.)

CORDS was unique in that for the first time in the history of the United States, civilians in a wartime field organization commanded military personnel and resources. Its chief, a civilian with ambassadorial rank, became a deputy commander in the controlling military headquarters, serving not as a political adviser and coordinator but as a director, manager, and, in effect, a component commander.

CORDS embraced all American agencies in South Vietnam dealing with pacification and civilian field operations with the exception of covert operations conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It was an element of the American military headquarters—the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV)—and was thus under the military commander, General William C. Westmoreland and later General Creighton W. Abrams. Yet in practice, with encouragement from the military commander, CORDS operated as a quasi-independent corporation with direct channels of communication and command to its units in the field. Through the real and perceived personal interest of President Johnson and aggressive leadership combined with a degree of cooperation and tolerance that was remarkable among disparate American foreign policy agencies, the civilians in CORDS

managed to preserve their civilian identity and to exercise firm control of the program in support of pacification.

The cooperation and tolerance were all the more remarkable after many years of disharmony and uncertainty over how to organize the program. Although the American ambassador in Saigon was charged with overall responsibility for all activities of the U.S. mission, he had to deal with a military commander who was a de facto equal and with officials of three semi-independent civilian agencies: the Agency for International Development (AID), the United States Information Agency, and the CIA. All three agencies maintained staffs in South Vietnam substantially larger than that of the ambassador, and persons under the Department of Defense far outnumbered them all.

The U.S. mission was not fully unified. Each agency had its channels of communications to its parent organization in Washington, its own ideas of how the war should be conducted, and statutory authority and responsibilities set down by Congress. The status of the parent organizations in Washington magnified this situation; no one agency, task force, or individual short of the president himself controlled American policy and operations in South Vietnam. The program in support of pacification typified the disunity. In terms of responsibilities, pacification crossed more agency lines than any other program. Yet no agency saw pacification as its central responsibility, and none was willing to let any other take full responsibility for the entire program.

This study is an account of how President Johnson reached the decision that brought unity to American support of pacification and how he carried it out. As such, it is a study in organization and management, decisions and implementation, not a judgment of the success or failure of CORDS in helping the South Vietnamese government pacify the countryside. Nor is it a study of pacification as a whole; despite a pervasive and often extremely influential American advisory effort, pacification remained a responsibility of the South Vietnamese.

I am grateful to the many participants who helped me through interviews or by granting access to personal and official papers, such as Ambassador William E. Colby, Mr. Charles M. Cooke, Jr., Maj. Paul Miles, Brig. Gen. Robert M. Montague, Jr., and General William C. Westmoreland. I would like to give particular thanks to Ambassador Robert W. Komer whose knowledge, interest, and patience were invaluable.

I am also grateful to members of the U.S. Army's Center of Military History, who supported and assisted research and publication: Brig.

Gen. Hal C. Pattison; Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr.; Dr. Maurice Matloff; Col. James F. Ransone, Jr.; Col. John Jessup; Col. James Dunn; Lt. Col. John Pipkin; Dr. Richard Hunt; Mr. Vincent Demma; and Dr. Ronald Spector. Mr. Charles B. MacDonald, then chief of the Current History Branch, was a continuing source of assistance and inspiration, and I owe a special debt for his helpful suggestions.

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REORGANIZING FOR PACIFICATION SUPPORT


SOUTH VIETNAM
0
100 Miles
0
100 Kilometers
Quang Tri
Thua Thien
I CORPS
Quang Nam
Quang Tin
Quang Ngai
Kontum
Binh Dinh
Pleiku
Phu Bon
Phu Yen
II CORPS
Darlac
Khanh Hoa
Quang Duc
Tuyen Duc
Ninh Thuan
Binh Long
Phuoc Long
Lam Dong
Tay Ninh
Binh Duong
Long
Binh Tuy
Thuan
Binh
Hau Nghia
Bien Hoa
Khanh
Saigon
Kien Phong
Kien Tuong
Long An
Phuoc Tuy
Chau Doc
An Giang
Dinh Tuong
Go Cong
III CORPS
Gia Dinh
Kien Giang
Sa Dec
Vinh Long
Kien Hoa
Phong Dinh
Vinh Binh
Chuong Thien
Ba Xuyen
Bac Lieu
An Xuyen
IV CORPS

CHAPTER 1

Prelude to Change

Pacification is an imprecise term. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that to pacify is "to reduce to peaceful submission, to establish peace and tranquility in a country or district." Although the Americans, like the French before them, saw pacification in the broadest sense of those terms, both usually thought of pacification as a specific strategy or program to bring security and political and economic stability to the countryside of Vietnam. But there was never agreement among Americans in Vietnam on just what pacification was and how it might be achieved. Some saw it as controlling the population; others as winning the people's allegiance. Some viewed it as a short-term military operation aimed at quashing opposition; others as a long-term process of bringing, in addition to security, economic, political, and social development to the people.

A semi-official study of pacification in South Vietnam provided one of the most comprehensive definitions:

> . . . an array and combination of action programs designed to extend the presence and influence of the central government and to reduce the presence and influence of those who threaten the survival of the government through propaganda, terror, and subversion. The pacification process incorporates a mix of programs and activities that may vary in composition and relative emphasis from time to time and from place to place . . . The program mix comprises two broad types of activities. They are designed on the one hand to establish and maintain a significant degree of physical security for the population and, on the other, to increase the communication and ties between the government and the people through a variety of selected non-military programs.[1]

Yet even that definition alluded to a fundamental cleavage over priorities that plagued American efforts at pacification in South Vietnam, one that CORDS was set up to eliminate: security versus development or, put another way, military versus civil.

Until the creation of CORDS in 1967, many Americans involved in South Vietnam, depending on their outlook or on which government

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[1] Chester Cooper et al., *An Overview of Pacification*, Vol. I of *The American Experience With Pacification in Vietnam*, Report R–185 (Arlington, Va.: Institute for Defense Analyses, 1972), p. 1.

agency they worked for, saw pacification as either civil or military but not as a joint civil-military process. Most military men and some civilians believed that there had to be security before economic, political, and social development could proceed, that the people had to be safe before the government could win their allegiance. The converse, to which most civilian officials adhered, was that economic, political, and social development would foster political allegiance and, in time, bring military success, because an insurgency without popular support would wither for lack of roots.

That dichotomy reflected an even more basic conflict in the entire American approach to the war: Was the war primarily military, to be fought with essentially military means, or was it basically a political struggle? Although the U.S. government never formally resolved that question, the resources and emphasis devoted to the military side constituted a de facto policy decision in favor of a military solution. Indeed, such a "security first" approach to pacification may have been, after the first few years of the 1960s, the only realistic path. The South Vietnamese people by that time had seen too many programs and too many governments; they had been prey too often to the ebb and flow of struggle in their villages to put their trust in anybody who was unable first to protect them. Yet despite the emphasis on security, pacification continued to founder for lack of sustained security; and what was in effect two wars, military and political, flowed in parallel but separate streams. By 1966 the separation and degree of emphasis on the military war were so great that President Johnson, to give pacification more attention, began to speak of it as "the other war."

The lack of coordination and centralized direction in the American pacification effort in South Vietnam that CORDS was designed to eliminate was apparent even in the late 1950s when commitments were minuscule in comparison to what they had become by 1967. The lack existed despite a general understanding that an American ambassador headed all U.S. representatives in the country to which he was accredited. That general understanding became formal in 1951 when the Departments of Defense and State and the Economic Cooperation Administration (forerunner of the Agency for International Development) agreed that their representatives in a country were to constitute what came to be known as a "country team" under leadership of the ambassador, who provided coordination, general direction, and leadership for the entire effort. Three years later President Dwight D. Eisenhower strengthened the arrangement by means of an executive order giving the ambassador in each

countrywide authority to manage and coordinate the U.S. mission in all matters involving more than merely internal agency affairs.[2]

Yet it was a rare ambassador who used fully the authority that order afforded him. The first and probably most important reason was the situation in Washington, where interagency battles and jurisdictional disputes were magnified and interests supporting each agency were solidly entrenched. It followed that representatives of the agencies in South Vietnam failed to consider themselves members of the ambassador's staff but instead looked to their home offices for guidance and direction, particularly in regard to programs and budgets.

Nor were most ambassadors either trained or inclined to be managers. Following years of custom, they tended to view their task as reportorial and representational. Yet even when they tried to exercise more than general coordination, they faced formidable obstacles. By its very nature, the CIA zealously guarded its operational secrets, and military representatives could appeal to a powerful and well-endowed bureaucracy in Washington with institutionalized ties to the Congress and the American public that far outweighed those of the Department of State. The size of the U.S. program further aggravated the ambassador's difficulties in South Vietnam. The AID mission there was one of that agency's biggest, and even in the late 1950s the Military Assistance Advisory Group was the largest advisory group in the world and the only one commanded by a three-star general.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy made two decisions that perpetuated the lack of centralized control in South Vietnam. In May of that year, rather than appoint single managers in the field and Washington to oversee all U.S. operations related to the war in South Vietnam, he reserved responsibility for coordination and direction to himself, his White House staff, and ad hoc interagency task forces that turned out to exercise little real control. Later in the year he sharply increased the size of the American military commitment in South Vietnam and superimposed over the existing Military Assistance Advisory Group a full military assistance command headed by a four-star general who was equal in rank to the ambassador, actions which made it more difficult than ever for the ambassador to manage the military.

The years 1964 and 1965 provided the seedbed for the formation of CORDS. In those two years there was a veritable stream of suggestions

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[2] Executive Order 10575, 8 Nov 54: "Administration of Foreign Aid Functions." Copies or originals of all primary sources cited may be found, unless otherwise noted, in the pacification research collection at the United States Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.

for improved organization for the overall American effort and for pacification. Those suggestions, and in some cases concrete experiments, came from every agency involved in South Vietnam and from the White House. Although the president took some part in those proposals and experiments, they were for the most part the province of government agencies which fought over them with little apparent intervention or influence from the president. The agencies groped in vain for a solution. Their failure was to be the catalyst for a presidentially imposed solution in 1966 and 1967.

Several factors were responsible for the interest in reorganization that arose during 1964 and 1965: The war was expanding in size and intensity; the South Vietnamese government was marked by weakness and instability; that government also adopted a new organization for pacification; and the commitment of American resources was rapidly growing.

The expanding war, soon involving not only the insurgent Viet Cong but also the North Vietnamese Army, dictated an increased American and South Vietnamese military response, which reinforced the perception of the struggle as basically military. Although many officials still maintained that pacification was the key to the war, the assignment of priorities and resources favored the military more than ever. In the face of enemy forces that had grown from small bands of insurgents to regular divisions, it was hard to argue otherwise.

Although South Vietnam had experienced eight years of relatively stable, if authoritarian, rule under President Ngo Dinh Diem, that changed suddenly in November 1963 when a *coup d'etat* and Diem's death in the course of it turned the government over to inexperienced generals. Amid changing and unstable governments, Americans found themselves involved in internal South Vietnamese politics and administration in a way Diem never would have countenanced. Although eventually rejected, joint American–South Vietnamese command and infusion of American advisers directly into the South Vietnamese government were seriously discussed both at the U.S. mission in Saigon and in Washington.

In addition, with Diem's death, the South Vietnamese abandoned the primary feature of their pacification program, the Strategic Hamlet Program, whereby the rural population was to be relocated in fortified hamlets, and turned pacification over to their military high command. That prompted more than one suggestion from the American military that the same should be done on the American side. Yet in 1965 the South Vietnamese put pacification under a Ministry of Rural Construc-

tion (later called Revolutionary Development); and that produced similar contentions from American civilian officials that either the embassy or the United States Operations Mission, as the Saigon Office of the Agency for International Development was then known, should manage the American pacification program.

Probably the greatest impetus for organizational change was generated by the growing commitment of American resources. During 1964 and 1965, the American military strength in South Vietnam grew from less than 20,000 to nine times that figure, and civilian representation increased correspondingly. A major increase in the American advisory program started in early 1964 when the American military headquarters, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), began to place small advisory teams in South Vietnamese districts (similar to counties in the United States). Within a year almost all of the 243 districts had them, and military advisory teams at the province (state) level expanded as well. American civilian agencies also placed their own representatives in provinces and many districts, so that the advisory effort was soon too large and too remote for any Saigon-based ambassador to control. It was no rarity for several American agencies to present conflicting advice to South Vietnamese officials at various administrative levels.

In Washington, President Johnson clearly was the man in charge on Vietnam, but only on those issues of high policy or immediate necessity that he chose or found time to deal with. There was still no individual, committee, or task force below the presidential level in charge of either the war as a whole or pacification. Although in 1964 Johnson created an interagency Vietnam Coordinating Committee within the Department of State to manage policy and operations, that committee failed to deal in major policy decisions or to manage operations.

In Saigon the situation was little better than in Washington. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge appeared to have no wish to manage the U.S. mission, yet he was unwilling to turn the task over to anybody else. In 1964 when his deputy, David Nes, attempted to improve coordination by creating a "pacification committee," chaired by Nes himself with the deputy chiefs of the other American agencies as members, Lodge ordered it disbanded soon after it was formed.[3]

The U.S. mission received an unusual opportunity for achieving unity when in July 1964 President Johnson appointed General Maxwell D. Taylor as ambassador. Former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

[3] Record of Meeting of Pacification Committee, 7 Apr 64, and William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1976), p. 69.



AMBASSADOR LODGE

Taylor commanded great respect within the military. He was apparently the ideal man to mesh the military effort with the civil and political aspects of the war.

Lest there be any question as to Taylor's authority, he himself elicited from President Johnson the strongest possible terms of reference. On the basis of a draft that Taylor prepared, the president ordered that he would "have and exercise full responsibility for the effort of the United States Government in South Vietnam." He wanted it "clearly understood," the president went on, "that this overall responsibility includes the whole military effort in South Vietnam and authorizes the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate." [4]

Few if any American ambassadors have entered on their assignments with such a formidable combination of personal respect and presidential authority and backing. Yet at the end of Taylor's tenure a year later, the U.S. mission had larger, more fragmented bureaucratic fiefdoms than ever.

Taylor apparently saw no need for major organizational changes, but he did make one innovation; he formalized the country team con-

[4] Ltr, Pres Johnson to Taylor, 2 Jul 64, quoted in full in MSG, JGS 7217 to CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific] and COMUSMACV [Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam], 2 Jul 64.



AMBASSADOR TAYLOR

cept by setting up what he called the Mission Council, in his mind a miniature National Security Council. The members were the ambassador, his deputy, the embassy's political and economic counselors, and the heads of the other American agencies, including the military commander. An executive secretary known as the Mission Coordinator prepared the agenda, recorded decisions, and followed them up. The council met weekly by itself and also held periodic meetings with the South Vietnamese National Security Council. Interagency subcommittees, chaired by the agency having primary interest, dealt with special areas of concern. Although the ambassador retained final authority, the object was to achieve a consensus, especially among staff officers, before issues even reached the formal meetings.[5] Despite the existence of this council, agencies were allowed to appeal council decisions to Washington, which reinforced the concept of the ultimate independence of each agency.

The existence of the Mission Council did relieve some pressure from Washington for tighter organization, for on paper the council arrangement looked effective. It also increased the interchange of information among the agencies. Taylor's deputy, U. Alexis Johnson, took pride in

[5] Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 318.



GENERAL WESTMORELAND

the work of the Mission Council on the theory that it "established the habit" of components of the mission working together and also of their working with the South Vietnamese government. Yet a hands-off philosophy was still evident, for the deputy ambassador noted that "the Mission Council and the Joint [American–South Vietnamese] 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 on their level." [6]

Yet coordination failed to flow downward from the council to representatives of the agencies working in the field. No member of the council was willing to subordinate the operations of his particular program to the council as a whole, and staff work for that body was accomplished by the agencies, not by a separate group serving the council. Perhaps the most glaring operational failure was that the council failed to reduce competition among agencies for resources. In the end even General West-

[6] Ltr, Johnson to Elbridge Durbrow, 26 Nov 76, as quoted in "Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965–1967," Vol. IV.C.8, of *United States–Vietnam Relations: 1945–1967* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 21–22. *U.S.–Vietnam Relations: 1945–1967* is the so-called Pentagon Papers, a study prepared at the direction of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Hereafter cited as *USVNR* with the appropriate volume and page numbers.

moreland, who had helped create it, observed in retrospect that "the Mission Council failed to provide the tight management needed for pacification." [7]

Despite the broad powers Ambassador Taylor had elicited from the president, he was reluctant to interfere with the military chain of command. To the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, and General Westmoreland, he specifically promised no interference; he had no wish to put Westmoreland "in the unhappy position of having two military masters." Although he asked Westmoreland to clear with him all policy cables going to Washington by military channels, he did that only so that he might dissent, if necessary, through the Department of State. Both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland thought the arrangement worked well, Taylor "because the parties involved were reasonable people," Westmoreland because he deemed it the ambassador's prerogative "to keep abreast of military matters." [8]

There was no open defiance of the ambassador, either by Westmoreland or the heads of any of the other agencies; for Taylor was unquestionably the figure of authority in the U.S. mission. It was merely that in the absence of firm direction to pull the mission together, something Taylor apparently saw as unnecessary,[9] the agencies continued to go their respective ways. And the beginning of the massive American build-up during this period aggravated the problems of disunity.

During Ambassador Taylor's tenure, one pacification operation showed that it was possible to pull together U.S. and Vietnamese resources, civil and military, to work on pacification.. HOP TAC was launched in September 1964 as the major Vietnamese pacification operation of the year. It grew out of a desire to concentrate Vietnamese efforts in a few critical provinces. The concept envisaged starting from a core of four provinces immediately adjacent to Saigon and then moving pacification out in a series of concentric rings. Central to the concept was military/civilian and U.S./Vietnamese unity. HOP TAC was run by a joint U.S./Vietnamese council with a secretariat. A U.S. Army colonel,

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[7] Interv, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 19 Mar 73. The MacDonald interviews were conducted during the preparation of Gen Westmoreland's memoirs, *A Soldier Reports*, and were deposited at the Center of Military History for use in preparing the U.S. Army's official history of the war in Vietnam.

[8] Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 316. Interv, Maj Paul Miles with Westmoreland, 10 Apr 71; conducted while Gen Westmoreland was U.S. Army Chief of Staff, the Miles interviews were deposited at the Center of Military History for use in preparing the U.S. Army's official history of the war in Vietnam.

[9] Interv, MacDonald with Westmoreland, 4–5 Feb 73. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 316, and interview by the author with Taylor, 14 May 75.

the senior adviser to the III Vietnamese Corps, led the interagency U.S. component of this council. The HOP TAC operation made no lasting impact on the Viet Cong, but the organizational structure it spawned did provide an early example of the Vietnamese military running pacification, as well as a demonstration of disparate U.S. agencies working together under military supervision in advising a pacification operation.[10]

During the same period (1964–65), however, the beginning of what was later known as the Revolutionary Development Cadre Program sharpened the dichotomy between military and civilian operations. Considering that neither the American nor South Vietnamese military was devoting sufficient emphasis and resources to pacification, American civilian agencies threw their support behind an expansion of the People's Action Teams. Started under CIA sponsorship, the teams were local-defense platoons, trained extensively in political indoctrination and motivation, that lived and worked among the people. Vastly expanding the number of teams, the South Vietnamese absorbed some members of existing programs run by separate government ministries but also gathered new recruits. Requirements for scarce South Vietnamese manpower conflicted with military needs, and the program became a major point of contention between American civilian agencies and General Westmoreland's command.

In the meantime, American bombing of North Vietnam beginning in February 1965 and arrival of American ground troops starting the next month and their commitment later in the year against the enemy's main-force units, produced more and more emphasis on military action and thus less and less American military attention to pacification. Immersed in their own expanding pacification program, American civilian agencies felt a widening conceptual gulf between the military war and what they were trying to achieve. While admitting that organization for pacification support might be tightened, they believed it should be achieved under civilian direction. Contributing most of the advisers and materiel and responsible for security, the American military command preferred to leave the organization as it was rather than see its resources put under civilian management.

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[10] *Hop Tac,* both in concept and execution, has been well documented. The treatment of it in the so-called *Pentagon Papers* (*USVNR,* IV.C.8, pp. 1–9) is probably the best unclassified source available. Official documentation is extensive and includes not only some of the earliest planning papers but also detailed "progress" reports and evaluations (see pacification research collection, U.S. Army Center of Military History). See also, Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports,* pp. 82–86.

Officials at the highest level of the U.S. government were aware of the lack of unity in the U.S. effort. In February, for example, in advocating reprisal bombing against North Vietnam, President Johnson's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy, told the president that if the reprisal program raised new hopes and if some improvement in the South Vietnamese government followed, "the most urgent order for business will then be the improvement and broadening of the pacification program, especially in its non-military elements." He advocated strengthening at what he called "the margin between military advice and economic development." The military, he noted, needed to pay more attention to supporting civilian programs while the United States Operations Mission, which advised the South Vietnamese police, needed to focus more on security.[11]

Numerous proposals during 1965 for reorganizing the U.S. mission and the American pacification effort reflected continuing concern in Washington over disunity in the mission. In February, for example, the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Maj. Gen. Rollen Anthis, recommended a single chain of command for the pacification program under General Westmoreland.[12]

In Saigon, in an effort to coordinate the advice given South Vietnamese province chiefs, the U.S. mission tried an experiment in three provinces, designating three "team chiefs," from AID, MACV, and the embassy. Although the test worked well in at least one province, it was abandoned after three months because of inconclusive results. The idea of unified advice for each province nevertheless became a part of nearly every reorganization subsequently proposed and eventually was to be incorporated as an important principle in the final structure for CORDS.

That unified interagency action for a particular aspect of the struggle in Vietnam was not necessarily impossible was demonstrated in May when Ambassador Taylor established the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) under the head of the United States Information Agency's office in South Vietnam, Barry Zorthian.[13] He was given

[11] Memo, Bundy, to Pres, 7 Feb 65, sub: The Situation in Vietnam.

[12] Memo, Anthis for Gen Goodpaster (Dir, Joint Staff), 24 Feb 65, sub: RVN Pacification. Adm F. J. Blouin, Director, Far East Region Office, International Security Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, made a similar proposal a short while later. See Memo, Blouin to John McNaughton [Asst Sec of Def for Internatl Security Affairs], 2 Mar 65, sub: Vietnam.

[13] HQS, MACV, Command History 1965, p. 253.

ministerial rank and made responsible for the entire mission's psychological warfare operations and press relations. For those matters the joint office was made the central point of contact with the South Vietnamese government. Zorthian's powers were directive and included seeing that his orders were carried out; he was not merely a coordinator. Officers from his agency and from all U.S agencies in South Vietnam served under him. The Joint Public Affairs Office was a successful smaller precursor to CORDS for the management of programs that cut across agency lines.

When Henry Cabot Lodge returned for a second tour as ambassador in July 1965, he came armed with a letter of authority from President Johnson as powerful as that earlier given to Taylor.[14] Yet Lodge continued to see himself primarily as the president's personal representative, and his earlier reluctance to interject himself in a managerial role continued.

Ambassador Lodge did bring with him to Saigon a small, handpicked team of specialists to serve as an informal political staff for his use and to provide liaison with South Vietnamese officials responsible for pacification. The head of the group, Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, U.S. Air Force, had helped defeat an insurgency in the Philippines soon after World War II and had headed a staff advising President Diem on pacification. Lodge made Lansdale chairman of an interagency mission liaison group, which Ambassador Taylor had earlier created to provide coordination with the South Vietnamese Director General of Rural Reconstruction (pacification).

Yet neither in that post nor later as the U.S. mission's senior liaison officer to the South Vietnamese government was Lansdale able to accomplish much in terms of bringing unity and direction to the U.S. pacification support effort. The political contacts he had established in his earlier tour and his ability to gain the trust and confidence of South Vietnamese officials were valuable, but otherwise his stay was frustrating. Key South Vietnamese leaders quickly discerned that his power was limited and chose to deal instead with the agencies themselves, which had large staffs and access to funding and other resources. The agencies resented Lansdale's efforts to deal with Lodge on issues cutting across agency responsibilities and frequently frustrated those efforts; for Lans-

[14] Ltr, Pres to Lodge, Jul 65, as quoted in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 809.

dale had no independent operating authority, no funds, and—an extremely important factor—no Washington constituency to back him up.[15]

The year 1965 ended with little change in the management of the American program of pacification support. Despite a greatly expanded war, a vastly increased American effort, an enormous commitment of military and civilian resources, and a change of ambassadors and commanders in Saigon (Westmoreland had become commander in mid-1964), the organization at the end of the year was basically the same as it had been two years earlier. At all levels American officials appreciated the problems of organization and made numerous proposals for change, and the president had given his ambassadors unprecedented authority. Yet the situation remained basically the same. It was not to stay that way much longer.

[15] Chester Cooper et al., *An Overview of Pacification,* p. 286.

CHAPTER 2

The First Reorganization

"I wasn't at all reassured about what I heard yesterday. I have been concerned every time I have been here in the past two years. I don't think we have done a thing we can point to that has been effective in five years. I ask you to show me one area in this country . . . that we have pacified." [1]

Those harsh words by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara exemplified the frustration that by late 1965 gripped American officials, particularly in Washington, in regard to the pacification program. Following a brief period during which attention focused on aerial bombardment of North Vietnam and the first commitment of American combat troops, officials of the Johnson administration began to turn again, slowly at first, to the subject of pacification. Within constraints imposed in large measure by concern over possible intervention by the People's Republic of China, they came to realize that the war was not to be won by military measures alone. There was also a widespread perception among senior U.S. government officials that the commitment of American troops had reversed the downward spiral of South Vietnamese military fortunes, thereby providing an opportunity for pacification to move forward.

Thus there began a renewed emphasis on pacification. There was neither a precise time when it began nor a single official or agency separately responsible. Yet the pressure for it clearly came from officials in Washington, especially from a president who, conscious of congressional and presidential elections, wanted to divert attention from the American role in the fighting to the more positive program of improving the lot of the South Vietnamese people through pacification.[2]

Contributing to the new emphasis was the beginning of a division of effort, with American troops doing much of the fighting against enemy main-force units while nearly half the South Vietnamese Army assumed responsibility for local security. Although such a policy was not formally

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[1] Sec of Def McNamara, as quoted in Briefing for General Westmoreland, 28 Nov 65, in MACV, Command History 1965, p. 229.

[2] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

adopted until October 1966, it actually came into being as American units arrived. Despite the largely separate U.S. military effort, the presence of American military advisers with South Vietnamese units meant that more American military became involved in pacification, their numbers soon far exceeding the number of American civilian advisers. That increased the justification for a continuing and substantial role in pacification support by the U.S. military command.

The result of that renewed interest in pacification, along with such pessimistic assessments as that of Secretary McNamara, was to reopen the question of management of American support of the program. For the next year and a half a search for improved management was destined to be a key aspect of the drive to spur pacification.

Late in 1965 the Vietnam Coordinating Committee within the Department of State began discussions on a general concept of pacification and methods and machinery for improving the American support effort. Contributing to the work of the committee was a sharply pessimistic appraisal of the existing effort by a professor of government at Harvard University, Henry Kissinger, upon his return from a trip to Saigon. Kissinger reported that there was little integration of the various American programs, that AID management lines in the field were hopelessly tangled, and that the entire management structure needed to be overhauled.[3]

In late November the chairman of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Leonard Unger, proposed to Ambassador Lodge a conference of representatives of Washington agencies concerned with conduct of the war and representatives of the U.S. mission. When Lodge responded enthusiastically, Unger forwarded a detailed conceptual paper in applying American and South Vietnamese resources to the overall war effort and soon thereafter cabled a proposed conference agenda dealing almost exclusively with organizational concepts and priorities and how to implement them.[4]

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[3] Transcript of Vietnam Coordinating Committee Meeting, 20 Nov 65, atched to Memo, Unger for Members of Vietnam Coordinating Committee, sub: Action Summary for 20 Nov 65; Memo, Col T. J. Hanifen for Brig Gen Bennett, 20 Nov 65, sub: Debrief of Dr. Kissinger (19 Nov 65).

[4] Ltr, Unger to Dep Amb William Porter, 29 Nov 65 with atched Memo, sub: Concept for Application of Resources to Vietnam Conflict. See also Msgs, Saigon 1849 to State, 23 Nov 65, and State 1512 to Saigon, 1 Dec 65.



AMBASSADOR PORTER

The conference took place from 8 through 11 January 1966 in Warrenton, Virginia, with supplemental meetings in Washington.[5] With Unger and Lodge's deputy, Ambassador William Porter, as co-chairmen, the participants included the members of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, representatives of the mission in Saigon, and representatives of other Washington agencies. The talks touched on such subjects as allocation of resources, specific pacification programs and priorities, and concepts of pacification and overall strategy, but the focus was on how to organize the U.S. mission for support of pacification.

Reflecting the views of Ambassador Lodge, Ambassador Porter maintained that the existing system of coordination within the mission was adequate, while field coordination was a question of "personality relationship" that seldom failed. Ambassador Lodge, he asserted, had "complete control and no disagreements have arisen concerning policy and priorities." The principal officer of each agency, he maintained,

[5] See Tentative Schedule of Meetings for Vietnam Conference, 7–13 Jan, second draft, 6 Jan 66, which lists the participants and the subjects of the preliminary and supplemental meetings. The main conference is covered in: Report to the Principals and Ambassador Lodge from Ambassadors William Porter and Leonard Unger, 13 Jan 66, sub: Warrenton Meeting on Vietnam, 8–11 Jan 66, with extensive annexes; Minutes of All Warrenton Agenda Discussions, 8–11 Jan 66; and Draft, Agenda for Meeting at Warrenton Training Center, 8–11 Jan. A detailed analysis is contained in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 20–27.

fully understood U.S. policy. "The Mission," he concluded, "should be given a chance to operate." [6]

With the exception of the representative from MACV, Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., the other spokesmen from Saigon echoed Porter's views, all wanting to keep their separate field programs, their channels of communications to their Washington organizations, and their direct links with the ambassador. General Westmoreland, on the other hand, as reported by General Collins, was thinking in terms of an interagency coordinating committee chaired by the deputy ambassador and operating below the level of the Mission Council. Although the committee would direct and execute pacification programs, unresolved disagreements would be settled by the Mission Council. He also wanted each agency to retain separate access to the South Vietnamese agency for pacification, the Ministry of Rural Construction.[7]

Two proposals for genuinely tight management came from Washington-based representatives. A White House assistant, Chester Cooper, called for a second deputy ambassador for pacification. The Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Maj. Gen. William Peers, proposed giving overall responsibility for pacification, including those components of the civilian agencies supporting pacification, to MACV, which would have a deputy for pacification responsible to the ambassador. That second proposal, as it turned out, was an omen of the future.

Although the conferees at Warrenton reached no decision, the cochairmen noted in their final report "widespread recognition" of a need within the U.S. mission for a single focus for pacification. The general consensus was that control and management should rest just below the ambassador, but there was no agreement on whether the manager should be the current deputy ambassador or another official or on how much of the various agencies' resources and operations should be subject to the manager. The latter was, in fact, the basic issue involved.

Viewing pacification at a lower level, the conferees recommended that the Mission Council consider designating team chiefs to head all advisory efforts in those provinces designated as priority pacification areas. That was a return to similar attempts to impose coordination, such as the province team chief experiment, that had been tried in 1964 and 1965.

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[6] Minutes of All Warrenton Agenda Discussions, pp. 3–4. Although not attributed to Porter in the minutes, the remarks are clearly Porter's as indicated by context and confirmed by a participant in the conference, Brig Gen James L. Collins, Jr.

[7] Msg, MACV 0117, Westmoreland to Collins, 7 Jan 66.

Largely through the proddings of Chester Cooper, the officials looked at how the government in Washington was organized to oversee pacification and concluded that the machinery was inadequate to handle problems quickly and decisively. They advanced as a possible solution a single official located in a senior position, possibly in some way related to the National Security Council, to serve as a "high-level point of liaison" for whoever came to be responsible for pacification in Saigon.

The Warrenton Conference was less noteworthy for what it accomplished in terms of specific actions and programs than for the ideas it raised and the positions various participants, reflecting the views of their parent agencies, took on those ideas. At the very least it enabled officials from opposite poles to converse unhampered by the restrictions of formal cables and telephones and let everybody look at his work in a broader context. This interchange of ideas, General Collins reported to General Westmoreland, was perhaps the most important benefit of the conference.[8]

The conference nevertheless demonstrated that disunity still prevailed among the agencies involved, and that in Saigon the civilian agencies, at least, including the embassy, were content to leave the organizational structure the way it was. That foreordained that the initiative for change would come from Washington, where President Johnson would soon indicate a determination to see tangible action and progress in pacification.

On 13 January Porter and Unger met with Secretary McNamara, Undersecretary of State George Ball, and White House National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy and reached tentative agreement that the U.S. mission's pacification official should be a second deputy ambassador and should supervise the work of the subordinate agencies.[9] They also pondered Washington organization for coordinating pacification. They envisaged upgrading the chairman of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, making him not only a coordinator but a director with an interagency staff and access to the top officials of each agency. Like the members of the mission in Saigon, Washington officials displayed a conspicuous lack of desire to upset their own bureaucratic relationships.

A few days later officials in the State Department developed a closely held plan to create within the State Department a Director of Vietnam

[8] MACV Command History 1966, p. 504.

[9] Memo, Unger for Members of Vietnam Coordinating Committee, 19 Jan 66, with attachment, draft "Record of Decisions Concerning Warrenton Meeting Recommendations," 19 Jan 66.



PRESIDENT JOHNSON AT HONOLULU CONFERENCE, *February 1966.*

Operations.[10] The concept saw the director as manager of all U.S. noncombat operations. He would draw on other agencies as well as the State Department for his staff and would have a presidential mandate for authority subject only to secretarial or presidential reference.

Although not entirely laid to rest until March, that proposal never came to fruition. It was remarkable, nevertheless, in that it looked to a stronger and more centralized management than any prior or later plan proposed in the State Department. Whether it ever had a chance of adoption or of working is open to question. The State Department was hardly in a position to direct or supervise an action-oriented field program to which its contribution of resources and personnel was far outstripped by three other competing bureaucracies.

Yet the idea of centralized Washington control refused to die. Although President Johnson and his advisers were unwilling to endorse the idea of one dominant bureaucracy or to bring themselves to shake up the government's structure radically, the president himself was already inclined toward some form of centralized direction, and over the next two months McNamara and McGeorge Bundy continued to advocate it.

Meanwhile, indications of a need for change developed from another source. Returning from a trip to South Vietnam, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, David Bell, submitted to the president a candid report which incorporated some of the ideas raised

[10] Memo, William Bundy for Rusk, 26 Jan 66, with attached: (1) Draft Cable to Rangoon and (2) Draft NSAM [National Security Action Memorandum]. Although the author was unable to locate a copy of the Draft NSAM, a description of its contents is in Bundy's memorandum.

at Warrenton.[11] Pacification, not merely aid programs, he indicated, was the main concern. "It is a striking and melancholy fact that no significant progress has been made in pacification for the past several years despite a great deal of effort . . . There is as yet . . . no basis for optimism. The pacification task is inherently very complex and difficult and will require years to complete under the best conditions. The new effort is still almost entirely on paper."

Bell went on to state that the problem of highest priority was to create a "tested and reliable system for 'pacifying' the countryside." In his words, neither the South Vietnamese nor the U.S. approach to pacification "is yet strong enough or well organized enough to get the job done." There were no strategy directives, he said, and no integrated plans or schedules to indicate how American agencies would actually assist pacification.

Although Bell recommended a single manager for U.S. pacification support, his solution was weaker than his plea and bore a close resemblance to what actually happened a month later: Deputy Ambassador Porter, supported by a small staff, should prepare integrated plans and schedules and supervise their execution. General Westmoreland and the Director of the U.S. Operations Mission, he said, agreed with that recommendation and Ambassador Lodge seemed "to receive it favorably."

In Saigon, meanwhile, the idea of any change still met resistance, particularly at the embassy. On returning to Saigon, Ambassador Porter downplayed any move to reorganize, and the Mission Council rejected—with one exception—the idea advanced at Warrenton of team chiefs in priority pacification areas. The exception, adopted at General Westmoreland's suggestion, was to designate the AID representative in the An Giang Priority Area of the IV Corps not as "team chief" but "team coordinator." That was a particularly small concession in that An Giang Province was probably the most secure province in the country, and thorny civil-military coordination problems seldom arose there.[12]

In early February 1966 President Johnson arranged a conference in Honolulu with the heads of the South Vietnamese government, Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Nguyen Cao Ky. Although not dealing with organization for pacification, the conference had a marked

[11] Memo, Bell to Pres, 19 Jan 66, sub: Non-Military Aspects of the Effort in Vietnam—Jan 1966.

[12] Memo, S. L. Karrick for Members of Mission Liaison Group, sub: Report of Meeting, 27 Jan 66; Msg, Saigon 2775 to State, 2 Feb 66, sub: Warrenton Recommendations.

effect on that organization. Conscious of the importance of political, social, and economic matters to successful prosecution of the war, the president wanted to stress those factors, as indicated by the fact that he brought with him Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John W. Gardner. The conference put a spotlight on pacification as a means of carrying out political, social, and economic improvements; and the glare of the spotlight would inevitably lead to an effort to improve the structure for pacification, particularly in view of the chorus of complaints about it from visitors to South Vietnam and from Washington officials.[13]

The stress throughout the conference was on pacification and the civilian aspects of the war. As Ambassador Lodge put it in his opening remarks: "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 proper police can function and a climate be created in which economic and social revolution, in freedom, are possible."

Secretary of State Rusk and President Johnson tied the emphasis on civilian matters into a three-faceted strategy of military pressure, nation-building or pacification, and negotiations. In Rusk's view pacification was a means to bring pressure on the North Vietnamese to negotiate, for "anything that can cause them to realize that an epidemic of confidence is building could hasten the time when Hanoi will decide to stop this aggression." In calling for tangible results, the president reiterated the three points: "Now, I want to have my little briefcase filled with these three targets—a better military program, a better pacification program that includes everything, and a better peace program." In an unusually blunt statement, in view of the fact that he was addressing not only his own officials but the South Vietnamese leaders as well, he said: [14]

> . . . 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

[13] For an account of the Honolulu conference, see Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 242–45.

[14] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 36, 38, 41–42.

and the finals will be on just what you have done . . . how have you built democracy in the rural areas? How much of it have you built when and where? Give us dates, times, numbers . . . 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 . . . ? 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 a team of experts." Well we'd 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 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.

Almost none of Johnson's specific wishes were carried out within his deadlines. Some of his goals were unrealistic; and the problems, difficult in any circumstances, had to be solved through an imperfect South Vietnamese instrument, one that might outwardly indicate agreement but might not willingly carry out the president's wishes. In addition, the South Vietnamese government soon faced a major political crisis, a near open revolt in the I Corps zone. That overshadowed any sense of urgency that President Johnson may have been able to generate by his exhortations.

The setting of targets at Honolulu nevertheless emphasized the president's impatience with the status of pacification. The nearest target for that impatience, given the inherent difficulty of pacification itself, would be the American organization for pacification support. Only visible and swift success could have stilled the pressure for reorganization.

Close on the Honolulu conference, President Johnson made two important decisions: He ordered Deputy Ambassador Porter assigned to the task of pulling together the U.S. mission's pacification effort, and he designated a deputy special assistant to the president for national security affairs, Robert W. Komer, as a special assistant and gave him a strong mandate to supervise from the White House Washington support for pacification.

Upon conclusion of the conference at Honolulu, McGeorge Bundy headed a group of Washington officials travelling to Saigon. Bundy had permission to give Ambassador Porter wide authority over all parts of the pacification program. The president meanwhile cabled Ambassador Lodge: "I intend to see that our organization back here for supporting



SPECIAL ASSISTANT KOMER

this [pacification] is promptly tightened and strengthened and I know that you will want to do the same at your end . . . I suggest that your designation of [Porter] 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." [15]

Porter's assignment to pacification was forced on a reluctant Henry Cabot Lodge, and Lodge in his response to the president said he had considered that the embassy's direction of pacification had been working "pretty well" and that he saw no need for a public announcement of Porter's assignment. "I assume," Lodge said, "that if Porter's new allocation means that I am so taken up with U.S. visitors [a chore from which his deputy often relieved him] that I am in effect separate from rural construction, then we would take a new look at the whole thing." [16] Although Lodge directed that Porter have full charge under his direction of all aspects of U.S. support for pacification, he nevertheless excluded the military aspects from the charge.

[15] Ibid., pp. 53–54.
[16] Ibid., p. 56.

Porter soon found himself in a difficult position. On the one hand, officials in Washington were pressuring him for results, while on the other Lodge failed to see Porter as a czar charged with obtaining the results Washington expected. Lodge's handling of the pacification committee chaired by David Nes in 1964 indicated that Lodge had no intention of relinquishing any appreciable degree of his personal responsibility for pacification. Even Porter himself apparently viewed his new role as considerably less authoritative than Washington saw it. Although "the basic idea is to place total responsibility on one senior individual to pull together all of the civil aspects of revolutionary development," he noted, he saw that "primarily as a coordination effort" and did not intend "to get into the middle of individual agency activities and responsibilities." Whenever he perceived something that required attention and action by an agency, he would call the agency's attention to it in order to emphasize it. He intended, he said, "to suggest rather than criticize." [17]

If Porter's handling of pacification was less successful than officials in Washington had hoped, neither was it a complete failure. His efforts were at least a first step in a long process of getting the civilian agencies working together. In addition, although Porter had no authority over MACV's participation in pacification, General Westmoreland designated his chief pacification planner, Col. Joel Hollis, to serve as an adviser to Porter with an office in the embassy. Cooperation was such that Hollis' office often produced staff work that bore Porter's signature,[18] and Hollis served as MACV's single point of contact with the embassy on pacification, which represented an additional improvement in coordination.

But Porter's small staff, however able, was insufficient to handle the task at hand. Ambassador William Leonhart, who was serving in the White House as Robert Komer's deputy, returned from a visit to Saigon in May "full of admiration for Porter" but noted that Porter was stretched too thin with duties, including virtually all the usual deputy chief of mission functions, most of which Lodge had promised the president to relieve him of. Furthermore, although spokesmen for the civilian agencies would express "enthusiastic, but generalized, words of agreement" for Porter's proposals, they were unwilling, in practice, to change their programs or divert resources in the directions Porter wanted.[19]

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[17] Ibid., 57–58. These quotations are from the Mission Council's minutes of 28 Feb 66.

[18] Interv with Charles M. Cooke, Jr. (former officer in MACV RDSD), 5 Jan 75.

[19] Memo, Leonhart for Komer, 31 May 66, sub: Visit to Vietnam: 17–29 May 1966. *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 61.

Nevertheless some officials who visited Saigon saw the situation differently. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy said in March, for example, that the embassy was in the best shape that he had ever seen it and that Lodge was delegating major responsibility to Porter for pacification. After an informal visit as a consultant in August, Henry Kissinger observed marked improvement in the organization of the embassy. "The plethora of competing agencies," he noted, each operating "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." [20]

In view of what the situation really was, such observations constituted a telling comment on how bad organization must have been earlier. Yet those views were not the ones then carrying weight in Washington. The real force behind pacification in Washington was Robert Komer. He was dissatisfied and impatient, not with Porter personally but with the continuing paucity of accomplishments in pacification.

Komer's appointment as special assistant to the president for "the other war," the substance of which had been foreshadowed at Warrenton and hinted at by the president in February, was directly attributable to the urgings of Secretary McNamara and McGeorge Bundy.[21] Having authority by National Security Action Memorandum to direct, coordinate, and supervise all U.S. nonmilitary programs for peaceful construction relating to South Vietnam, his purview was wider than pacification. He was to run "the other war," and that might also involve dealing with such matters as port congestion and economic stabilization. As Komer later remarked: "By God, we had a mandate to run the other war. We didn't know what the other war was; nobody else did either." [22]

Although management of military pacification programs was not under Komer's jurisdiction, the president still gave Komer considerable say in military business insofar as it affected "the other war." As noted in the National Security Action Memorandum setting up Komer's position, the President charged Komer with assuring "that adequate plans are prepared and coordinated covering all aspects" of pacification programs. "This responsibility will include the mobilization of U.S. military resources in support of such [pacification] programs. He will also assure

[20] Memo, Bundy for Under Secretary of State, et al., 14 Mar 66. *USVNR,* IV.C.8, p. 58.

[21] R. W. Komer, *The Organization and Management of the New Model Pacification Program—1966–1969* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1970), p. 26.

[22] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

that the Rural Construction/Pacification Program is properly coordinated with the programs for combat force employment and military operations." [23]

President Johnson made it plain in the memorandum that Komer's authority had substance in that "he will have direct access to me at all times." To Komer, that was vital. As he recalled later: "The influence we had was . . . largely a function of our direct relationship to the President, and my position on the President's personal household. Washington does move when the President, the White House, speaks." If he had been in the State Department, he said, he would have gotten nowhere, for "one bureaucracy cannot manage several others." [24]

Operating under the White House umbrella, Komer became a powerful force on nonmilitary matters connected with South Vietnam. With a small but talented and unconventional staff, the "Blowtorch"—as Ambassador Lodge nicknamed him—began to prod, often abrasively and with unusual pressure, officials and agencies in both Washington and Saigon. In the thirteen months Komer held his position, he would make seven trips to South Vietnam. There was no question but that he used his charter to the hilt, challenging even the military and urging priority for key pacification programs at the expense of the military effort. Noting that U.S. civil-military coordination was still inadequate, he told the president in April 1966: "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." [25]

The significance of some of Komer's contributions were not at first apparent but would be with the passage of time, such as laying the organizational groundwork for centralized U.S. advice on pacification and developing the concept and basis for a program that he himself was later to implement in South Vietnam. He also kept pacification squarely on the minds of senior officials, including the president, and when decisions on the war were being made, provided a voice for pacification in the highest circles.

During the months when Porter and Komer were settling into their new assignments, three major government studies dealing with pacification were published, each explicitly or implicitly acknowledging defects

[23] NSAM 343, 28 Mar 66.
[24] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.
[25] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 65, quoting from Memo, Komer for Pres, 19 Apr 66, sub: Komer Report on Saigon Trip.

in U.S. organization for pacification. The fate of those studies—none was adopted by more than one agency and no follow-up machinery was created—was one indication why a second reorganization for pacification would soon be under way.

The first study, "Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam," more generally known as PROVN, was developed by a group of officers on the U.S. Army staff under the aegis of the chief of staff, General Harold K. Johnson. A product of research done in 1965, it appeared in March 1966, an exhaustive, phased analysis of the entire problem of South Vietnam and the American response to it. No two U.S. government agencies viewed the nation's objectives in South Vietnam in the same manner, the study noted, and it stressed that pacification should be designated as the major American–South Vietnamese effort.[26]

On U.S. organization, PROVN made a series of detailed and explicit recommendations: (1) that a Washington executive agent coordinate Vietnam support activities in the United States; (2) that the U.S. ambassador be the single manager in South Vietnam with two coequal deputies, one for U.S. military forces and one for pacification; and (3) that below the deputies there be a single American representative or chief at each level in the field.

Originally closely held within the Army, PROVN never received Secretary McNamara's support,[27] and MACV, which raised numerous objections, recommended that the study be reduced to a concept rather than an action document.[28] The Army's chief of staff, General Johnson, nevertheless continued to stress the importance of the study's recommendations to those who would listen, especially Komer. Although PROVN itself was never implemented, many of its recommendations were destined to be adopted separately.

The two other studies were produced at the behest of Ambassador Porter. The first, called the "Mission Priorities Study," developed in response to urging from Komer in April 1966 that the mission attempt to establish a set of interagency priorities, was prepared by an interagency staff headed by an official of the Agency for International De-

[26] Ibid., pp. 74–79.

[27] Col Donald S. Marshall, a key author of the study, attributes this to an inadequate briefing given the secretary. Interv with Marshall, 23 Jan 75.

[28] Msg, MACV 18244 to CINCPAC, 27 May 66. Drafted by junior staff officers who were more sympathetic to PROVN than were Westmoreland and senior members of his staff, the message was phrased to be as favorable as possible while not inviting Westmoreland's outright rejection. Intervs with Charles M. Cooke, Jr., 13 Aug 75, and Gerald Britten (former officer in MACV RDSD), 18 Aug 75.

velopment. With a list of priorities that was often vague and confusing and included almost every U.S. program then in existence in South Vietnam, the study was subsequently used by the Agency for International Development but had little impact elsewhere.[29]

The other study, known as "Roles and Missions," begun in July 1966 under mission coordinator Col. George Jacobson, who was working for Porter, attempted to set out the roles and missions of each U.S. military and civilian agency. When the study was completed, each agency tended to object to those parts impinging on its own institutional interests. MACV, for example, disagreed with giving South Vietnamese pacification forces priority in manpower over regular South Vietnamese Army units, and the Agency for International Development opposed the idea of a national constabulary as endangering its own police programs. Both CIA and MACV objected to a single director of intelligence within the mission. Yet of eighty-one recommendations sixty-six were acceptable to all agencies. Ambassador Porter chose not to concentrate on those and try to resolve the others but instead allowed the study to wither, each agency merely adopting and pursuing those parts that it agreed with.[30]

[29] Despite extensive inquiries and search, no copy of this study has been found. A file of papers relating to it, including a "Priority Directive," has been assembled in the Center of Military History. *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 79–83, provides a summary. See also a detailed letter to the author, 4 May 70, from the director of the study, Robert Klein, who feels that the study probably never was adopted because its recommendations were inconsistent with what Komer and the military wanted at the time.

[30] An assistant to Komer, Col Robert M. Montague, Jr., stated that Porter never sent the study to Lodge on the theory that Lodge would not accept it. Author's interv with Montague, 6 Nov 69.

CHAPTER 3

The Second Reorganization

Following several months in charge of Washington support for pacification, Special Assistant Komer set in motion events that were destined to lead to a second reorganization of American support when in August 1966 he circulated a paper entitled, "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification: Analysis, Concept, and Management." [1] No other document so accurately forecast the future course of the U.S. pacification advisory program.

Komer divided the problem of pacification into three main parts: local security, breaking the hold of the Viet Cong over the people, and programs to win active popular support. He felt that because of recent victories over the enemy's large units, the time was propitious to step up work in all three fields. "As pacification is a multifaceted civil/military problem," he noted, "it demands a multifaceted civil/military response." No single program would provide a breakthrough. "The path to both quick impact and accelerated progress is through better management and coordination of the host of contributory programs—most of them already in existence."

Komer then proposed a system of priorities: continuous local security to include improving local defense forces and diverting regular South Vietnamese Army units not "gainfully employed" against the enemy's main forces to local security missions; breaking the hold of the Viet Cong over the people; positive development programs to win popular support; functional priorities for field pacification operations with work proceeding first in locales where the most progress was feasible; additional human and material resources for pacification; more performance goals with adequate criteria to measure progress and a system to monitor it; better security for key roads; using the flow of refugees as an asset in pacification; and better control over the rice supply.

Implicit throughout the paper was a concept of mass. Komer saw the road to success—or at least visible results—to be through a massive

[1] Draft 3 of 7 Aug 66, with attached Ltr, Komer to John T. McNaughton, 10 Aug 66.

application and better management of South Vietnamese manpower and American material. He also felt that pacification had to be pressed throughout the country, not just in priority areas or specialized local programs. Only with a truly massive effort could a turn-around be achieved, and that was what the president required if he were to maintain public support for the war. Throughout Komer's association with pacification, he would constantly strive to get more and more people and more and more material involved in the effort. That was what lay behind his desire, almost from the first, to give responsibility for pacification to the military, for only the military—both American and South Vietnamese—had the men and resources to do the job on a large scale.

Although Komer proposed three possible organizations, he had enthusiasm only for one. The first would give Ambassador Porter full operational control over all U.S. pacification activities, including those of the military, and merge field staffs and advisers at all levels into coordinated teams with a designated chief and a channel of communications direct from the district to Porter. The second would retain separate civil and military command channels but strengthen the management structure of MACV and the mission by appointing a senior deputy for pacification in MACV and giving Porter control of all civilian pacification personnel at all levels. The third—which Komer favored—would assign responsibility for both civil and military pacification programs to General Westmoreland, whose MACV staff would be partially restructured to provide an integrated civil-military staff under a civilian deputy (Komer recommended the deputy ambassador for the position) while at lower echelons there would be a single manager for pacification at each level.

Despite the forcefulness of Komer's presentation, the paper had little immediate impact. Although Komer sent a copy to the president, he received no reaction from him. However, Secretary McNamara and his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, John T. McNaughton saw it as a means to give new life to pacification. Komer's deputy, Ambassador Leonhart, carried a copy to Saigon, but Ambassadors Lodge and Porter cared for none of the proposed changes. Preoccupied with the war against the enemy's big units, General Westmoreland displayed no enthusiasm for any change, although as Komer later recalled, Westmoreland told Leonhart, in effect, "I'm not asking for it, but if I'm told to manage pacification, I will do it." [2]

Just a few weeks later, aware of various proposals and counterproposals then floating about Washington, Westmoreland saw pacifica-

[2] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 72. Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

tion in a more positive light: "I'm not asking for the responsibility, but I believe that my headquarters could take it in stride and perhaps carry out this important function more economically and efficiently than [under] the present complex arrangement." [3]

When Westmoreland turned Komer's paper over to his planning staff for study, the reaction was quite the opposite. The planners saw in it no approaches to pacification not already recognized by the U.S. mission, deemed none of the three alternate organizational concepts capable of achieving the desired results, and maintained that the current organizational structure was adequate.[4]

Charged further with preparing a plan for possible assumption of the responsibility for pacification by Westmoreland, the staff came up with a two-stage variant on Komer's third alternative. In both stages there would be both civil and military pacification officers on the MACV staff; but in a first stage, there would be a civilian chain of command to the districts, and in a second, to be put into effect if the first failed to work, the entire field program would be unified under a military officer at each level.[5]

That was strictly a planning exercise, for there was no move or conspiracy by MACV to take control of pacification. Although Westmoreland himself believed that military management was inevitable, he thought the logic of that solution would eventually sell itself on its own merits. He was also conscious that even the slightest indication that he was seeking the responsibility would provoke strong adverse reactions from the civilian agencies both in Saigon and Washington.[6] The civilian agencies, meanwhile, made no proposals of their own to counter those in Komer's paper, simply letting the paper go with a flat *no* as if nothing further would come of it.

In September, Komer began an active campaign to transfer responsibility for pacification to the military. Since the military provided 90 percent of the resources and the civilian agencies only 10 percent, putting pacification under the military was to Komer "obvious." He also considered that General Westmoreland "had the clout" with the South Vietnamese government and armed forces that was needed, and "the men in Washington who were really pushing hardest on Vietnam were Robert McNamara and his people, like McNaughton." If paci-

[3] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 6 Oct 66.
[4] Briefing, MACV J–5 for Westmoreland and C of S, 19 Sep 66.
[5] Memo for Record, Cmdr Daryl O. Maxwell, 29 Sep 66, which contains some comments by Westmoreland at a briefing on the study by the planning staff.
[6] Interv with Westmoreland, 8 Apr 75.

fication was to work, there had to be "strong auspices" behind it; Komer was convinced the Defense Department was "far stronger behind pacification" than was the State Department, "not that State didn't understand it but the State people just weren't doing anything." In getting programs moving, he believed, the Defense Department was "infinitely more dynamic and influential." [7]

Working with Assistant Secretary McNaughton, Komer arranged for Secretary McNamara to make the official proposal for the military to assume responsibility for pacification. Details worked out in McNaughton's office were not exactly what Komer wanted, but he and his staff saw that as no disadvantage since those could be changed once the secretary's proposal had drawn the first fire from the civilian agencies.[8]

The McNamara proposal provided a strong concept but one unfinished in details, possibly deliberately so. Under the proposal, all pacification personnel and activities were to be placed within MACV under a deputy for pacification who would also be in charge of all pacification staffs in Saigon and the field. Whether the deputy would be military or civilian and which activities would be classified as part of pacification were left unanswered, matters so obviously requiring decision that their omission may have been deliberate in order to be available to be used with the civilian agencies as carrots.[9]

Although Secretary McNamara never formally submitted his memorandum to President Johnson, he discussed the concept with him and obtained his agreement.[10] The memorandum then was staffed out to the State Department, the Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Information Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Komer. The reactions were predictable; only Komer and the Joint Chiefs concurred.

The State Department cited the political nature of pacification, the alleged failure of the 1964 HOP TAC pacification operation that the military had managed, and a need to emphasize civilianization of the war. The State Department also wanted the views of the U.S. mission in Saigon solicited. Indirectly providing comment on the efficacy of Ambassador Porter's efforts to manage pacification, Deputy Assistant Secretary Unger stated that "the problem of management" would be better

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[7] Komer, *The Organization and Management of the New Model Pacification Program*, p. 38.

[8] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69. Interv with Montague, 6 Nov 69.

[9] Draft Memo, McNamara for Pres, 22 Sep 66.

[10] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

solved by putting Ambassador Porter in a position to carry out his full responsibilities "as originally envisaged." [11]

The Agency for International Development's Assistant Administrator for the Far East, Rutherford Poats, proposed like Unger a strengthening of Porter's position, noting that "Porter should be given the job originally conceived for him." [12] Poats wanted a pacification command structure with Porter directing the agency staffs in Saigon and with committees at the corps and province levels chaired, in the main, by military officers. The results would have been a deputy ambassador with a small staff, four powerful deputies at corps level, and a hierarchy of small committees at lower administrative levels, a solution putting a high premium on coordination and not providing truly integrated management.

At the Central Intelligence Agency, one official saw McNamara's proposal raising the basic pacification issue of military security versus popular involvement, i.e., should pacification aim at inspiring the local populace to resist the insurgents or should pacification be imposed by military power? Another CIA official raised doubts about the military's ability to handle pacification by expressing undisguised scorn for MACV's efforts to train and motivate the South Vietnamese Army and local defense forces and their leaders. He proposed a joint pacification staff under the ambassador, stressing unified direction rather than unified management. Although he envisaged a staff large enough to supervise and direct the contributing agencies, he did not advocate melding the personnel and resources of the agencies into a unified organization at all command and operational levels.[13]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to the "McNamara" proposal with marked enthusiasm. Recognizing that the new organization would require increased help from U.S. combat and combat support forces, they nevertheless suggested, among several small changes in the text, one that

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[11] Memo, William Bundy for Under Secretary of State, 27 Sept 66, sub: Responsibility for Pacification/Revolutionary Development Program in Vietnam (McNamara Draft Proposal). Unger drafted the memorandum, but there is no evidence that Bundy actually signed or forwarded it. U. Alexis Johnson of the State Dept expressed similar views in discussions with Komer. See *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 92–93. See also Memo, Johnson for Rusk, 1 Oct 66, sub: Secretary McNamara's Proposal for Placing Pacification Program in South Vietnam under COMUSMACV: Action Memorandum.

[12] Memo for Record, R. M. Poats, 26 Sep 66, sub: Notes on McNamara's Draft Proposal.

[13] Memo, no title, no author, no date (but either late Sep or early Oct), CMH files. Memo, author unknown (deliberately blocked out), 3 Oct 66, sub: Comments on Mr. Komer's Views on Pacification Management.

was intended to prevent interference with General Westmoreland's authority to employ his combat units.[14]

Stressing the primacy of local security and the need for resources, Komer asserted that coordination was no longer sufficient and that the military was better set up to manage the large support effort that was required. While expressing no view as to whether the deputy for pacification in MACV should be civilian or military, he noted that the ambassador and deputy ambassador should retain their authority in overall supervision of pacification support. The new deputy in MACV, he observed, should control field activities and the Saigon staff that would direct field operations but should be excluded from overall economic policy, anti-inflationary programs, CIA programs other than police and pacification cadre, and such programs of the Agency for International Development as medicine and education. Logistical support for pacification, he believed, should remain with the parent agencies along with administrative responsibilities for their personnel. "To be perfectly candid," Komer concluded, "I regard your proposal as basically a means of bringing the military fully into the pacification process rather than of putting civilians under the military." [15]

While discussions were proceeding, Deputy Ambassador Porter arrived in Washington, expressed strong opposition to McNamara's proposal, and warned against a possible "serious reaction" from Ambassador Lodge if Washington officials made a quick decision on the issue. He cabled Lodge to alert him about the proposal and to recommend that the U.S. mission form a study group to evaluate various reorganization possibilities.[16]

The Agency for International Development and the State Department meanwhile solidified their positions. The administrator of the Agency for International Development, William Gaud, proposed a second deputy ambassador whose only function would be directing the U.S. pacification program. The deputy would have an interagency staff and would chair a Revolutionary Development Council made up of deputy directors of all agencies, while similar structures would be set up at subordinate advisory levels. The State Department's solution was much the

[14] Memo, JCSM–626–66, Gen Earle G. Wheeler for McNamara, 29 Sep 66, sub: Reorganization of Pacification Responsibilities in South Vietnam.

[15] Memo, Komer for McNamara, 29 Sep 66.

[16] Memo, Unger for Rusk, 2 Oct 66, sub: Ambassador Porter's Views on Secretary McNamara's Proposal To Place the Vietnam Pacification/RD Program Under COMUSMACV. Msg, State 61251 to Saigon, 6 Oct 66, and Msg, Saigon 7935 to State, 7 Oct 66.

same: a strengthened deputy ambassador directing pacification at all levels but leaving execution to the agencies. The deputy ambassador would have a military director who would command MACV's corps, province, and district advisers and would coordinate with a deputy for pacification within MACV.[17]

In the face of the unanimous opposition from the civilian agencies, President Johnson decided to defer a decision. By giving the civilians a short time to try to put their house in order, he intended to defuse the opposition. Like McNamara and Komer, the president had made up his mind that the management of pacification had to be unified under the military.[18]

In Saigon the civilian officials continued to misread the way the trend was developing in Washington. On 8 October, for example, Porter told Lodge that the pressure for a swift decision on reorganization had given way to "careful consideration." As events would soon demonstrate, that was not to be the case. On 10 October, Secretary McNamara, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle G. Wheeler, Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, and Komer arrived in Saigon for a brief visit before joining a conference in Manila with the president and heads of several Asian states. Because Porter was still in the United States, the visitors received their briefing on pacification from Porter's deputy, Ambassador Henry Koren, who had only recently arrived in Saigon. Poorly prepared and weakly presented, the briefing did nothing to create an impression of efficient civilian leadership. To Komer it was a "fiasco," and he was convinced that it confirmed Secretary McNamara's commitment to pacification under the military.[19]

Ambassador Koren himself was left with no doubt where McNamara's sentiments on organization for pacification lay. To the State Department he reported that the secretary "expressed himself as utterly dissatisfied with progress on pacification" and that the current U.S. organization was "incompetent" to deal with the problem.[20] Having had a chance to tell McNamara privately that the lack of progress in pacification was attributable to inadequate security for the population,

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[17] Draft Memo, Gaud for McNamara, 5 Oct 66, sub: Unified U.S. Pacification/Revolutionary Development Organization. Draft Memo, Actg Sec State for Pres, 7 Oct 66, sub: U.S. Organization for Revolutionary Development/Pacification Program. (Drafted by Unger.)

[18] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

[19] Msg, State 62666 to Saigon, 8 Oct 66. Interv with Maj Gen William A. Knowlton (formerly SJS, MACV), 26 Jan 70. Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

[20] Ltr, Koren to Unger, 15 Oct 66.

which was the fault of the military, Ambassador Lodge thought that McNamara had changed his mind; but Koren failed to share that view.

General Westmoreland discerned the drift of events but continued to approach responsibility for pacification with caution and care. As he noted following the McNamara visit:

> McNamara feels it is inevitable that I be given executive responsibility for American support of the Revolutionary Development program. He is convinced that the State Department officials do not have the executive and managerial abilities to handle a program of such magnitude and complexity. I told McNamara I was not volunteering for the job but I would undertake it if the President wished me to do so, and I felt we could make progress. He stated that he thought there would be an interim solution—that they were giving the civilian agencies another try. He stated that if this does not work after approximately three months, I could expect to take over.[21]

Upon returning to Washington, McNamara and Katzenbach presented their findings to the president separately. Although admitting failure of the political and social aspects of pacification, Katzenbach labeled the lack of sustained security as the major stumbling block, for which he fixed blame on both the American and South Vietnamese military. He nevertheless proposed only a strengthening of the existing separate civilian and military pacification support channels with overall authority to remain with Porter but with a second deputy ambassador to relieve Porter of nonpacification duties. Under his proposal, administrative control of civilians working in pacification would remain with their parent agencies, but Porter would have operational control over them. Katzenbach also recommended that a senior general officer be assigned as Porter's principal deputy, one who could assist in administration and coordination and who might also increase the military focus on pacification. (Since the preceding August, a brigadier general, Willis D. Crittenberger, Jr., had been so serving.) He added the proviso—which indicated that he was aware of the drift of events—that should the civilian solution fail, the same general would be an ideal choice to head a single, unified command for pacification under Westmoreland.[22]

At the time undergoing a difficult personal reappraisal of the war, McNamara in his assessment for the president was highly pessimistic: "I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon . . . we find ourselves—from the point of view of the important war (for the com-

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[21] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 17 Oct 66.

[22] Memo, Katzenbach for Pres, 15 Oct 66, sub: Administration of Revolutionary Development, in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 94–99.

plicity of the people)—no better, and if anything worse off. This important war must be fought and won by the Vietnamese themselves. We have known this from the beginning. But the discouraging truth is that, as was the case in 1961 and 1963 and 1965, we have not found the formula, the catalyst for training and inspiring them into effective action."

The solution, as McNamara saw it, lay 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." [23]

McNamara made five recommendations to implement that approach, but the one which he saw as the most important and the most difficult to achieve was a successful pacification program. As Komer later observed, the Secretary of Defense was markedly unhappy with what he saw as a failure of Lodge, Porter, and Westmoreland to do anything in pacification. "Pacification," he noted, "is a bad disappointment . . . [and] . . . has if anything gone backward . . . full security exists nowhere." Either directly or by implication, he attacked the lack of sustained local security, the lack of attention accorded local security by both the American and South Vietnamese military commands, the apathy and corruption of South Vietnamese officials, the weakness of the South Vietnamese in dedication, direction, and discipline, and "bad management" on the part of both Americans and South Vietnamese.[24]

Apparently aware of President Johnson's plan to afford the civilian agencies a period of grace, McNamara recommended leaving the military and civilian pacification channels separate and with all civilian pacification activities under Porter; but he warned that "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." [25]

Presented with those two reports, President Johnson on 15 October called together Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance, and General Wheeler and made clear his dissatisfaction with the current direction and execution of the pacification program. He was nevertheless unwilling at that point, he said, to override the strong civilian objections, particularly of Secre-

[23] Memo, McNamara for Pres, 14 Oct 66, sub: Actions Recommended for Vietnam, in *USVNR*, IV.C.6(a), pp. 82, 88.
[24] Interv with Komer, 28 Jun 71. Memo, McNamara for Pres, 14 Oct 66.
[25] Memo, McNamara for Pres, 14 Oct 66.

tary of State Rusk and Ambassador Lodge, to transferring the program to military control. He intended, he said, to give the civilian agencies a period of ninety days to produce acceptable results and implied that if the status of pacification were still unsatisfactory after that time, responsibility might be transferred. At a subsequent meeting of the National Security Council, the president made clear to all concerned the necessity to strengthen the pacification program.[26]

To General Wheeler it appeared that the pressure for results allowed little hope for a civilian solution. With this in mind, he recommended that Westmoreland name a senior member of his staff to be concerned solely with pacification. He wanted MACV to be ready with both a man and a functional organization when the seemingly inevitable call came to take over the entire pacification program.[27]

Yet the civilian agencies were to have their chance. Thus was born what became known as the Office of Civil Operations. That it came to exist at all was due to strong civilian opposition to placing pacification under the military. To some it may have appeared as a common bureaucratic compromise, but the president clearly saw it as nothing more than a temporary step to deflate civilian objections to another plan to which he was already committed. As Komer recalled it: "I said they can't do it in [even] six months, but the President said: 'That doesn't bother me.' He deliberately gave them a very short deadline . . . McNamara told him it wouldn't work. I told him . . . it wouldn't work. So he stacked the deck." [28]

As President Johnson left on an Asian tour that was to culminate in the Manila Conference, Komer made another trip to Saigon where he warned Porter that there would definitely be a reorganization and left behind two members of his staff, Richard Holbrooke and Lt. Col. Robert M. Montague, Jr., to help him plan for it. On 4 November, Secretary Rusk sent a message to Lodge, with input from McNamara and Komer, directing Lodge to reorganize the mission for pacification. It was to be, the message made clear, a "trial organization" and a final chance for civilian management. Lodge would be given a second deputy ambassador so that Porter, relieved of all other duties, could command a unified civilian pacification organization which would be strengthened by assignment of a two- or three-star general officer to assist in administration and in liaison with MACV, where Westmoreland was to have a

[26] Msg, JCS 6339-66, Wheeler to Sharp and Westmoreland, 17 Oct 66.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

Deputy for Revolutionary Development. The arrangement was to be on trial for 90 to 120 days, "at the end of which we would take stock of progress and reconsider whether to assign all responsibility" for pacification to MACV.[29]

When Lodge replied two days later, he agreed that some reorganization was necessary but again blamed the military's failure to provide security for the lack of substantial progress. While agreeing to consolidate civilian lines of command under Porter, he wanted no second ambassador. Contrary to the judgments of many observers, Lodge maintained that "Ambassador Porter does not now absorb substantial other responsibilities which distract his attention from revolutionary development." [30]

Although General Westmoreland promptly moved to upgrade the staff section in his headquarters that had been handling pacification, for more than a week little information reached Washington to indicate that Ambassador Lodge was moving on his reorganization. On 15 November Secretary Rusk told him tersely that the president "wished to emphasize that this represents final and considered decisions and . . . expressed hope that the indicated measures could be put into effect just as rapidly as possible." [31]

Two days later Lodge told Washington what the new organization would look like. Since Westmoreland, like Lodge, wanted no second deputy, there would be no Deputy for Pacification in MACV but instead a Special Assistant for Pacification. Rather than have a second deputy in the embassy, which Lodge felt would downgrade Porter's position within the American community and in the eyes of the South Vietnamese, Porter would be relieved of duties other than pacification by delegating responsibilities for running the mission to other officials of the mission. Under Porter's authority but not his administration, there would be a civilian Office of Operations, which would consist of the personnel and activities of those offices of the Agency for International Development dealing with Field Operations, Public Safety (Police), and Refugees; the Field Services of the Joint United States Public Affairs Office; and the Cadre Operations Division of the CIA. All civilians at the corps and province levels would have a single director, thus reducing to two (mili-

[29] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 108. Msg, State 78865 to Saigon, 4 Nov 66. Although the author has found no copy of this cable, *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 106–08, contains the text of an advance version sent to the president in New Zealand (Msg, State 68390 to Wellington, 20 Oct 66), which was apparently unchanged in the final version.

[30] Msg, Saigon 10204 to Pres, 6 Nov 66, in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 108–11.

[31] Msg, State 85196 to Saigon, 15 Nov 66, in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 112.

tary and civilian) the channels of American advice to South Vietnamese corps commanders and province chiefs.[32]

With sharply contrasting speed, General Westmoreland on 7 November had already created in his headquarters a Revolutionary Development Support Directorate and named as director his Secretary of the Joint Staff, Brig. Gen. William A. Knowlton, who would have direct access to Westmoreland on policy matters. Knowlton remembered that Westmoreland saw this step as temporary, a move to prepare for complete assumption of responsibility. When that time came, a more senior officer, possibly the commander of the 25th Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Fred C. Weyand, whom both civilians and military men saw as an excellent choice to manage pacification, probably would replace Knowlton.[33]

After consulting Lodge and Porter, Westmoreland named a member of his staff, Maj. Gen. Paul Smith, to serve as principal deputy and executive officer to Porter, thus upgrading that slot, previously filled by a brigadier general. The impetus for upgrading the position had consistently come from the civilians, both Komer and Katzenbach having recommended it. Although Porter wanted General Smith to have a role in planning military operations, thus, in effect, giving Porter a voice in orienting military operations in support of pacification, General Westmoreland refused to accept such a plan or anything that might reduce his flexibility and ability to respond to enemy pressures. That Komer failed to back Porter on the issue was an indication of how transitory he deemed the Office of Civil Operations to be.[34]

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[32] Msg, Saigon 11125 to State, 17 Nov 66, in *USVNR*, IV.C.8, pp. 114–15.

[33] Msg, MACJOO 49907, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC 180045, 2 Nov 66. Interv with Knowlton, 26 Jan 70.

[34] Msg, MAC 7242, 20 Dec 66. Interv with Komer, 3 Nov 71.

CHAPTER 4

The Third Reorganization

The Office of Civil Operations, representing the second attempt within a year to improve U.S. organization for pacification, was at least a partial success. Although during a short lifetime it had no discernible influence on the war against the Viet Cong, it achieved organizational improvements that represented an important half-way step in the formation of CORDS.

Washington officials had intended that Deputy Ambassador Porter run the new organization directly, but Ambassador Lodge made the Office of Civil Operations similar to a subsidiary corporation, with a director reporting to Porter.[1] This development and Lodge's refusal to accept a second deputy ambassador meant that Porter was still running the mission, particularly when Lodge, soon after establishing the Office of Civil Operations, left for a month's home leave. Porter was seldom at his desk in the new office and remained busy with activities unrelated to pacification.

The choice of a director for the new office was Porter's, a choice narrowed considerably by the need to find a senior civilian already serving in South Vietnam so that the transition could be made swiftly. Porter chose the deputy director of the Saigon office of the Agency for International Development, L. Wade Lathram. Yet hardly had Lathram taken over the position when, like Lodge, he left on a month's home leave.

The absence of both Lodge and Lathram reinforced the belief of Washington officials that a second deputy ambassador to devote full time to pacification was needed. Stressing that need to President Johnson in February 1967, Special Assistant Komer noted that although Porter had originally opposed a second deputy, he had come around to the view that one was needed.[2] Yet by that time, in view of the pending creation of

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[1] Three early documents on the organization of the Office of Civil Operations are important: Draft Memo, Porter for USAID, OSA, and JUSPAO, 21 Nov 66, sub: Office of Operations—Terms of Reference; Msg, Saigon 12200 to State, 2 Dec 66, sub: U.S. Mission's Office of Civil Operations—Terms of Reference; and Memo, Leonard Maynard for JUSPAO, OSA, USAID, et al., 22 Dec 66, sub: OCO Functional Statements and Organization Charts.

[2] Memo, Komer for Pres, 28 Feb 67, sub: Change for the Better—Latest Impressions from Vietnam.

CORDS, the matter had become largely academic; but as the president was pondering the precise form that CORDS was to take, the need for three strong senior civilians was no doubt a consideration.

The new director, Lathram, had authority for directing all American civilian staffs in Saigon concerned with pacification support and all American civilian programs outside Saigon except clandestine operations of the CIA. In addition, he was to coordinate among the various agencies other civilian programs not dealing with pacification. Despite his interagency responsibilities, he was made only an ex-officio member of the Mission Council.[3]

The structure and detailed concepts of operation of the Office of Civil Operations were developed largely by members of Komer's White House staff on temporary duty in Saigon, Richard Holbrooke and Colonel Robert M. Montague, Jr. Six divisions were responsible for refugees, psychological operations, new life development (improvement of economic conditions in the villages), revolutionary development cadre, CHIEU HOI (a program to encourage Viet Cong to rally to the government), and public safety. Those were moved en bloc from their parent civilian agencies. Above those divisions were an Executive Secretariat, a Management Division (internal administration), and a Plans and Evaluation Division, the last having primary responsibility for policy, concepts, strategy, plans, and programs and for reporting on and evaluating all pacification activities.

At subordinate levels—corps, provinces, and eventually some districts—civilian operations fell under one man who was responsible up the chain of command to Lathram. Except for the addition of a Military Program and Liaison Division, the staffs in each of the four corps were similar to those in Saigon; and at province level, where the senior civilian was called the province representative, there were, as a rule, at least six subordinates whose duties paralleled those of the higher staffs. Because divisions of the South Vietnamese Army were in the South Vietnamese pacification chain of command, the Office of Civil Operations assigned to each an American division tactical area coordinator.

The Office of Civil Operations was far larger than any of its civilian antecedents in South Vietnam. The office contained nearly a thousand American civilians and directed programs costing $128 million and four billion South Vietnamese piastres.[4]

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[3] Briefing, Brig Gen William A. Knowlton for Gen Earle G. Wheeler, c. 6–14 Jan 67, sub: U.S. Mission Agency Organization for Support of Revolutionary Development.

[4] Airgram Saigon A–543 to State, 22 Mar 67, sub: OCO Progress Report.

Moving offices to one location and choosing and acquiring people occupied much of the time of senior officials of the new office, time-consuming tasks that would help smooth the later formation of CORDS but whose complexity was not fully recognized by those in Washington who were impatient for results. By early December Porter and Lathram had decided on three of the four regional directors: Ambassador Koren (State Department) for the I Corps; John Vann (Agency for International Development, a former officer in the U.S. Army who had resigned his commission over disagreements on policy in South Vietnam) for the III Corps; and Vince Heymann (CIA) for the IV Corps. The position in the II Corps, declined by General Lansdale, was filled in February 1967, near the end of the projected ninety-day lifespan for the Office of Civil Operations, by Robert Matteson (AID). Selection of province representatives was completed only in mid-January 1967, also near the end of the contemplated lifespan.[5]

Like many other American agencies in South Vietnam, the Office of Civil Operations never had its full complement of people. By late February 1967, 485 vacancies remained out of 1,468 positions, many of them important managerial posts.[6] Difficulty in recruiting civilians was neither new to the Office of Civil Operations nor did it end with the establishment of CORDS.

In terms of personnel and funding, the Office of Civil Operations was essentially an offspring of the Agency for International Development, which in fiscal year 1967 provided 54 percent of the financing and 78 percent of the people. In addition, the parent office in Washington provided and financed administrative support. The second largest contributor, the CIA, provided 44 percent of the financing but a far smaller percentage of personnel.[7]

Although better than its predecessors', relationships of the new office with the other U.S. civilian agencies were often strained. Richard Holbrooke, for example, noted that the office was "sniped and attacked almost from the outset by the bureaucracies." The directors of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office and the CIA, Holbrooke remarked, were particularly possessive of their people and programs. Just how jealously the CIA guarded its prerogatives was apparent from a memorandum of un-

[5] Ltr, Porter to William Bundy, 3 Jan 67. Msg, Saigon 15479 to State, 13 Jan 67.

[6] Chart (developed by AID in Washington), sub: OCO Personnel as of 23 Feb 67, and Msg, Saigon 21790 to State, 31 Mar 67, sub: Critical Vacancies—Managerial.

[7] Airgram, Saigon A-543. Memo, William Hall for Komer, 6 Feb 67, sub: OCO Financing and Support, and Memo, Komer for Hall, same title and date.

derstanding which gave the CIA station chief and the chief of the Revolutionary Development Cadre Division, a CIA official, wide authority and veto power over planning, programming, funding, and operating the Revolutionary Development Cadre program.[8]

Although the Office of Civil Operations wrote the performance reports of its people (but with comments by the parent agencies), the employees were supported, paid, and housed by their parent agencies. Even though the Office of Civil Operations directed a program, the agency to which that program had previously belonged remained responsible for funding. This separate funding made the subsequent transition to CORDS simpler, but it hampered reprogramming of money and resources to deal with unexpected problems. The director had no authority, for example, to transfer funds from the Revolutionary Development Cadre program to psychological warfare.[9]

There were clear benefits nevertheless. Senior officials working on pacification were at least located together and saw each other daily. In relations with MACV, the civilians spoke with one voice at all administrative levels, which made their case stronger; and coordination with the military, especially in planning for pacification, was facilitated. The South Vietnamese in turn benefitted by receiving advice from two voices rather than from several directions.

The office was unquestionably a useful step toward a workable organization for single management of U.S. advice and support for pacification. The experience gained would considerably ease the transition from civil to military responsibility. Yet in its short lifetime the Office of Civil Operations had no visible effect on the war in the countryside, where the situation was ill-disposed to quick improvements. In measuring the successes even senior officials of the office saw them in terms of American accomplishments, such as improved reporting and evaluating systems, not in what those systems were reporting and evaluating.[10] If the move in the direction of military responsibility was to be halted, the Office of Civil Operations would have had to produce results little short of miraculous.

Although the trend toward military responsibility was always there, General Westmoreland continued to be discreet about it. Talking with Ambassador Leonhart in mid-December 1966, soon after the Office of

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[8] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 125. Memo of Understanding, L. Wade Lathram and John L. Hart, 10 Feb 67.

[9] Airgram, Saigon A–543.

[10] Ibid.

Civil Operations was established, Westmoreland denied that he was seeking such responsibility but indicated that he had no intention of being unprepared should it come his way. Neither fragmented nor dual responsibility was the answer; leaders in Washington, he observed, might be ill-judged by history if they failed to devise more clear-cut organizational authority and responsibility.[11]

Returning to Washington, Leonhart voiced much the same opinion to President Johnson. After noting that the civilians and the military still had problems agreeing on operational priorities, he added: "I remain doubtful that we can get pacification moving quickly or effectively enough with the present organization or that we will have the requisite planning, retraining, and leverage applied to [the South Vietnamese] until MACV is tasked with a single responsibility for the pacification program." Copies of Leonhart's report went to the Defense and State Departments, the CIA, and the Agency for International Development, where the views apparently raised little protest except from one member of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee who was "deeply troubled by the continuing and apparently growing pressure" for military control.[12]

Visiting Saigon for ten days starting 13 February, Special Assistant Komer praised the Office of Civil Operations as "a major step forward" that deserved "full Washington backing by all agencies involved." Yet he also made a strong plea for better management and cited the prerequisites of "a vigorous top U.S. team in Saigon," improved civil-military coordination, and a more effective and coordinated effort by the South Vietnamese government.[13]

In the meantime President Johnson had begun to consider a radical reorganization of the American command structure in South Vietnam, more than simply giving responsibility for pacification to the military. The president had begun to think in terms of a sweeping reorganization of the U.S. mission based on a suggestion by Secretary McNamara, which General Wheeler endorsed, that Westmoreland be afforded powers similar to those exercised by General Douglas MacArthur during the occupation of Japan. Under that concept, Westmoreland would control all American civil and military efforts but apparently would exercise no proconsulship over the South Vietnamese. Wheeler's relay of this plan

[11] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 1 Jan 67.

[12] Memo, Leonhart for Pres, 30 Dec 66, sub: Visit to Vietnam—Dec 66, Rpt and Recommendations. Memo, Robert Miller to Unger, 11 Jan 67, sub: Possible Military Takeover of U.S. RD/P Effort.

[13] Memo, Komer for Pres, 28 Feb 67, sub: Change for the Better—Latest Impressions from Vietnam.

to Westmoreland did not note whether there would even be an ambassador.[14]

In response to specific queries from General Wheeler, Westmoreland proposed that if the arrangement were adopted, he should have the title of Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces, Vietnam. He also proposed three deputies, one each for political affairs, economics and national planning, and military operations, the latter to assume his title as commander of MACV.[15]

When in mid-February Ambassador Lodge informed President Johnson that he wanted to end his assignment as ambassador, General Westmoreland came under consideration for that post. Secretary McNamara saw him either as a civilian ambassador or in the dual role of ambassador and military commander. In the belief that a man in uniform could better coordinate the U.S. mission and with concern for Westmoreland's continuing military career, General Wheeler recommended the dual position, to which McNamara eventually subscribed.[16]

In late February and early March, President Johnson discussed the possibilities with McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk. Although Rusk stressed that he had no personal objection to Westmoreland as ambassador, he was concerned about American operations becoming completely militarized because the projected South Vietnamese elections would almost certainly result in a military president. That objection, combined with McNamara's recommendation that Westmoreland remain in uniform, whatever his position, killed the proposal.[17]

The roles of McNamara and Wheeler in those deliberations underscored the strong desire of both men to see a consolidated American effort in South Vietnam, particularly in pacification. The president's interest also appeared to reflect continued determination to achieve a united effort, but the proposal for Westmoreland's appointment may have been only one of several choices that the president considered. Even as Secretary McNamara was recommending Westmoreland, he also suggested to the president that Special Assistant Komer might be named to head

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[14] Msgs, JCS 0831–67, 30 Jan 67, and JCS 1190–67, 14 Feb 67, Wheeler to Westmoreland.

[15] Msg, MACV 1629, Westmoreland to Wheeler, 16–23 Feb 67. General Westmoreland discusses the subject in his memoirs, *A Soldier Reports*.

[16] Msg, CJCS 1527–67, Wheeler to Westmoreland, 28 Feb 67.

[17] Msgs, JCS 1573–67, 1 Mar 67; JCS 1637, 3 Mar 67; and JCS 1815–67, 10 Mar 67; Wheeler to Westmoreland. Westmoreland said later that he was reluctant to take over the ambassadorship because the job should be handled by one experienced in political and diplomatic matters. Interv, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 2 Apr 73.

the pacification program in South Vietnam, a possibility that the president mentioned to Komer.[18]

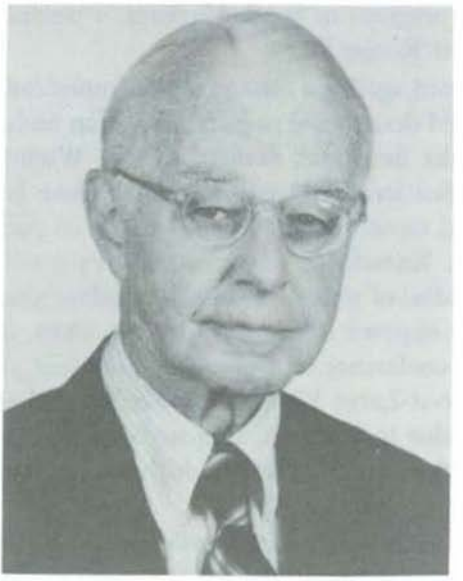
Having decided against a change in Westmoreland's status, President Johnson remained determined to put pacification under the military and, apparently for the first time, decided to give Westmoreland a civilian deputy for pacification. That possibility had gone largely unremarked since Komer had recommended it in his paper on pacification prepared in August 1966. Knowledge of the president's decision, however, was limited to a handful of senior officials—including almost certainly none who might have opposed it—until 15 March when, as a prelude to another high-level conference on Guam, the president publicly announced that Ambassador-at-Large Ellsworth Bunker, would replace Lodge; the current ambassador to Pakistan, Eugene M. Locke, would be the new deputy ambassador; and Komer would head the pacification advisory program.

On vacation at the time, Komer was somewhat chagrined at Locke's appointment, for that made Komer the third-ranking civilian rather than the second. Komer had expected to be both the deputy ambassador and General Westmoreland's deputy for pacification.[19] Yet having only one deputy in the mission might have perpetuated the problems of Ambassador Porter. In any event, with pacification placed under MACV, Ambassador Locke was moving into a job that would be downgraded to its original focus on merely administering the U.S. mission.

The conference in March at Guam was outwardly another in a series of joint conferences among American and South Vietnamese leaders on the war's progress. Yet it also had importance as a forum for introducing the new American team for Saigon and for starting work on the details of reorganizing the U.S. mission. The principal proposal was that eventually adopted: creation of CORDS. At Guam, however, General Westmoreland felt a trace of presidential hesitation. Details of the CORDS idea, he noted were "put to the President, who seemed to accept them in principle but stated he would refrain from making a decision" until later in the conference.[20]

Westmoreland went to Guam expecting that the chief of his Revolutionary Development Support Directorate, General Knowlton, would head, under Komer, a new MACV staff section combining the direc-

[18] Komer, *The Organization and Management of the New Model Pacification Program*, pp. 52–53.
[19] Interv with Komer, 14 Feb 72. Memo, Leonhart for Walt Rostow, 15 Mar 67.
[20] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 25 Mar 67.



AMBASSADOR BUNKER

torate with the Office of Civil Operations; but by the end of the conference he agreed instead on the director of the Office of Civil Operations, Lathram, with Knowlton as his deputy. Having already established a good working relationship with Lathram, Knowlton readily agreed.[21]

Komer and his military assistant, Colonel Montague, accompanied General Westmoreland back to Saigon, there to spend several days working out details of the reorganization and to consult with Westmoreland. Westmoreland recalled that they came to "a meeting of minds." There were actually some stormy scenes, for Knowlton and the MACV chief of staff, Maj. Gen. William B. Rosson, deduced from Komer's proposed organization charts that he sought to command American units assigned to support pacification. Their concern may have arisen from a notation on a draft chart that American corps and provincial pacification advisory chiefs should control U.S. units if the units were "attached for pacification missions." Or they may have been concerned over a key paragraph in the draft National Security Action Memorandum directing the reorganization, which stated that "the Deputy will supervise the employment of all U.S. resources—civil and military, and the conduct of all U.S. programs directly contributing to pacification (Revolutionary Development)." Komer, the author of the draft memorandum, had meant U.S.

[21] Interv with Knowlton, 26 Jan 70.

advisers rather than units. The paragraph was nevertheless removed from the draft memorandum following the sessions at MACV; the U.S. military was clearly sensitive to any indication of civilian involvement in military command and tactical operations.[22]

More significant in the long run was what General Westmoreland and his future deputy for pacification did agree on: a series of guidelines that set the pattern for subsequent American organization. Pacification was still to be essentially a South Vietnamese program with the American role limited to advice and support. The American advisory program would have a single manager at each level with a single chain of command from Saigon down to district, a single official voice when dealing with the South Vietnamese, and integrated civil and military planning, programming, operations, evaluations, logistics, and communications. Every effort would be made to achieve a smooth transition by melding existing civil and military organizations, the entire Office of Civil Operations being transferred to the new organization. In managing pacification support, Komer was to maintain close contact with applicable ministries of the South Vietnamese government. Komer was not to be a political adviser or mere coordinator; he was instead to operate as a component commander. Positions in the new organization were to be filled by the best men available, whether military or civilian. In addition, the reorganization was to proceed by careful and cautious steps; civilian agency staffs and budgets, for example, were to be retained until at least fiscal year 1969.[23]

Although at first Komer planned eventually to integrate or merge the civil and military staff sections, the final structure as developed in June 1967 kept the two sections relatively intact in the sense, for example, that staff sections from the Office of Civil Operations retained their original names and nearly all their former personnel. That would make a smooth transition back to civilian control possible should negotiations with the enemy prompt a reduction in or withdrawal of U.S. military forces.

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[22] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 25 Mar 67. Interv with Knowlton, 26 Jan 70. Draft Charts (drawn up by Komer and Montague), Mar 67, sub: Organizational Schematics. Draft NSAM, c. 24 Mar 67, sub: Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development).

[23] This paragraph is based on a draft concept paper prepared by Komer and Montague, 23 Mar 67, sub: Organizational Concepts Governing Integration of Civil/Military Responsibility for Pacification (RD) Under COMUSMACV. A basic document on CORDS organization, the copy used by the author has Westmoreland's handwritten revisions and a notation by Komer: "Westy's copy, as revised by him 24 March '67."



PRESIDENT JOHNSON AT GUAM CONFERENCE, *March 20, 1967.*

Komer saw for himself a major role in allocation of resources, training, and other activities of those South Vietnamese military forces involved in pacification; but possibly in deference to a new deputy military commander, General Creighton W. Abrams, whose primary responsibility was to be upgrading the South Vietnamese Army, Westmoreland did not sanction it. In addition, Westmoreland directed that Komer's command line run through the U.S. field force (corps) commanders; yet he did give Komer permission to maintain a direct channel of technical supervision to the corps pacification advisers and their subordinates at province level.

In working on the draft National Security Action Memorandum, as originally prepared by Komer, General Westmoreland made only a few changes, primarily wording to assure his own primacy and responsibility for pacification support over that of Komer and removal of the ambiguous paragraph on supervision of all U.S. resources. Returning to Washington, Komer on 27 March forwarded the memorandum to President Johnson with the notation that Secretaries McNamara and Rusk, Deputy

parently gave it little consideration. Komer later recalled that he recommended strongly against his operating in both Saigon and Washington and made clear he preferred the CORDS solution.[27]

When Komer arrived in Saigon on 1 May along with General Abrams, President Johnson still had not signed the National Security Action Memorandum creating CORDS and did so only nine days later. By that memorandum, the president charged General Westmoreland with American civil and military support of pacification and named Komer as his deputy for pacification with the personal rank of ambassador. On any interagency disputes arising from the change, Ambassador Bunker was to have full jurisdiction. In Washington, Ambassador Leonhart was to take over Komer's former position as Special Assistant to the President. "I count on all concerned—in Washington and in Vietnam," the president admonished, "to pull together in the national interest to make this arrangement work." [28]

The signing of the National Security Action Memorandum marked a distinct turning point in the U.S. pacification advisory effort. The force behind the new organization had come from Washington, particularly from Komer's office in the White House, but the focus after the signing of the memorandum was in Saigon. As Komer later put it: "The problem was one of field execution, not Washington organization . . . the real problems were not in Washington any longer but in Vietnam . . . we could not manage the "other 'war' from 11,000 miles away." [29] Washington agencies and offices were from that point onlookers, monitoring but not initiating programs in pacification.

Few organizational changes during the war in Vietnam had such impact as placing pacification under the military and creating CORDS. There were three compelling reasons behind the president's decision to make the change.[30] First, so intimately involved in pacification was every U.S. agency in Saigon, and so interwoven were civil and military tasks, that normal governmental coordination was inadequate. Second, the problem was simply too large and complex for the civilian agencies to handle alone. Third, pacification was failing for lack of adequate military security, and the military would take security more seriously if directly responsible for pacification. Aside from additional military

[27] Memo, Komer for Pres, 20 Apr 67. Interv with Komer, 6 Apr 75.

[28] NSAM 362, sub: Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development), 9 May 67.

[29] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

[30] Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1972), p. 459, lists the reasons.

Secretary of Defense Vance, General Wheeler, and Ambassador Bunker endorsed it.[24]

Komer and Secretary Rusk insisted that Ambassador Leonhart, who was to take over Komer's responsibilities in the White House, should receive the same full mandate previously held by Komer. The president only grudgingly approved. At the same time Komer made clear to the president that he expected to be equal in status to General Abrams except when General Westmoreland was absent, in which case Abrams as the military deputy would be filling Westmoreland's position. He also wanted "free access to Bunker (who insists on it)." At McNamara's urging Komer refused any role in such additional civilian functions as reducing inflation and port congestion lest they take time from the primary task.[25]

Because the press was speculating on the new direction of pacification, Komer urged the president to make a public announcement of the new organization soon, but for a variety of reasons the president delayed until May. For personal reasons, Ambassador Bunker was unable to proceed immediately to Saigon, and President Johnson wanted him to make the announcement when he had assumed his new assignment. In addition, official Washington was at the time involved in a new decision on force levels for South Vietnam. Besides, the president himself apparently was still uncertain as to Komer's and Leonhart's roles and for a while leaned toward Komer dividing his time between Saigon and Washington.[26]

On 20 April Komer again urged a presidential decision in order that he could be in Saigon by 1 May. Yet President Johnson continued to delay. He was still considering three organizational schemes: the CORDS solution as recommended at Guam and worked out with Westmoreland, Komer as director of an enlarged Office of Civil Operations, and Komer handling pacification in both Saigon and Washington. Although keeping the Office of Civil Operations would have been the most acceptable solution to the civilian agencies, President Johnson ap-

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[24] Memo, Komer for Pres, 27 Mar 67, sub: Shift of Pacification Responsibility, with attached draft NSAM, sub: Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development). Five versions of NSAM 362, from drafts prepared in March to the final one, can be found in the CMH Pacification Research Collection. Textual changes and marginalia usually make it possible to determine who made changes and when.

[25] Memo, Walt Rostow for Rusk and McNamara, 27 Mar 67, sub: U.S. role in Vietnam Pacification. Memo, Komer for Pres, 27 Mar 67, op. cit. Comparisons of the drafts of the memorandum indicate that McNamara made only one substantial change: He removed a phrase that required Komer to report to Ambassador Bunker, although through Westmoreland. In practice Komer retained direct access to Ambassador Bunker.

[26] *USVNR*, IV.C.8, p. 128. Interv with Komer, 14 Dec 71.

resources, Komer hoped that military operations might eventually be given a political bent. That could hardly happen overnight, but in time the military did begin to integrate its military operations with the political struggle. In the end, no other American organization in South Vietnam would be as altered by the new organization as was the military.

CHART 1—U.S. MISSION CIVILIAN ORGANIZATION: FEB-NOV 66

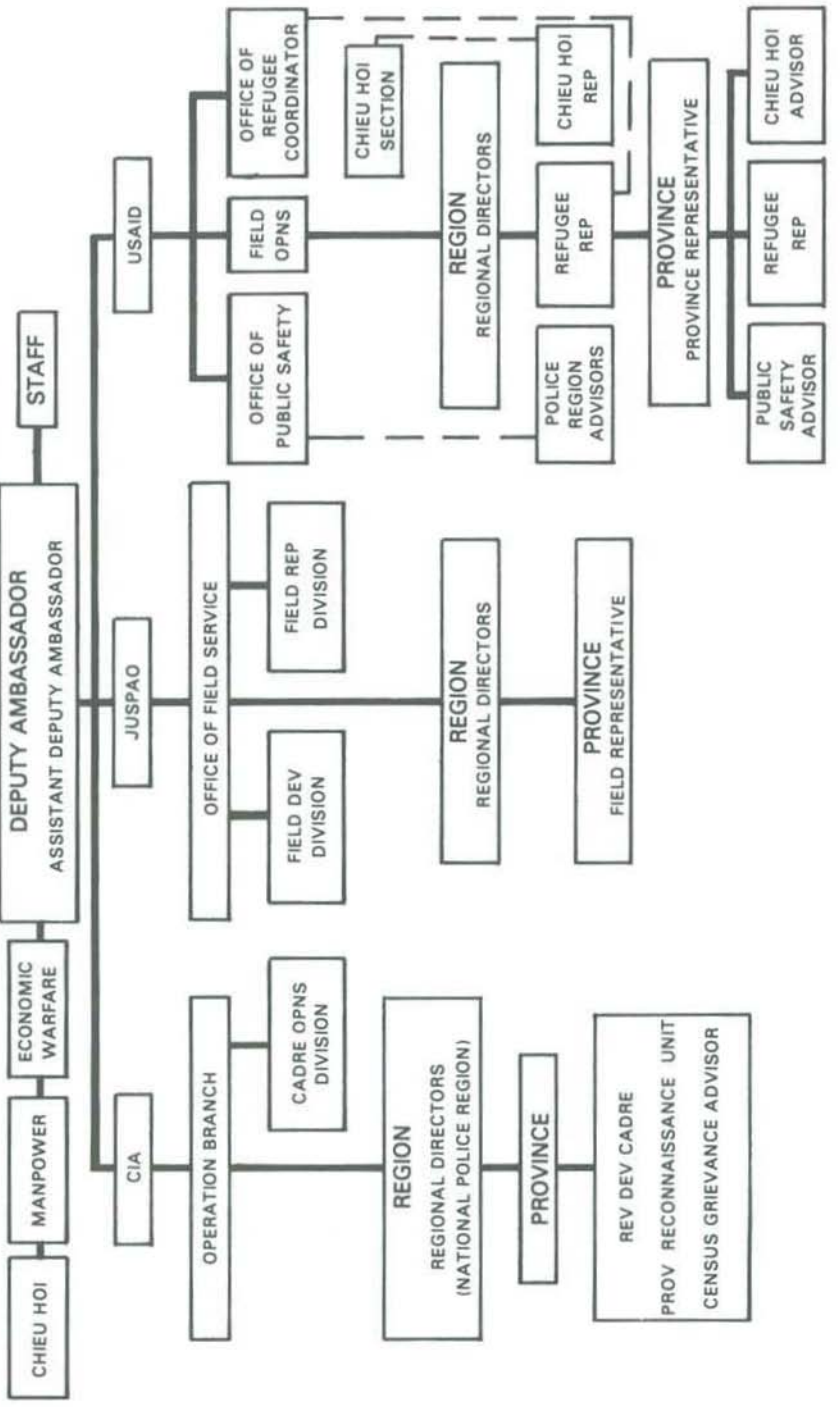


CHART 2—STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS (OCO) WITHIN THE U.S. MISSION: DEC 66-APR 67

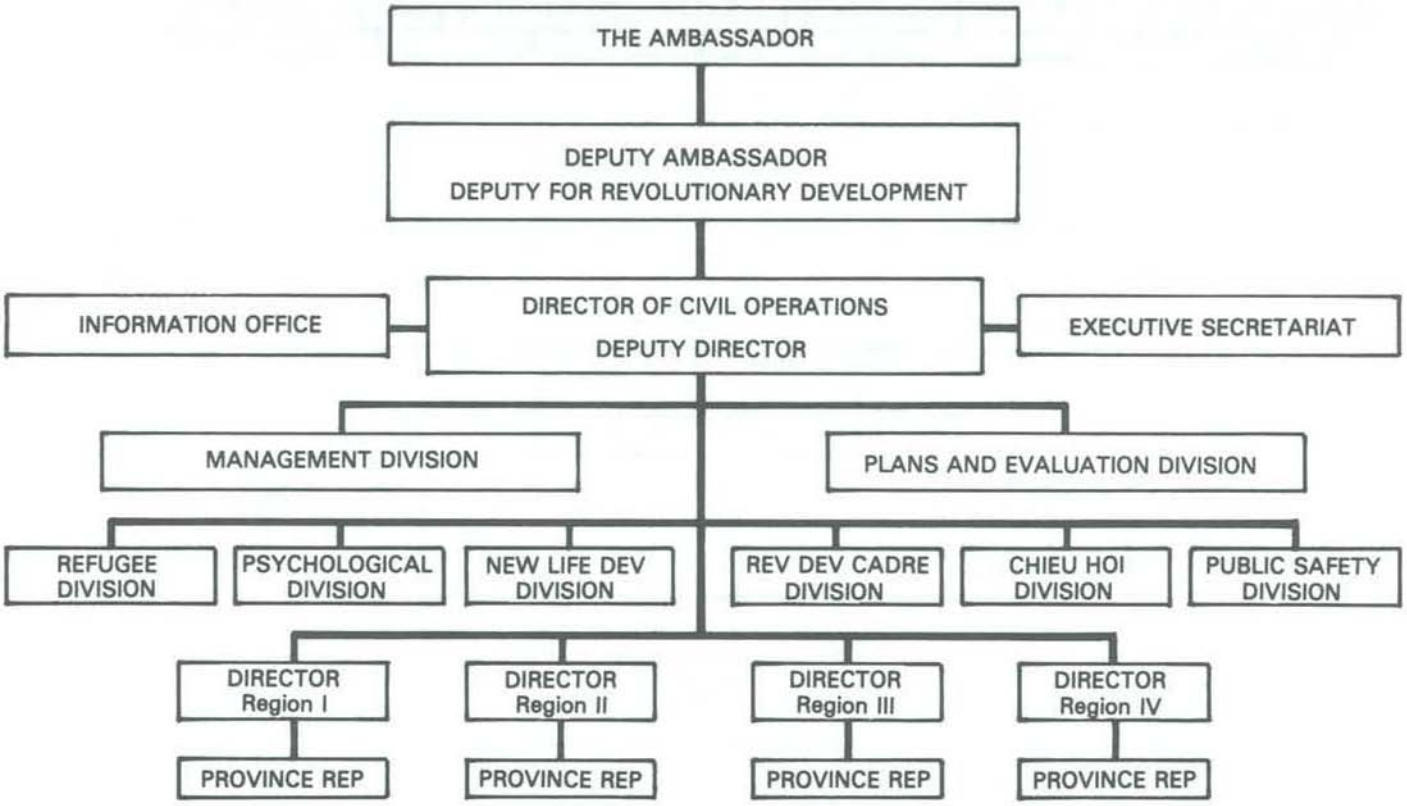
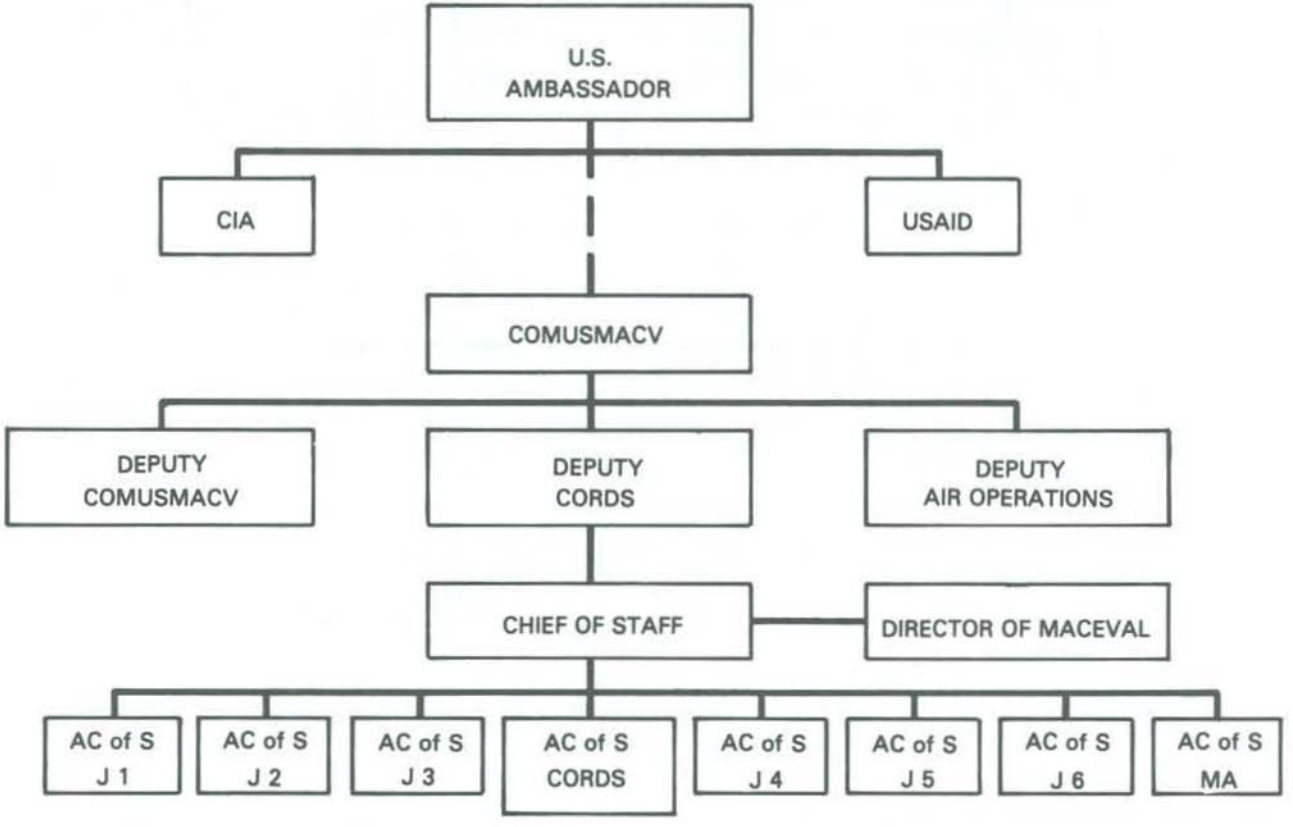
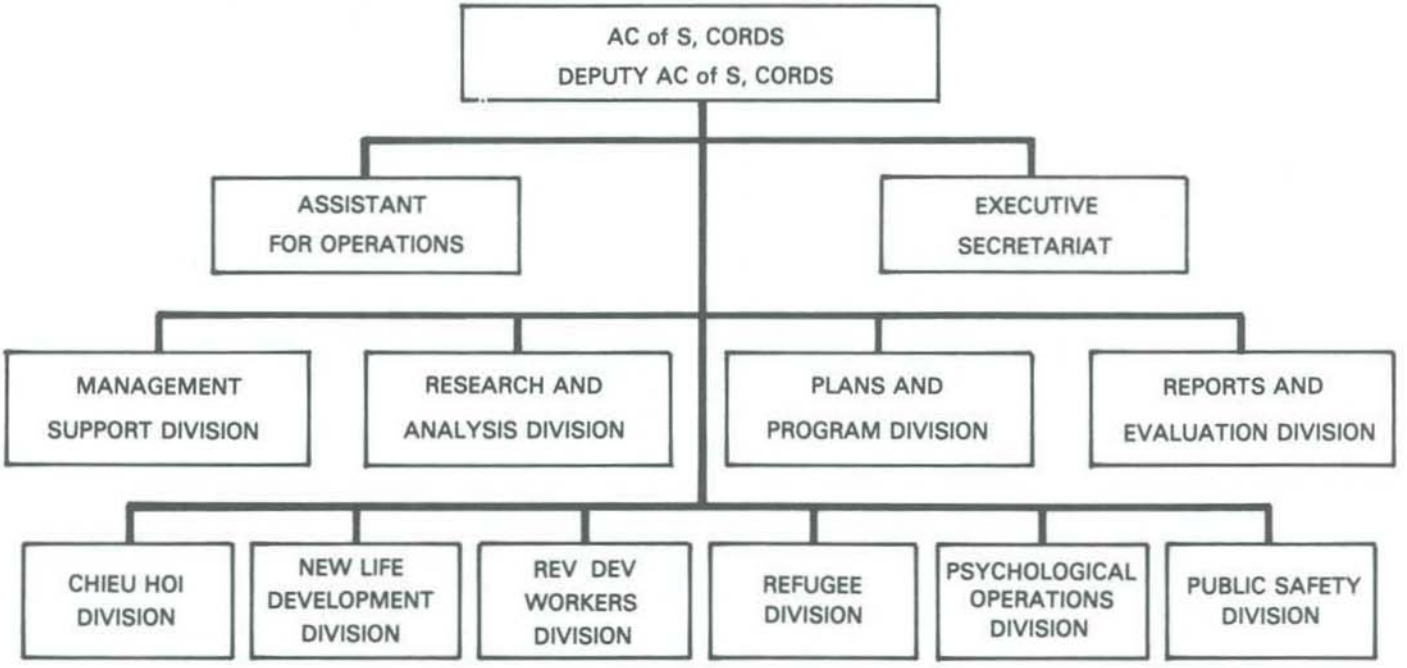


CHART 3— STRUCTURE OF U.S. MISSION, SHOWING POSITION OF CORDS: MAY 67



368-458 O - 82 - 6 : QL 3

CHART 4—ORGANIZATION OF ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF FOR CORDS



CHAPTER 5

Setting Up CORDS

Having made the decision to create CORDS, President Johnson, in contrast to his follow-up participation in other decisions connected with the war in Vietnam, rarely reappeared as an actor in the pacification drama. He had no need to back up Komer continually, no requirement to switch officials, no necessity to remind members of his administration of his interest. That is not to say that the transition to CORDS was totally smooth. In some cases both civilians and military resisted; yet there was compromise also, and problems that did develop were all handled below the presidential level. So successful was the change that President Johnson soon deemphasized Komer's old White House position.

Success in setting up CORDS was attributable as much to a fortuitous combination of personalities as to any other factor. Ambassador Bunker set the tone when in his first Mission Council meeting he said: "I dislike the term 'The Other War.' To me this is all one war. Everything we do is an aspect of the total effort to achieve our objectives here." [1] Even though American operations never did become one war and even though the architects of the new organization had deliberately left out activities not directly related to pacification, Ambassador Bunker brought more unity to American activities in South Vietnam than had any of his predecessors. Pacification advice and support was by far the most apparent manifestation of that unity.

The new head of pacification, Komer, took a wider and more dynamic view of his prerogatives than his title would indicate, and from the start he wanted to make sure that all concerned recognized that overall authority in South Vietnam rested with the ambassador, including authority for pacification support even though the pacification programs had been centralized under the military. He urged Bunker to put his imprint on the emission swiftly by demanding "action programs" for three critical matters: transition to an elected South Vietnamese government, revamping the South Vietnamese armed forces, and improving pacifica-

[1] Mission Council Action Memo No. 191, 8 May 67, sub: Opening Remarks by Ambassador Bunker at Mission Council Meeting, 1 May 67.

tion. After consulting with Westmoreland, he also recommended that the ambassador create from the large and relatively unwieldly Mission Council a smaller Executive Committee designed to handle the most sensitive issues. As worked out by Bunker, the committee included the ambassador, Deputy Ambassador Locke, General Westmoreland, and Komer, and usually conducted business over lunch following meetings of the Mission Council.[2]

Both Komer and his staff, particularly John Vann and Colonel Montague, were concerned lest the civilians in pacification be submerged by the military command and lose their power to press American support of pacification against competing priorities and interests. Vann and Montague, for example, urged Komer to strengthen his position at the start by concentrating and insisting on such key issues as actual command of the U.S. advisers engaged in pacification, authority to organize U.S. pacification staffs from Saigon to the provinces, and a channel of direct communication to Ambassador Bunker. As Montague put the case for consolidating Komer's authority: "Your leverage goes down day by day after you are no longer Special Assistant to the President." [3]

Thus it was that Komer landed in Saigon on the run. He set out immediately to bring additional programs under his control, such as support for the South Vietnamese militia and the drive against the Viet Cong infrastructure or shadow government. He himself wrote the pacification section in Ambassador Bunker's weekly message to President Johnson; he participated in the MACV commanders' conferences; he commented to Bunker and Westmoreland on any number of issues that were hardly within his bureaucratic purview, such as proposed military operations and South Vietnamese political developments; he made private suggestions to Bunker for programs he wanted MACV and other agencies to adopt. Above all, he was determined not to be lost in a big military machine; he would act like a four-star general and insist on being treated like one, even to the extent of demanding a special license plate for his official car. As his hand-picked military deputy, Maj. Gen. George I. Forsythe, later put it: "The whole arrangement was like a grain of sand in an oyster. Like the oyster, the bureaucracy set out to encase the irritant; but Komer was not about to become a pearl." [4]

Komer was also concerned lest the shift to the military jolt civilian morale and result in widespread resignations. Yet as one of his assistants

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[2] Memo, Komer for Bunker, 5 May 67, sub: Completing the Transition. Interv with Komer, 30 Mar 72. Also Interv with Westmoreland, 18 Apr 75.

[3] Memo, Montague for Komer, 6 May 67, sub: Tactics.

[4] Interv, Charles B. MacDonald with Gen Forsythe, 16 Jun 73.

noted, only if the civilians refused to exercise the authority they were being given or to accept the control that would be necessary would the military dominate them. Bunker and Westmoreland were also sensitive on that issue and anxious to avoid criticism of the reorganization as a militarization of the American effort. They publicly stressed Komer's role as a manager and the fact that the new staff section would have a civilian head, Lathram, with the title, Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, and that the Office of Civil Operations was absorbing MACV's Revolutionary Development Support Directorate, not vice versa. Westmoreland had personally proposed the acronym CORDS in order to give the greatest prominence to the word civil.[5]

Soon after arriving in Saigon, Komer gave Ambassador Bunker draft cables that he wanted Bunker to send to Washington explaining the concept of the reorganization, providing a schedule of steps for carrying it out, and suggesting a method of publicly announcing it. Making only minor changes, Bunker forwarded them to Washington, where the State Department quickly approved them.[6]

Komer also proposed forming a Steering Committee to take a close look at duplication and overlap among MACV and civilian agencies. Although Bunker and Westmoreland responded enthusiastically, Komer soon lost interest when it became clear that savings were going to be small and not worth the effort to dig them out. He let the idea drop but again pressed the ambassador to ask for an action program on pacification. Komer said he intended working one out anyway but suggested the ambassador show personal interest by formally asking for it.[7]

On 11 May Ambassador Bunker formally announced to the press the creation of CORDS, in the process stressing the advantages of single management of American support for pacification and his own interest in the program. He intended, he said, "to keep fully informed personally about all developments in this field" and to hold frequent meetings with Westmoreland and Komer to formulate pacification policy.[8]

Two days later at a MACV commanders' conference at Cam Ranh Bay, Bunker and Westmoreland dwelt extensively on the new organization, each stressing that pacification was a single program constituting

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[5] Memo, T. McAdams Deford for Komer, 9 May 67, sub: Suggestions for Regional Director's Meeting. Interv with Knowlton, 26 Jan 70.

[6] Msgs, Saigon 25028 to State, and Saigon 25029 to State, both 8 May 67; and Msg, State 190928 to Saigon, 9 May 67.

[7] Memo, Komer for Bunker, 8 May 67; interv with Komer, 12 May 72.

[8] Statement by Amb Bunker at Press Conference, Saigon, 11 May 67. Komer drafted the statement; Westmoreland approved it.



GENERAL FORSYTHE

part of a larger combined civil-military effort with one manager: the ambassador. Highlighting the importance of civilians in the new structure, Westmoreland stated that "a major goal will be to avoid personal conflicts or friction." Komer in turn talked of the use of mass and of no single solution but many programs unified in a "comprehensive package." For the first time a commanders' conference was devoted almost entirely to pacification.[9]

To work out the mechanics of reorganizing pacification support activities, Komer formed a Steering Group on Organization for Revolutionary Development Support, which he chaired. Other members were General Paul Smith, who had been Lathram's military deputy in the Office of Civil Operations; Frank van Damm, an AID official; and Brig. Gen. Daniel Raymond, the latter named by Westmoreland to represent the MACV Staff.[10]

Against the recommendation of a previous MACV planning study, Komer insisted that the steering group approach the integration as a three-step process, going slow in areas that would raise more complicated

[9] Memo for Record, Brig Gen John R. Chaisson, 21 May 67, sub: MACV Commanders' Conference, 13 May 67.

[10] Directive, MACV Chief of Staff, undated but probably 12 May 67, sub: Terms of Reference for Organization Steering Group.

interagency problems, such as psychological warfare and intelligence, or those where absorption into MACV might be expected to lower civilian morale or be inconsistent with points in the ambassador's public announcement of the formation of CORDS. The first step, to be accomplished in thirty days, was to create a unified organization that consolidated civilian and military pacification activities under a single chain of command down to the district level. The second and third steps involved the functional integration of such civil and military activities as transportation, communications, logistics, intelligence, medical support, public safety, and psychological operations. No completion dates for those two steps were set, and, as it turned out, integration of many of the functions was never achieved.[11]

Against the advice of the military members of the steering group, Komer insisted that the CORDS staff be an operating agency with command authority.[12] He also insisted that, as Westmoreland's deputy for pacification, he be allowed to by-pass the MACV chief of staff and deal directly with the CORDS staff on any pacification matter not involving the interests of other MACV staff sections. Although that authority was never specifically spelled out, Komer's final directive afforded him such wide authority that he could interpret his command authority in pacification matters as he saw fit. In practice, he dealt directly with all subordinate echelons involved in pacification, maintaining a formal facade of working through the chief of staff but in effect working directly with the assistant chief of staff for CORDS, Lathram. He and his assistants often dealt directly with individuals and staff sections serving Lathram.

How to reorganize pacification at corps level raised several questions: Should the CORDS corps staff be an operating agency? Should the corps deputy for CORDS directly control the province pacification advisory teams? Would the American advisory teams with divisions of the South Vietnamese Army be in the pacification chain of command? What would be the role of the corps deputy senior adviser (military)? Who would control the advisers to units of the South Vietnamese Army assigned to pacification support mission? The last question was of particular importance in that nearly half the battalions of the South Vietnamese Army were to operate in support of pacification.

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[11] Memo, Komer for MACV Chief of Staff, 12 May 67, sub: Terms of Reference for Steering Group on Organization for RD Support.

[12] Memo, Organization Sub-Committee to Chairman of the Organization Steering Group, 16 May 67, sub: Integration of MACV RDSD and the Office of Civil Operations. See also Col Montague's marginal notes on the subcommittee's operating assumptions memo, 16 May 67, and Memo, Montague for Komer, 17 May 67, sub: Organizational Issues.



GENERAL ABRAMS

In resolving those issues and others, Komer usually imposed his views on the steering group. Yet he failed to get everything he wanted. At General Westmoreland's insistence, for example, he was made Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (or DEPCORDS) and thus a deputy for one function only. Unlike Westmoreland's military deputy, General Abrams, he could operate across the broad range of MACV staff sections only for pacification. By that arrangement Westmoreland made certain that should both he and General Abrams be absent, U.S. forces would not be commanded by a civilian.[13]

On 23 May Komer forwarded to General Westmoreland his proposed organizational arrangements. The plan, he noted, "is by no means perfect, but represents an optimum balancing of pros and cons" and was "the best interim scheme." To deal with some problems of regional and corps organization not fully settled, Komer recommended that his proposed directive be issued subject to objections by the corps senior advisers and MACV staff sections, thus throwing onto the potential opposition the burden of changing an established directive. Determined to give CORDS every chance to succeed, Westmoreland called Komer three days later, made only minor changes in the implementing directive that Komer proposed,

[13] Intervs with Komer, 6 Nov 69 and 5 Jun 72.

subsequently discussed it with Ambassador Bunker, and approved publication, which was accomplished on 28 May.[14]

Under the directive, Ambassador Komer was charged "with supervising the formulation and execution of all plans, policies and programs, military and civilian, which support the [South Vietnamese government's] Revolutionary Development program and related programs." Because the directive lacked limitations and specifics, Komer's role would depend in large measure on personalities. It did provide CORDS with responsibilities greater than merely the sum of those tasks previously handled by the Office of Civil Operations and MACV's Revolutionary Development Support Directorate. Komer, for example, obtained responsibility for advising the South Vietnamese government on two key aspects of pacification: improving security for the population and destroying the enemy's infrastructure.

To have civilians fully operating in a military chain of command was extremely rare in the history of the United States; it had certainly never before occurred on such a scale. Komer was the first ambassador in the country's history to serve directly under a military command and also have command responsibility for military personnel and resources. Since military and civilians were intermixed in the organization, a military man might write the performance report of a civilian or vice versa.

Komer maintained a small personal staff that served as an informal brain trust and source of information for him. The staff also served as a short-cut channel of communication for more junior members of the main CORDS staff serving under the assistant chief of staff for CORDS; and Komer's military deputy, General Forsythe, was useful in mollifying military officers ruffled by the unconventional actions of Komer and his assistants.

The main staff, called MACCORDS, operated under the MACV chief of staff as a regular MACV staff section alongside J–2 (intelligence), J–3 (operations), and others. Under Lathram as the assistant chief of staff for CORDS, the staff had responsibility for all aspects of pacification planning, support, and advice to American and South Vietnamese officials, plus MACV staff responsibility for economic warfare

[14] Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, 23 May 67, sub: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities Within MACV, with attached staff study: Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, n.d., sub: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities Within MACV, with five encls. Hqs, MACV, Directive 10–12, 28 May 67, sub: Organizations and Functions for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, and Hqs, MACV, Change 4 to Organizations and Functions Manual, 28 May 67; Change 4 details the functions of the Deputy for CORDS, the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, and the divisions under the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS.

and civic action programs of American forces. Of even greater importance, Lathram supervised "the execution of plans and programs for U.S. civil/military support" of pacification.[15] MACCORDS thus was not just another staff section but an operating agency.

The staff was at first markedly similar to that in the Office of Civil Operations; indeed, the new organization was designed specifically to make the transition as effortless as possible with most of the people doing the same jobs they had done before but under a different supervisory structure. The six field program divisions, such as CHIEU HOI and refugees, were transferred intact from the Office of Civil Operations (and thus from the CIA and the Agency for International Development) with some military officers added. Management support remained largely civilian, while the most extensive intermingling of military and civilians occurred in the command sections and in one division handling research and analysis and another developing plans, programs, and policy.

The breadth of CORDS programs was apparent from a listing of the programs and the agencies formerly charged with them: New Life Development (AID), CHIEU HOI (AID), Revolutionary Development Cadre (CIA), Montagnard Cadre (CIA), Census Grievance (CIA), Regional and Popular Forces (MACV), Refugees (AID), Field Psychological Operations (Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office), Public Safety (AID), U.S. Forces Civic Action and Civil Affairs (MACV), Revolutionary Development Reports and Evaluations (all agencies), and Revolutionary Development Field Inspection (all agencies).[16] CORDS also assumed coordination responsibility for pacification-related programs of the Agency for International Development, such as rural electrification, hamlet schools, rural health, village-hamlet administrative training, agricultural affairs, and public works. With few exceptions, all American programs outside of Saigon, excluding American and South Vietnamese regular military forces and clandestine CIA operations, came under the operational control of CORDS.

An important exception was land reform, which the Agency for International Development insisted on retaining. Although originally one of Komer's high-priority action programs, the Agency for International Development was so adamant about keeping it that Komer gave up trying to bring it under CORDS.[17]

For the most part the CORDS organization in each corps mirrored

[15] MACV Directive 10–12.
[16] Change 4 to Organizations and Functions Manual.
[17] Interv with Komer, 22 Apr 75.

that at MACV headquarters. The corps deputy for CORDS was a full-fledged deputy to the American corps senior adviser, a lieutenant general who in the I, II, and III Corps was also the American field force or III Marine Amphibious Force commander. The directive describing the deputy's responsibilities used the same words as it did for Komer's role in Saigon: "supervising the formulation and execution of all military and civilian plans, policies and programs." [18] Despite misgivings by General Westmoreland, Komer felt strongly that the corps deputy for CORDS should be in an operational as opposed to a staff position and should definitely not be subordinate to the American corps commander's chief of staff.

Largely on the advice of John Vann, the deputy for CORDS in the III Corps, Komer modeled the position of the corps deputy for CORDS on that of the corps deputy senior adviser, who was in charge of the entire advisory program to the South Vietnamese armed forces in the corps area and who functioned as a "component commander" reporting directly to the American corps commander. That autonomy was a key to the ability of CORDS to function and to the ability of the civilians to preserve their power and exploit their access to military resources and personnel.

The American war effort at the corps level and below thus was divided into three distinct components: the American military forces, the advisory effort to the South Vietnamese military forces under the deputy senior adviser, and the pacification support program under the deputy for CORDS. The deputy for CORDS was served by an assistant deputy for CORDS, except in the III Corps where an assistant chief of staff for CORDS headed a civil-military staff much like the CORDS staff under Lathram in Saigon.

Since the South Vietnamese Army was so heavily involved in pacification support, the corps deputy for CORDS supervised the corps deputy senior adviser in regard to all aspects of South Vietnamese military support of pacification. At a lower level the American province senior adviser had operational control of all American advisers with South Vietnamese units subordinate to the South Vietnamese province chief.

Province advisory teams, unified under the province senior adviser, were responsible directly to the corps deputy for CORDS. Thus Westmoreland and Komer settled a point that had long been in contention: Should the province advisory teams be in the chain of command of

[18] MACV Directive 10–12.

American military advisers with the South Vietnamese Army? Removing the province advisory teams from the chain of command ran counter to a steadily growing trend, which MACV supported, to have South Vietnamese division commanders control all province-level activities.[19] If the South Vietnamese division commander controlled all province-level activities, American advisers to the divisions would then control advisers to South Vietnamese provinces; with that procedure eliminated, Komer hoped the South Vietnamese would follow the American lead and end division control over the provinces.

Since a division headquarters could hardly give either pacification or provincial affairs the attention they deserved, both the PROVN study and the "Roles and Missions" study of 1966 (see Chapter 2) had recommended removing South Vietnamese divisions and their American advisers from the pacification chain of command. The division was in many aspects a superfluous link; few South Vietnamese civilian ministries, including the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, or American civilian agencies had representatives at that level. Proponents of a stronger South Vietnamese provincial government also supported freeing the province chief from the division commander; and as a matter of organizational principle, Komer did not want his key province advisers under the control of American military superiors whose advisory role was oriented toward large-unit combat.

In discussions on the point in May, General Abrams, the MACV staff, all American field force (corps) commanders, and Lathram's deputy, General Knowlton, recommended against removing division advisers from the pacification advisory structure. Knowlton, for example, felt that with assignment of battalions of the South Vietnamese Army to pacification, the division commanders would take a more active interest in pacification and that the American example of removing division advisers from the pacification chain of command would not necessarily prompt the South Vietnamese to do the same with division commanders.[20]

To the surprise of a number of skeptical civilians, General Westmoreland decided the issue in favor of Komer. From that time division advisory teams had no authority over the province teams and were involved only in routine administrative and logistical support for military members of the province teams. Despite personal doubts, Westmoreland sup-

[19] Memo, Holbrooke to Leonhart, 6 Jun 67, sub: Reorganization of the United States Mission: An Appraisal So Far.
[20] Interv with Knowlton, 26 Jan 70.

ported an attempt by Komer later in 1967 to persuade the South Vietnamese to make the same charge and end the division commander's control over the province chief, which the South Vietnamese the following year finally agreed to do.

The pacification support structures at province and district levels were more readily determined. Both had a single team chief. The corps deputy for CORDS, with the concurrence in each case of Komer and Westmoreland, chose the province senior advisers, roughly half of whom were civilian and half military. A civilian chief always had a military deputy and vice versa. With the approval of the corps deputy for CORDS, the province senior adviser chose the district senior advisers, most of whom were drawn at first from the ranks of the MACV sub-sector advisers. Since security in the districts was often precarious, Westmoreland and Komer considered it better to have a military officer rather than a civilian at the district level. But in some more secure districts civilians headed the advisory teams.

Because of special conditions in the IV Corps zone, Westmoreland and Komer put off any change in the advisory organization there. Although that region had few American military forces and only a corps senior adviser with no major command functions, it had the largest civilian advisory structure to be found anywhere. They also decided for the moment to make no change in administrative and logistic support for CORDS, each agency simply making the same contributions in funds and people as under the existing support arrangements.

In early June, Ambassador Komer traveled to each of the four corps headquarters to explain the new organization to American commanders and their staffs. Although he found little resistance to the provisions of the new CORDS directive, he considered it necessary to stress heavily that the corps deputy for CORDS supervised all American support for pacification, including activities affecting pacification run by the deputy senior adviser. At each corps Komer left a list of recommended province senior advisers.[21]

In mid-June the two American field force commanders and the commander of the III Marine Amphibious Force submitted detailed plans for pacification organization in their respective areas. Except for two modifications made by the I Field Force commander, Lt. Gen. Stanley R. Larsen, the plans for pacification at corps levels adhered remarkably to the spirit, and in the case of the III Marine Amphibious Commander

[21] Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, 5 Jun 67, sub: DEPCORDS Trip to I FFORCEV.

for the I Corps zone, the letter of the CORDS directive. General Larsen wanted a dual chain of command for the province senior adviser, running for military matters through the division advisory teams and the corps deputy senior adviser, and a rating system for province advisers that would directly involve the corps deputy senior adviser.[22]

In late June, Komer asked Westmoreland to approve four changes in the directive: (1) allow the chief of staff at corps level to coordinate the efforts of the military and pacification staffs; (2) set up the basic organization for all the corps zones; (3) replace a staff section that had handled civil affairs and civic action in the headquarters of the U.S. Army's component command, the United States Army, Vietnam, with an assistant chief of staff for CORDS; and (4) designate the former deputy regional director of the Office of Civil Operations as assistant deputy for CORDS at corps level rather than as assistant chief of staff for CORDS, in that way to emphasize the operational as well as the staff responsibilities of the position. Komer also asked permission to disapprove some of the proposals of the corps senior advisers, including the two from General Larsen, as "inconsistent" with the CORDS directive. General Westmoreland approved all of Komer's requests.[23]

Thus was the corps organization for pacification standardized. It was another case of General Westmoreland backing his new deputy for pacification and establishing the principle that the CORDS directive was not to be diluted. He thus sent a signal, albeit one that would have to be reinforced later, to all subordinate echelons.

While supporting Komer, General Westmoreland made clear from time to time that full command authority remained his. After visiting the corps commands in early June, for example, Komer told Westmoreland

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[22] Memo, Lt Gen Stanley R. Larsen for Komer, 13 Jun 67, sub: CORDS Organization for I FFORCEV, with atchd Memo, Larsen for Westmoreland, 12 Jun 67, sub: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities Within II Corps Tactical Zone, with 2 incl; Ltr, CG, III Marine Amphibious Force to Westmoreland, 17 Jun 67, sub: Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support Organization and Functions, with 2 incl; and Ltr, Maj Gen Fred C. Weyand to Westmoreland, 15 Jun 67, sub: Reorganization for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) Within III Corps Tactical Zone, with 9 incl.

[23] Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, 25 Jun 67, sub: Organization for CORDS in CTZs; none of three tabs to the memorandum on recommended corps organization, changes to the CORDS directive, and changes to the corps proposals has been found, but the substance of them can be gleaned from the memorandum and from messages sent the next day by Komer to the four corps senior advisers. Msgs, COMUSMACV 21013 to CG, III MAF, sub: CORDS Organization for I CTZ; COMUSMACV 21015 to CG, I FFORCEV, sub: CORDS Organization for I FFORCEV; COMUSMACV 21014 to CG, II FFORCEV, sub: CORDS Organization for III CTZ; and COMUSMACV 21016 to Senior Adviser, IV CTZ, sub: CORDS Organization for IV Corps; all dtd 26 Jun 67.

that "my next major step will be to review and approve the organization in each of the corps," to which Westmoreland replied: "I will approve [corps] organizational arrangements." [24]

Time would be required for Komer and Westmoreland to develop close working relationships, particularly in view of the firm hand that Komer wanted to wield in connection with pacification. He wanted to refer only the most important matters to Westmoreland, meanwhile accustoming the corps senior advisers to deal directly with him on pacification rather than with Westmoreland.[25]

As of mid-August 1967 there were still problems. As Komer wrote to General Westmoreland: "My ability to contribute . . . is as yet hampered by the fact that my role and relationship vis-a-vis subordinate and coordinate echelons is not adequately defined. Nor am I sure as yet that I have your own full trust and confidence, which I have had from all my previous superiors but which I recognize takes time." The point at issue was that at times General Westmoreland, the MACV staff, or the corps senior advisers were bypassing Komer. He wanted Westmoreland to tell the senior advisers, the MACV staff, the staff of the United States Army, Vietnam, and the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff to come to him first on "all pacification business" and rely on him to refer major issues to Westmoreland. In retrospect Komer was to take a mellowed view of the issue: "Westmoreland was not used to having an active deputy. The corps commander or staff would come to him and discuss several issues, one of which would be pacification-oriented. Then Westmoreland would give guidance and I would not hear it until later." [26]

Through a combination of Komer's assertiveness and Westmoreland's growing trust, the difficulty in time disappeared. As the trust increased, Komer began to exercise responsibilities that actually belonged to the corps senior advisers and developed a semi-independent chain of command. Occupied with the large-unit war, senior advisers delegated most pacification business to their own deputies for CORDS; and most operational affairs dealing with pacification went through the informal channel of Komer (or Lathram) to corps deputy for CORDS to province team. Yet there were certain matters, such as money and manpower (particularly if they concerned personnel or materials not already under control of CORDS), that had to be treated through the corps senior

[24] Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, 7 Jun 67, sub: DEPCORDS Visit to IV Corps, and the MACV routing slip of 8 Jun 67 to Komer, attached to the memorandum.

[25] Note, Komer for Westmoreland, 24 Jun 67.

[26] Ltr, Komer to Westmoreland, 11 Aug 67. Interv with Komer, 30 Mar 72.

advisers; but, in general, as Komer recalled it: "Basically the corps commanders left us alone. In practice the pacification business was run autonomously." [27]

Meanwhile, the organization for pacification in the IV Corps zone, with its special conditions involving a large civilian advisory force and no major American forces, was treated separately. It was, for example, the only corps zone where Westmoreland and Komer gave serious consideration to naming a civilian as the corps senior adviser. Komer suggested the head of the Joint United States Public Affairs office, Barry Zorthian, which Westmoreland heartily endorsed; but to their surprise, Zorthian declined. Since it was difficult to find another civilian with the requisite experience and rank who was acceptable to the military, the idea was dropped.[28]

The organization for pacification in the IV Corps differed from that in the other corps in that corps command channels devolved in only two broad lines: the South Vietnamese Army and the pacification advisory structure. Given an extra month to revise the pacification organization, the senior adviser produced principles and structure that adhered to the general guidance provided by the CORDS directive.[29]

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[27] Interv with Komer, 30 Mar 72.

[28] Memo, Col Montague for Komer, 13 May 67, sub: Early Decisions/Actions; and Interv with Komer, 15 Jun 72. The III Corps deputy for CORDS, John Vann, was ruled out because of a reputation for criticism of the military advisory program. Much later in the war he did serve as the first and only civilian corps senior adviser, that in the II Corps zone. To point up the importance of the pacification role in the IV Corps, Komer in July 1967 suggested as senior adviser the titular commander of the United States Army, Vietnam, Lt Gen Bruce Palmer, but Westmoreland was reluctant to see him give up his current position. See Memo, Komer for Westmoreland, 9 Jul 67.

[29] Msg, COMUSMACV 21016 to Senior Adviser, IV Corps, 26 Jun 67, sub: CORDS Organization for IV Corps.

CHAPTER 6

Making CORDS Work

Carrying out President Johnson's decision to reorganize the American pacification support program involved much more than issuing directives and setting up a viable organization. If CORDS were to survive, it had to demonstrate its ability to get results from the South Vietnamese whom the organization advised and supported, for getting results from the South Vietnamese was the fundamental factor behind the president's decision. Although the president imposed no time limit on CORDS, the new organization was functioning in far less than the ninety days allotted to the Office of Civil Operations. Yet influencing the South Vietnamese people and government and making progress in the war were long-range matters in which tangible results could be expected only slowly over the next several years.

Despite lessening of pressure from Washington, Ambassador Komer was sensitive to any interference by Washington officials. Having changed from the pacification man in Washington to the pacification man in the field, he quickly adopted what he would later call the "Westmoreland view": "We are the field commanders; give us the resources; we'll do the job." [1] He was soon showing some of the same resentment toward Washington agencies and officials that Taylor, Lodge, and Westmoreland had shown before him.

Yet Komer still took pains to maintain his old contacts in Washington in order to make sure that those with power in the executive branch understood what he was doing. Not only did he personally brief Secretary McNamara during a July visit to Saigon on the new CORDS organization and plans for it, he also flew back to Washington with the secretary to make sure his viewpoint was understood. He also made sure when he reached Washington to see the president.

An important source of Komer's strength was an implicit recognition that he was the president's man. That he was close to the president was hardly to be lost on his associates in Saigon. This was a mixed blessing, for the permanent power of CORDS depended less on faraway presiden-

[1] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

tial ties than on its relationships in the field. Unless it was a matter of survival of the new organization or the policies it was designed to implement, too much presidential involvement on Komer's behalf would have been a hindrance, giving the impression that Komer was not part of the "team" on the ground in Vietnam. Although having no wish to dispense completely with the aura of the White House, Komer tried from the first to become an integral part of the U.S. mission and of Westmoreland's headquarters. Not only did that attitude help his working relationships with Bunker and Westmoreland, but it would help CORDS survive later changes in leadership, particularly a new president.

One of the early major problems that Komer faced was the relationship of CORDS with the Agency for International Development. Hardly was the new organization established before AID attempted to lessen CORDS' authority and retrieve some of its own programs. Much of the financing for the Office of Civil Operations had come from the Agency for International Development, but the agency's contributions to the new organization were dwarfed by the contributions of the Department of Defense. Yet the civilian agency was unhappy about contributing any funds to programs not under its control. Citing a confusion in the agency's role in South Vietnam, Administrator William Gaud proposed to Under Secretary of State Katzenbach that the CORDS program be more narrowly defined and AID removed from congressional accountability for activities that had been transferred to MACV. This proposal encouraged the return to his jurisdiction of some of the programs under CORDS, most notably that dealing with the South Vietnamese police.[2]

Seeing the proposal as a clear attempt to subvert the president's decision to centralize the pacification effort, Komer dispatched a sharp letter to Gaud.[3] Pacification, he wrote, could not be sliced to fit jurisdictional and budgetary alignments of Washington agencies; that had been a plague to past efforts in pacification. CORDS, he noted, had merely taken over AID programs that had earlier been taken over by the Office of Civil Operations and no more, so why the objection at this stage? To Komer removal of any programs would be the start of a return to the old separation of civil and military programs. With support from McNamara and Bunker, he successfully resisted Administrator Gaud's proposal.

That did not mean that AID officials considered their relations with

[2] Memo, Gaud for Katzenbach, 22 Jun 67, sub: Responsibility and Accountability for U.S. Support of Revolutionary Development/Pacification for Vietnam.

[3] Ltr, Komer to Gaud, 30 Jun 67.

CORDS settled. From time to time they continued to raise questions on funding and accountability,[4] and Komer experienced difficulty in persuading officials of the agency in Washington to correspond directly with CORDS on pacification business rather than to go through the agency's office in Saigon. As time passed, relationships nevertheless improved.

Although always wanting it understood who was in command, General Westmoreland was soon allowing his deputy for pacification remarkable freedom of action. A combination of Westmoreland's flexibility and Komer's ability to capitalize on it through the absence of an intervening layer of command permitted Komer to run an unusual, innovative program within what otherwise might have been the overly strict confines of a military staff. "The way [Westmoreland] handled the thing," Komer remarked later, "was one of the basic reasons why CORDS worked. I think Westmoreland deserves a great deal of credit for the decentralization [and] delegation of pacification management." Westmoreland supported him, Komer recalled, "on every issue that did not involve taking something away in the way of [military] forces." [5]

In regard to reporting channels, the new job meant a readjustment for Komer from the heady days of full access to a president. On the day of Komer's arrival in South Vietnam, General Westmoreland told him firmly that he would not compromise on his reporting to anyone else. To which Komer responded that he had no intention of trying to serve two masters. In his opening press conference, Ambassador Bunker stressed a single reporting channel on pacification as one of the benefits of the new organization, yet he had gone on to say that he intended frequent meetings not only with Westmoreland but with his deputy for pacification.[6]

Free access to Bunker had been one of the requirements of the job that Komer had early stressed to President Johnson, and despite the caveats from both Bunker and Westmoreland, that was what he got. Placing Komer on the Mission Council, and even more importantly on its Executive Committee, meant that the man operationally responsible for pacification would be able to present his views directly to the rest of the mission and in particular to the chief of mission, not filtered through a third person. As working relationships matured, Komer's personal access to Bunker became a commonplace. Aside from easing the

[4] See, for example, James P. Grant for Gaud, 15 Nov 67, sub: Background for Your Meeting with Ambassador Bunker on Thursday, 16 Nov at 9:30 a.m.

[5] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

[6] Gen Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 4 May 67. Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69. Statement by Amb Bunker at Press Conference, Saigon, 11 May 67.

transaction of daily business, it gave Komer and the pacification program two channels, Westmoreland and Bunker, through which to apply pressure on other American agencies in Saigon or Washington.

Communication arrangements with Washington were settled less quickly. Secretary McNamara made it clear from the first that Komer was to work through normal channels, and Komer himself knew that he would soon incur the wrath of both Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland if he went over their heads; but the old Washington ties were hard to sever. President Johnson apparently wanted him to communciate directly with the White House, for the president and his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Walt W. Rostow, often cabled Komer directly, to which he felt obligated to reply. General Westmoreland would later note that he "had to clamp down" on the practice of direct communication. In any event, communications from the White House had dropped off by the fall of 1967 and ceased entirely by early 1968.[7] Westmoreland and Bunker were far less sensitive about direct communications on strictly pacification matters to Ambassador Leonhart's White House pacification office and with civilian agencies in Washington associated with pacification.

Nor was there objection to direct communications with subordinate echelons in the field, even if intervening echelons were by-passed. Indeed, close contact between CORDS and district advisers through formal and informal communications and reporting was one of the strengths of the CORDS organization. It was a two-way flow; Komer and members of his staff often visited lower echelons, and on visits to Saigon key field officials dropped in on Komer or his assistants.

CORDS also established teams of Americans and South Vietnamese who made lengthy field trips to evaluate programs and developments. The teams were encouraged to look for problems and to report frankly on success or failure. That process annoyed some subordinate officials, but Komer defended the practice and as time passed increased the number of evaluators.

Komer and the CORDS staff also communicated directly on pacification matters with all levels of the South Vietnamese government, including the president, vice-president, and prime minister. That practice developed from the first but increased dramatically following the Tet offensive when CORDS played a major role in a nationwide recovery effort, to include setting up a special U.S. office in the president's palace to help coordinate this effort.

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[7] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, p. 215. Interv with Komer, 30 Mar 72.

The leaders of CORDS also acted aggressively to bring under their purview programs important to pacification that had been languishing under other agencies. One of the first to be transferred to CORDS was advice and support to the South Vietnamese militia, the Regional and Popular Forces. Although that responsibility had been transferred in the early 1960s from the Agency for International Development to MACV, those forces had always been neglected in favor of support for the regular army. Since South Vietnamese generals were unable to pull their troops from the big-unit war to support pacification, pacification clearly needed its own security forces. Rather than attempt a long, slow build-up of police and Revolutionary Development cadre to fill that role, Komer saw the territorial units as a ready, large, and under-utilized force for securing the rural regions.

By doubling the number of advisers responsible to CORDS, by making CORDS responsible for assisting and advising sizable military resources, and by providing the organization leverage with the South Vietnamese government, the transfer strengthened CORDS considerably. It also enabled CORDS to press for a corresponding reemphasis and reorganization by the South Vietnamese, who in late 1967 appointed a vice chief of staff in the Joint General Staff to be responsible for the military side of pacification and for the Regional and Popular Forces. That was a first step toward unifying the South Vietnamese pacification effort and afforded Komer a readily identifiable opposite in the South Vietnamese military chain of command.

A second program taken over by CORDS was the war against the enemy's clandestine politico-military command and administrative cadre or infrastructure. To deal with that new responsibility, CORDS created the Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation Program, later known as the *Phung Hoang,* or PHOENIX, program. The transfer focused attention on a hitherto neglected element of the insurgency. Although officials had long recognized that the infrastructure had to be excised if the Viet Cong were to be defeated, the attempts to do it had long been diffuse, uncoordinated, and unequal to the task.

In Komer's opinion, the CIA knew more about the problem than did MACV, whose basic intelligence interest was in enemy order of battle. He wanted the new advisory program against the infrastructure to be under CIA leadership yet, as an integral part of CORDS, subject to his close personal supervision. To do that meant creating a new organization within MACV with a CIA man as its head that would be in competition with MACV's own intelligence staff section (J–2). It would also be an

organization composed of advisers who were almost all military men. Not unexpectedly, the MACV J–2 wanted to head the new program.

The matter reached the point of decision in a conference in General Westmoreland's office. Speaking for the military staff, the MACV chief of staff insisted that the advisory program on rooting out the infrastructure should be run as a military operation by the military. After hearing him out, Westmoreland asked for and received Komer's rebuttal. Then, as Komer later recalled it, Westmoreland "turned to the chief of staff, in the presence of all the generals, and said: 'The Ambassador is right . . . I think we ought to do it his way.' And that was it. They all filed out, and from that time on my power position was solid . . . And I remember psychologically marking that as the time when Westy made it clear that when I had a good case, he was on my side." That decision, clearly in Komer's favor, was, he felt, what put CORDS "in business" with the rest of MACV.[8]

It was another example of General Westmoreland's flexibility. As it turned out, the anti-infrastructure advisory program became a microcosm of the larger CORDS organization with an intermingling of military and civilian advisers, the military more numerous but the civilians holding important directorial positions. A program previously marked by disunity had been welded together through close civil-military cooperation and, as with the militia advisory program, served eventually to promote a similar amalgamation on the part of the South Vietnamese.

At key points in the war CORDS also created and managed programs that increased its responsibilities. Following the 1968 Tet offensive, Bunker and Westmoreland called on CORDS to take the lead in a nationwide recovery effort. In the process CORDS developed an even closer working rapport with the South Vietnamese government. In late 1968, CORDS conceived, planned, and supported a major South Vietnamese pacification drive to take advantage of enemy weakness stemming from losses in the Tet offensive and two follow-up attacks.

As it took time for the CORDS experiment to achieve its full impact, so it took time for the example of the improvements achieved through centralization to convince the South Vietnamese to emulate the practice. When CORDS was created in 1967, the South Vietnamese military, the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and numerous civilian agencies such as those dealing with health, education, and police, were all involved in pacification but with little unity or focus to their programs. That lack of unity was complicated by institutional heritages and

[8] Interv with Komer, 6 Nov 69.

political problems that made the disharmony on the American side seem simple by comparison. Except in 1965 with creation of the Ministry of Rural Construction (later Revolutionary Development), which pulled together diverse pacification cadre programs but not the programs of all the ministries, American officials had been able to do little about it.

Since one explicit rationale behind the decision to create CORDS was to encourage the South Vietnamese government to unify its own pacification programs, Komer from the outset tried to foster it. The appointment of a vice chief of staff in the Joint General Staff to be responsible for the military side of pacification was one step; unifying the efforts against the enemy's infrastructure was another. Yet the real key to unity as Komer saw it was to engage the South Vietnamese government at its highest levels directly, to lift pacification from the purview of diverse ministries by creating a national pacification council run by the prime minister but headed by the president. During Komer's tenure, he pressed strongly for that kind of council, but only under his successor, Ambassador William Colby, did the South Vietnamese in 1969 adopt the idea.

Known as the Central Pacification and Development Council, the new organization had a full-time staff directed by a general officer. No figurehead organization, the council through its staff actually ran the South Vietnamese pacification program in all its aspects with an authority—as American officials had long hoped—that in time served to diminish the American role.

In addition to the unity that CORDS brought to the American pacification advisory effort and, eventually, to the South Vietnamese effort, CORDS also greatly improved cooperation between military and civilians. After CORDS was created, such terms as "non-military actions" and "the other war" fell out of the official vocabulary. Although the military contributed a preponderance of people, money, and resources, civilians held most of the key policymaking and directorial positions in pacification advisory support. That and Komer's aggressiveness went a long way toward allaying the fears the civilians may have entertained that they would be swallowed by a large and powerful military organization. After several months of civilians and military working together, the distinctions between the two began to break down. For the civilians CORDS was an invaluable managerial and operational experience of the type few of them had been exposed to before.

Rather than civilians being captured by the military, just as strong a case could be made that the reverse actually happened. After the crea-



AMBASSADOR COLBY
(*Photograph taken while he was director of the Central Intelligence Agency.*)

tion of CORDS, pacification had direct access to such resources as military transport and military engineers for construction and road-building and to the funds available through the Department of Defense. Although much of the Defense monetary contribution to CORDS went for support of the Regional and Popular Forces, other portions of the military share of the CORDS budget also increased.

From a contribution for fiscal year 1967 amounting to 81 percent of the CORDS budget, the Defense contribution had increased by fiscal year 1970 to 94 percent; while that of the Agency for International Development, previously the largest contributor to funding the Office of Civil Operations, declined from 19 percent in 1967 to 5 percent in 1970. In terms of dollars, the Agency for International Development's contribution declined from $70 million in fiscal year 1968 to $41 million in fiscal year 1970; the share contributed by the Department of Defense increased over the same period from $485 million to $729 million.[9]

Just how much CORDS affected military operations and policies is difficult to measure. Having within the MACV staff as the largest single

[9] CORDS Fact Sheet prepared for Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Feb 70. CORDS Briefing Paper, 4 May 70, sub: Trends in Pacification Funding—1968–1970.

element of that staff a powerful, institutionalized advocate of pacification blessed with outside ties clearly influenced military operations and policy in a way that pacification had never been able to do when it was the province of separate and often competing agencies and when the military had no direct overall responsibility.

That is not to say that pacification became the main criterion of military operations. There continued to be any number of operations that did not take pacification adequately into account, but as was apparent from planning guidance issued by MACV to senior commanders, emphasis on operations related to pacification markedly increased following the creation of CORDS. For example, in a directive issued in May 1967, just before its creation, MACV stressed offensive operations against large enemy units. In discussion of various aspects of the current situation, that directive treated pacification last, and of seven military objectives noted, pacification was listed last. Yet in a new directive in October 1967, MACV declared that the key to the overall concept of the war was "sustained territorial security for pacification." Under the current situation, pacification was treated second and became both the second and third military objectives, even ahead of "invade enemy base areas," which had long drawn the military's primary attention. Joint American-South Vietnamese annual combined campaign plans reflected the same change.[10]

All these achievements of CORDS were unquestionably far greater than any official in Washington, including President Johnson, could have expected when the new organization came into being in May 1967. That the president no longer had to concern himself with pacification was one indicator that CORDS worked organizationally; and it worked well enough and built up enough momentum to last until American withdrawal in early 1973 despite attempts to reduce its role, despite increasing lack of support for it from civilian agencies, and despite a complete change in the top officials.

The first change occurred in mid-1968 when General Westmoreland left South Vietnam to become the U.S. Army's chief of staff. General Abrams replaced him. The change in command had a particular effect on the freewheeling operational style of Komer and his organization, although not on pacification itself, for Abrams supported pacification

[10] Hqs, MACV, Planning Directive 5–67, 3 May 67, sub: Planning Guidance for Senior Commanders for the Period 1 May 67–31 Oct 67, Hqs, MACV, Planning Directive 9–67, 29 Oct 67, sub: Planning Guidance for Senior Commanders for the Period 1 Nov 67–30 Apr 68.

as fully as had his predecessor. Komer also sensed that that was no longer the same interest from Washington. When a new secretary of defense, Clark Clifford, visited Saigon in July 1968, Komer later recalled that he felt that Clifford had little interest in pacification.[11] Two months later Komer was ready to accept an offer from President Johnson to become U.S. ambassador to Turkey and left South Vietnam in October.

With President Johnson's departure from office soon thereafter, CORDS was truly on its own and had to live by its own devices, but it had been helped by a smooth transition from Komer to William Colby, whom Komer had personally picked to succeed him and had brought to CORDS six months earlier to replace Lathram as assistant chief of staff for CORDS.

By nature a different personality from Komer, Colby stuck more closely within the boundaries of programs directly related to pacification; and if General Abrams reduced the independence of CORDS, he made no effort to stifle it. In a sense, each man was right for his period: Komer for establishing the system and Colby for keeping it running effectively in a changed situation. As American military forces withdrew, pacification actually became a larger component of the total American effort. Along with turning the war over to the South Vietnamese in a program known as "Vietnamization," pacification provided an alternative to the presence of large numbers of American troops.

Although CORDS was a large organization, it was in tune with what the war and the American response had become by 1967. Rather than plead for tidbits of manpower, resources, and attention, it drew resources and emphasis from the U.S. military by aggressive innovation, force of personalities, and working from within as part of the military structure. Although not revolutionary, CORDS was flexible and innovative, as new organizations often are, and was less bound by the constraints of long established agencies. Most important, it had but one purpose: pacification. Yet without Komer and some of his key assistants CORDS still might have failed. Ambassador Bunker's influence was also important; he supported and backed CORDS strongly and never interfered in the conduct of pacification operations or CORDS' contact with even the highest levels of the South Vietnamese government. General Westmoreland, for his part, was vital to the successful establishment of CORDS. He accepted, at times tolerated and almost always supported what was by any definition an unusual, quasi-independent organization and gave it the necessary freedom to operate.

[11] Interv with Komer, 30 Mar 72.

Bibliographical Note

This study is based largely on unpublished, official U.S. government documents and records. Unless otherwise stated in the notes, all documents cited can be found in the Pacification Research Collection at the U.S. Army's Center of Military History.

In preparing this study, the author had access to files in the Agency for International Development, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of State, and the Department of the Army. The author was also able to visit Vietnam twice in 1970, while working for the Center of Military History, and to retrieve the files of Ambassadors Komer and Colby and many other pacification officials. The author also interviewed senior officials to amplify the written record or secure undocumented information. In addition, the author used records of interviews conducted by other members of the Center of Military History; for example, the interviews of General Westmoreland by Charles B. MacDonald.

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PIN: 050884-000