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THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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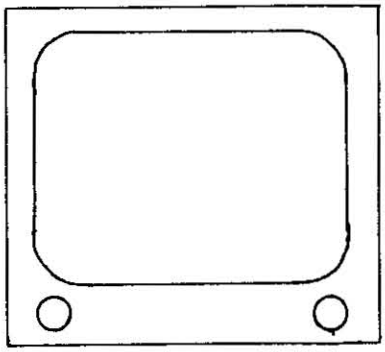
THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

This pamphlet concerns the United States Army in South Vietnam—the military purpose, the kind of war being fought, and the nature of the enemy.

The struggle cannot be described in terms of the US Army alone, but rather as the effort of an integrated team. This team includes other US Forces, the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, and the military and nonmilitary contributions of more than 30 other Free World nations.

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The soldier is a fundamental member of this integrated team. His tasks, as always, are many. He is a combat infantryman, a tanker, an artilleryman, a paratrooper, an air cavalryman. He is an engineer or a skilled communicator. He helps to train the Vietnamese Army and its militia force; supported by U.S. Naval Forces, he participates in Riverine operations in the Mekong Delta; or he fights in concert with Marines in combined task force operations. He is an expert in air defense, or in military medicine. He is an advisor, or a flier, giving mobility to our troops to a degree never known before. Whatever his task, he is supported by a logistical system that stretches 10,000 miles carrying the best that American ingenuity and resources can provide. Even as others depend upon him, so must the soldier depend upon others.



No conflict in history has been so closely watched by so many people as the one in Vietnam. News of the American soldier and his comrades in arms reaches around the world almost instantly and in minute detail. Because the war is being fought against a background of complex international relationships, the struggle is often difficult to understand.

What is the purpose of the military battle? How is that battle being fought? Who is the enemy and what is his purpose? Above all, what can the people of South Vietnam gain from this struggle?

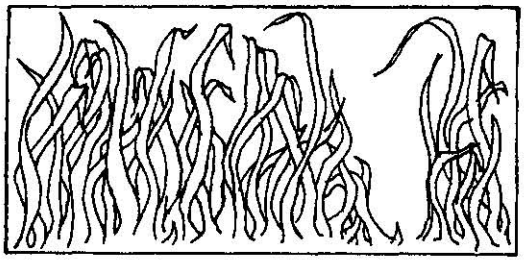
A CLIMATE OF ORDER

In the eyes of the Free World, South Vietnam has the right to exist in peace as a free and independent country. However, if that nation is to grow and prosper, its government must have authority over its land and people. There must be an environment of security in which law and order can prevail; for only when there is law and order can justice be administered by a government dedicated to the betterment of its citizens.

This is a principle that every American can understand. Our Declaration of Independence, in 1776, proclaimed the American belief that men enjoy certain inalienable rights, and that to secure these rights governments must be established. In other words, government serves its people by establishing the authority and security under which they may enjoy these rights.

When a nation is able to defend against armed attack, and is strong enough to defend its law and institutions, it has security.

The purpose of our military forces in South Vietnam is to help the South Vietnamese people achieve such security.



THE ENEMY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

To appreciate the kind of war we are fighting in Vietnam, it is first necessary to know something about the enemy—who he is, how he is organized, and what his purposes appear to be.

The term "Viet Cong" means "Vietnam Communist." To the American soldier in Vietnam that term has come to identify the enemy wherever he appears.

Strategy and Organization

Just as effective authority over land and people is vital to Free World efforts in South Vietnam, so it is to the Viet Cong. That enemy has set up within South Vietnam what has been called a "shadow government." He intends that this "government" shall eventually replace the legally elected government. He is trying to gain control of the country—hamlet by hamlet, village by village, and district by district, until the government of South Vietnam can no longer govern.

The Viet Cong "shadow government," including its military forces, parallels the legitimate government in many respects. It has political committees and organizations of various types that roughly form a "shadow" counterpart of the government at national, province, district, village, and hamlet levels.

Enemy military forces are generally organized as follows:

- Regular North Vietnamese Army units. These range up through divisions in size and strength.
- Main Force Viet Cong (VC) units. These also may be as large as divisional organizations. They include an increasingly larger number of North Vietnamese Army personnel.
- Regional and local force Viet Cong units of up to and including regimental size.
- Local guerrillas. These are "irregular" forces which operate in relatively small groups throughout the countryside.
- Viet Cong Self-Defense Forces. These range from part-time individual guerrillas to small teams in the hamlets and villages, and are generally the least militarily effective of the Viet Cong Forces.

The best of the enemy's units—the Regular North Vietnam Army and Main Force Viet Cong Units—are skilled professionals, some of whom have been fighting for many years. They are well-armed, well-trained, and firm believers in the "cause" for which they fight.

Enemy Operations

To understand the conflict in South Vietnam we must know something of the enemy himself—and of his operations. Over a period of years, by terrorizing and intimidating the people, the Viet Cong established an underground organization. The Viet Cong claimed to be struggling for the "national liberation" of South Vietnam. After this terrorism was fully established, the North Vietnamese Communists began to support the Viet Cong with regular military forces and supplies.

These supplies and replacements came from North Vietnam over narrow mountain paths and jungle trails, or in small boats along the coast, or through tortuous inland waterways—methods of transportation primitive by our standards.

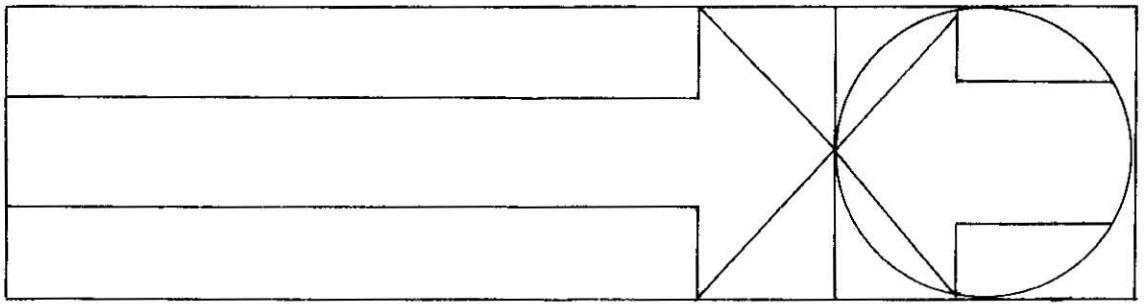
Over long periods of time the enemy built "secret" supply bases in remote areas he considered to be inaccessible to Free World forces. Many of these Viet Cong strongholds were constructed as extensive tunnel complexes, buried deep underground at multiple levels, and strongly defended.

Today the Viet Cong reinforces his supply system by using some of the local population, willingly or unwillingly, to replenish the material and human resources needed to carry on his battle.

The enemy usually assigns his main elements the following types of combat missions:

- Regular North Vietnam Army and Main Force Viet Cong units strike as mobile forces from their secret bases in the countryside. They attack targets which generally have high propaganda value for them. These Main Force units also serve as rapid reinforcements for local and regional force units.
- Local forces, operating in the provinces and districts, wage a campaign of terror. Steadily and ruthlessly, over a long period of time, the Viet Cong have terrorized and assassinated when persuasion and propaganda have failed. Forcing villagers to cooperate and acts of selective terrorism are intended to demonstrate that the Viet Cong is strong whereas the government of South Vietnam is weak.

Enemy military forces—from Main Force North Vietnam and Viet Cong units to part-time Viet Cong Guerrillas and irregulars—must depend upon each other to a great degree. Guerrilla forces and local Viet Cong units depend on the Main Force units to reinforce them. In turn, Main Force units depend on lower echelons for supplies, replacements, and laborers. And all of the enemy units are dependent upon the population in varying degrees.



OUR MILITARY PURPOSE

Millions of Americans tend to think of modern war in light of our military experiences in the World Wars and in Korea. Often we find it difficult to relate these past experiences to the fighting and military purpose in Vietnam. There armies do not face each other across established fronts, for both the Government of South Vietnam and the enemy exercise varying degrees of authority over the land and the people. Only in certain areas does one side or the other hold full and uncontested authority. Thus the progress of this struggle cannot be explained by lines on a map.

To fully appreciate our military goals in Vietnam, two dimensions of the war must be clearly understood:

- Armies in the past have used military power to force an enemy to surrender or be destroyed. Nations at war gave little thought to any sort of reconstruction until after the war was over. But in South Vietnam—while we fight—we are helping that country to improve the environment of the people. These actions are necessary to demonstrate to the people that the government is interested in their welfare, thereby winning their support. In the midst of conflict, the people of Vietnam have adopted a Constitution and held democratic nation-wide elections. In Vietnam today, Free World efforts have made economic and social progress possible while helping to build confidence in government.
- In Vietnam, an entire generation has lived with or under threat of violence and bloodshed. A shrewd and persuasive enemy lives among the people and makes it difficult to decide who is friend and who is foe. Because support from the people is essential to victory, the Viet Cong have variously indoctrinated, protected, terrorized, and persecuted the Vietnamese. Farms, hamlets, villages and cities are the scenes of battle. The people who are hurt and hungry, dispossessed and bewildered, are slow to see the value of *any* cause.

Our purpose in Vietnam is to support the South Vietnamese government in its exercise of authority over its own land and people. Effective government must exercise such authority so that order can be restored and justice can prevail.

To achieve this purpose, we have established general missions. One task is to force the enemy to relocate his forces further away from the people of South Vietnam. We accomplish this by attacking the enemy's "secret" bases and enemy concentrations, and capturing the enemy's supplies, weapons and equipment. Such operations make up what is often called the "Big Battle" and are carried on continually, by Republic of Vietnam forces, and by other Free World allies as well—Koreans, Thais, Australians, New Zealanders, and U.S. Forces.

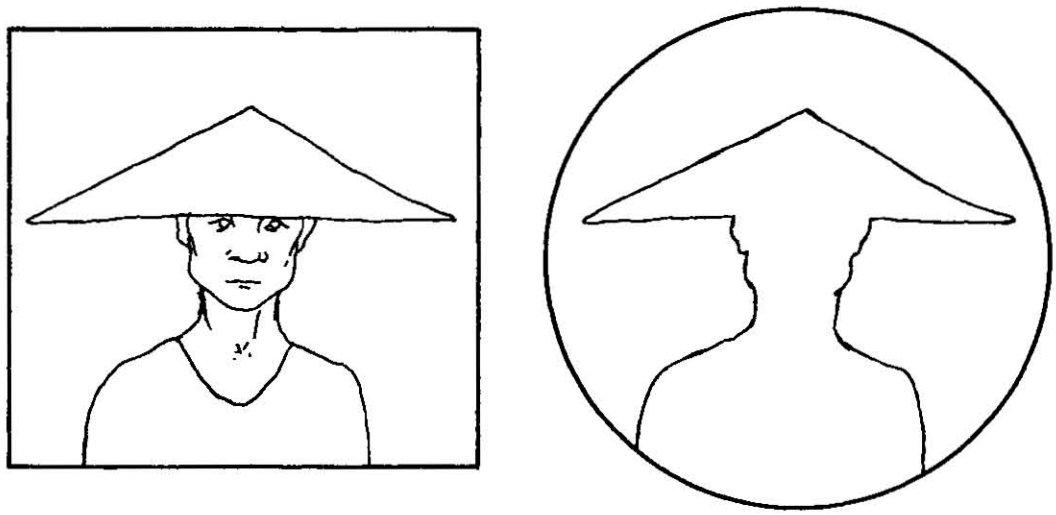
A second mission is to create a climate of order and security in which the South Vietnamese people can live and develop as they see fit. This involves separating the local guerrilla forces from the people and wearing down the guerrilla forces until they are no longer effective. The goal here is to force out the local guerrillas from populated and food-producing areas, which they try to control as a means of obtaining new recruits and food. These operations are usually conducted by Vietnamese forces.

Supplementing these operations are the efforts of local and national police and similar organizations to isolate the local Viet Cong and guerrilla leaders and prevent them from influencing the population by terror tactics. These two classes of operations are described later as the "Middle Battle" and the "Battle of the Terrorists."

While all of this is taking place, the Vietnamese Government, with Free World economic and military assistance, is helping the people improve their standard of living and is teaching the people how to defend themselves against attack. These programs aim at improving the economic and social stability of South Vietnam. Eventually these efforts will enable the South Vietnamese to maintain internal order after the external threat has been eliminated.

THE KIND OF WAR

We have seen that our goal in Vietnam is to achieve order by helping the South Vietnamese to exercise authority over their own territory and people. The combat required to attain this goal adds up to a strange kind of war —a mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar.



The familiar includes the achievement of military control of the ground by the basic and familiar combat techniques. The soldier uses fire and maneuver to defeat enemy forces at the decisive point. This may even involve hand-to-hand fighting where individual courage and training determine the outcome. Military missions usually are to control those physical features that the enemy wishes to control—his "secret" bases and populated or food-producing areas.

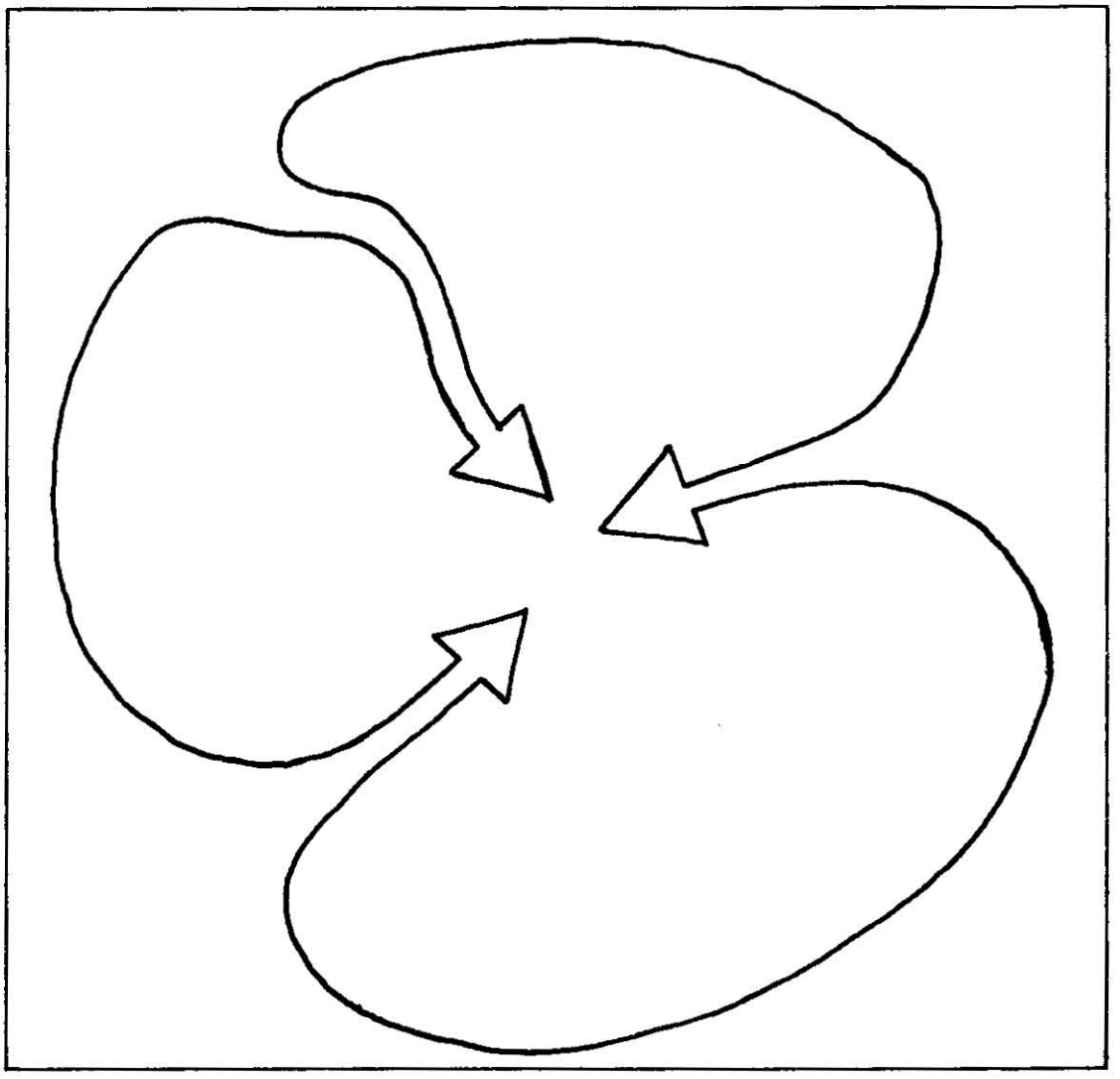
But there are special circumstances of battle in Vietnam that make it difficult to understand. These circumstances include the precarious position of the people, the nature of the enemy, and the nature of the land.

South Vietnam is ideally suited for the type of warfare the communists are waging. They take advantage of its geography, its social structure, and its fragile economy to tear down or destroy—a task always easier than the task of building.

Occasions sometimes arise in which the enemy is intermingled with the local population. The action taken in such instances must be measured and precise. While the soldier's task remains to separate the guerrilla from the people and defeat him, the rules of land warfare require that every effort *must* be made to preclude civilian casualties.

Different levels of force are required to combat this enemy in the various parts of Vietnam. The enemy may be the tough and highly trained professional, invading from the north by the tens of thousands in large-scale units. He may be in Viet Cong battalions, highly mobile, and living off the land. He may be the guerrilla who farms by day and fights by night. He may be the terrorist-assassin who throws a grenade into a crowded restaurant, or the innocent-looking youth who parks an explosive-laden bicycle in a market place in Saigon.

The land itself has an influence on the kinds of military action we employ. Although South Vietnam is less than half the size of California, its geography ranges from mountains to swamps. Tactics and weapons which are successful in one part of the country may prove of little use in another. Different types of battles, fought in different places, make necessary the waging of many small actions not specifically related to each other.



OUR MILITARY STRATEGY

Our strategy in Vietnam is aimed at disrupting the mutual support of the many enemy echelons. By driving the enemy's larger military formations away from populated areas, we improve the security for the population against guerrilla and local force units. By eliminating those enemy units, we limit the terrorist in his ability to carry on his campaign of assassination, intimidation, sabotage, and hit-and-run warfare and thus provide the security necessary to enable the government to obtain the support of the people.

The war in Vietnam is really three separate military struggles. Sometimes all three are conducted at the same time; more often, the emphasis shifts from one to the other. Since they represent three separate levels of intensity of fighting, they might be labeled the "big battle," the "middle battle," and the "battle against the terrorists."

The "Big Battle"

The purpose of the "big battle" is to separate the North Vietnam Army and Viet Cong Main Force units from enemy regional and local forces and local guerrillas. To achieve this separation, military operations are conducted to push the enemy Main Force units back to the unpopulated border areas and to a few remote mountain and jungle areas. Another purpose is to destroy the pre-stocked strongholds from which the enemy supports and supplies his units.

The "Middle Battle"

The "middle battle" is the wearing down and eliminating of enemy local forces through relatively small-scale operations designed to kill, capture or induce defections. These smaller scale operations are carried out systematically by U.S., South Vietnamese, and other Free World forces, often on a cooperative basis. The "middle battle" is usually conducted against enemy units of platoon or company size. However, it can include operations against enemy units formed into battalion-size forces for particular operations.

In the "middle battle," many simultaneous small-scale engagements are fought by elements of our divisions and other large combat units, sometimes in support of Vietnamese and other Allied forces. A battalion, company, platoon, or even a squad may find itself in actions only indirectly related to those being performed by other elements of the parent unit.

Operations on this scale are similar to those of a century ago on our Western frontier when a cavalry troop was then expected to operate on its own for long periods of time. In that day, elements as large as a regiment seldom had the experience of fighting as a single, coherent unit.

The "Battle of the Terrorists"

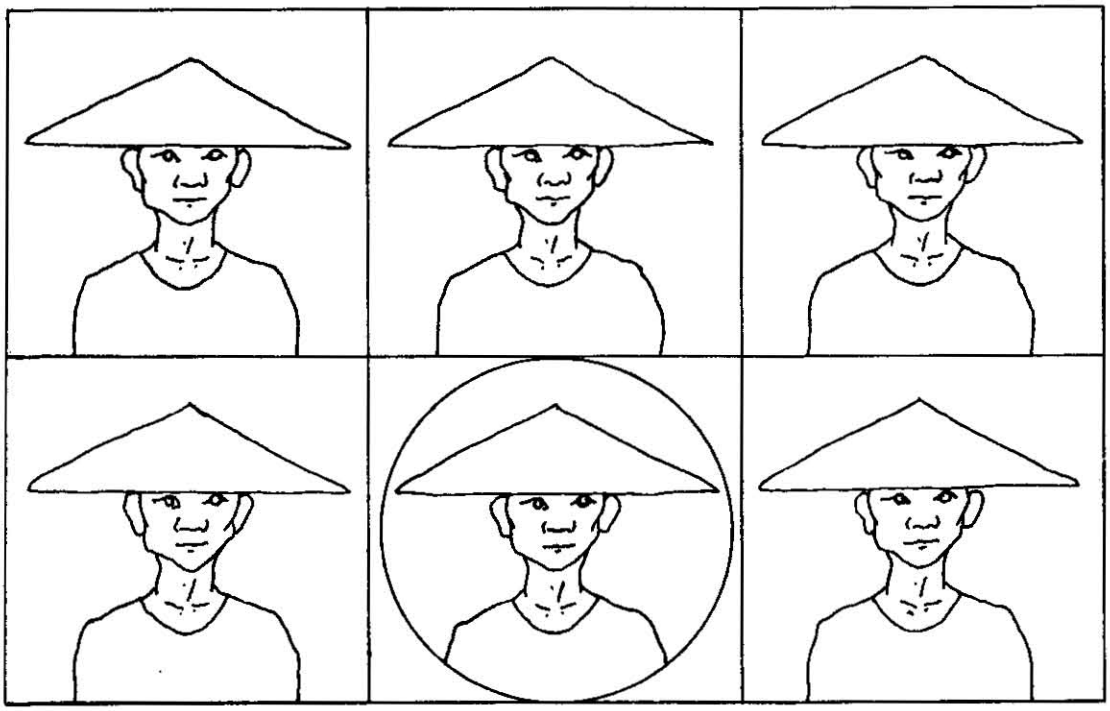
The struggle against internal terrorism strives to eliminate the political apparatus so essential to the success of terrorist operations. This is not a battle against the enemy's regular military forces. Rather it is aimed at the local terrorist who literally controls the people through threats and assassinations. It is a battle carried on primarily by Regional and Popular Forces, local and national police, and other local security forces.

The success of this battle depends entirely on the simultaneous effective application of SVN government political and administrative control in each local area. This is obvious when you consider that successful control only in certain local areas permits a safe haven for terrorists in those areas not properly controlled.

The difficult nature of the "battle of the terrorists" becomes apparent when you consider the most acute problem: How to identify the enemy—single him out from friendly or nonhostile Vietnamese who give him, under duress or willingly, his essential concealment and support.

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There is no error-proof method of identifying friend from foe. The apparently friendly villager often—when night falls—becomes extremely dangerous and hostile. Such people have, over the past few years, assassinated, tortured, or kidnapped thousands of village chiefs, school teachers, government workers, doctors, and others who represent and support the legitimate government of South Vietnam. The terrorist's special targets, in other words, have been the local leaders and doers—those who inspire the people to oppose the communists.



The effort to identify and frustrate the guerrilla-terrorist enemy requires the utmost skill and discrimination. The campaign to find and deal with him must take careful account of the necessity to avoid injury to the friendly Vietnamese peasants and villagers and to win the support of those who are confused and undecided. Allied forces must make special efforts, sometimes at additional risks to themselves, to avoid unnecessary casualties among the people. Nothing worthwhile is gained when a few guerrillas are caught by methods that generate hostility toward the forces and policies of the legitimate government.

The ability of the terrorist to dominate those around him must never be underestimated, for he gains public "support" by the most brutal acts of intimidation and physical violence. And so long as no effective leaders are available to combat his efforts, the people will be afraid *not* to protect him. Thus, even when every other vestige of war has disappeared from the scene, the terrorist can still be present, waiting only for the opportunity to subvert or assassinate local leaders, instill fear in the people, and resume his battle against the legitimate government.

Security

The key to long-range progress is South Vietnam is the attainment of effective security against both its internal and external enemies. By driving the organized enemy forces away from the South Vietnamese people, we seek to eliminate external aggression. This in turn opens up the opportunity to reestablish effective local government, providing for internal security once again.

Because the enemy may threaten first one area, then another, and because his methods can vary from terrorism to large-scale attack, the weight of our effort must change from time to time and place to place. Yet, in spite of the many variables, our strategy is producing two decisive results:

First—it is gradually forcing the enemy away from the population. This frees the people from intimidation and domination and clears the way for restoration of a free society in a climate of law and order.

Second—it is forcing the enemy to provide full logistic support to the units driven away from populated and food-producing areas. He is forced to rely to a greater extent on his own primitive supply lines instead of getting support from the people.

The Mission of Providing Security

We have pointed out that the purpose of our military forces in South Vietnam is to help the South Vietnamese people achieve security. The primary responsibility necessarily remains with the South Vietnamese, however.

Initially, our support was limited to advice and non-combat assistance. However, when North Vietnam began to support the Viet Cong with large quantities of men and materials from north of the 17th Parallel, the young South Vietnamese Armed Forces were not yet ready to cope with the increased violence. They needed substantial US and other Free World assistance. Thus, even as we helped to fight the enemy, we continued to help the South Vietnamese develop a capability to defend themselves.

As American and other Free World forces increased their contributions to the defeat of the enemy in South Vietnam, it became necessary to find a practical way to make the best use of the resources available. Consequently, to increase the effectiveness of the combined efforts, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces assumed the primary mission of supporting the pacification program. Meanwhile, they continued to train for large-scale military operations. American and other Free World forces were assigned the primary mission of confronting the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Main Forces and destroying their base areas and resources in South Vietnam.

This made sense in two ways: *First,* the soldier who provided security to the population was a Vietnamese and not a foreigner. He was the man who had to convince the villager that the national government was capable of protecting him and his family. He was able to perform this mission while continuing to increase his effectiveness in large-scale operations. *Second,* the greater mobility and firepower of the US and certain other Free World forces uniquely equipped them to carry out the larger-scale military missions during the early period of the North Vietnamese invasion.

This broad assignment of tasks was quite flexible. Vietnamese units regularly participated in large-scale offensive operations alongside American and other Free World units; they conducted other "big battle" missions when needed, thus increasing their ability in this area. Similarly, US forces participated actively throughout Vietnam in "middle war" operations against local guerrilla units; and US and other Free World units at every level conducted, planned, and supervised civic action programs to help the people help themselves, even in the midst of the destruction of war.

While all this was going on, US advisors continued to work with South Vietnamese Armed Forces, helping them with their training, guiding them in their development of tactics and doctrine, and assisting their leaders to develop the most effective units for total defense of their country. Although this advisory effort is by no means completed, South Vietnamese units are visibly demonstrating that the effort has paid off.

Possibly the most significant demonstration of South Vietnamese military effectiveness came during the Lunar New Year (Tet) truce, when the NorthVietnamese and Viet Cong launched an intense assault against innocent civilians living in South Vietnamese cities, villages, and hamlets. Many South Vietnamese units were called from their rural pacification efforts to fight the enemy who had attacked the cities.

The combat effectiveness achieved by the Vietnamese Armed Forces in recent years has been significant. South Vietnamese President Thieu has stated his desire that, in the foreseeable future, the South Vietnamese forces can take over areas which allied forces are presently responsible for. When that occurs, our forces can be redeployed elsewhere. We, too, look toward this end. Already, we are giving the South Vietnamese Armed Forces the necessary priorities in logistical support. This will serve to increase their fighting capability to the highest levels possible.



REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

We have seen that achieving security in South Vietnam really requires two things—eliminating the external Communist threat, and reestablishing internal security through effective, local government.

Our struggle against the military threat is quite visible and of great interest. It tends, therefore, to receive more attention in the public press than the equally important task of improving the social, political, and economic opportunities of the South Vietnamese people. Yet, for many years, the government of South Vietnam has conducted various programs to improve the environment of the people—to give them a way of life worth defending.

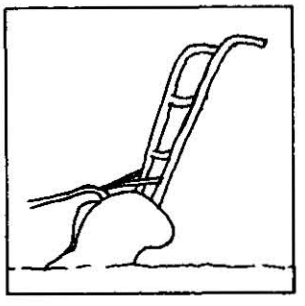
In 1966, several of these existing programs were combined into a program called Revolutionary Development—a broad cooperative effort by the South Vietnamese, the Americans, and other Allied nations. This is a program to help the people of Vietnam to help themselves to greater security and a better way of life.

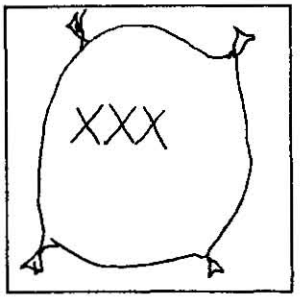
When security has become a reality, further development broadly contributes to nation building.

While Revolutionary Development is essentially a South Vietnamese effort, the United States furnishes large-scale assistance. US Army and other advisors participate in the program at every level. American military units throughout South Vietnam conduct civic action programs to supplement the local efforts. Whole villages have been built by American and Vietnamese people working together. Through the medical civic action program, teams of doctors, dentists, nurses, and corpsmen give medical treatment to hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians. American soldiers donate materials, drill wells, and assist the Vietnamese people in a host of other ways.

This program is carried to the villages and hamlets by carefully trained Vietnamese Revolutionary Development "teams." These 59-man teams vary their programs to fit the conditions in each village or hamlet, but each program has certain basic goals:

- Assist in the reestablishment of internal security.
- Record grievances, hopes, and aspirations of the people, and follow them up.
- Root out the Viet Cong "shadow government" and establish a structure of local self-government supported and trusted by the people.
- Help the people—with technical advice, money and materials—to develop an economic, social, and political life in keeping with their own aspirations.
- Teach the people how to defend their homes. The Revolutionary Development teams are armed and trained in the use of weapons. After establishing themselves in an assigned hamlet or village, team members assist in the protection of the local people. They maintain close contact with other friendly military and police forces in the area. They train the people in self-defense techniques so that eventually they will be able to provide their own local security.





Programs

Country-wide Revolutionary Development economic programs have such objectives as increasing food production through irrigation, improved farming techniques, and the development of improved fertilizers and seeds. The Revolutionary Development program thus supplements the pacification program that includes the building of highways and bridges to encourage commerce and industry.

In the hamlets, Revolutionary Development teams are primarily concerned with smaller projects for which the government supplies the money and materials and the people of the hamlet provide the labor while learning to help themselves.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of Revolutionary Development is centered about the matter of local leadership. The Vietnamese people have elected their local leaders for centuries. But it has been largely a "patriarchal" system in which leadership was handed down through families or dynasties. Hence, one of the fundamental goals of the Revolutionary Development program is to induce the people to choose their leaders on the basis

of ability. Real progress and internal security will come to Vietnam when the people in the hamlets are effectively linked, in a proper administrative chain, through the villages, districts, and provinces, to the national government.

Security At All Levels

As the Main Force Viet Cong and North Vietnam Army elements are driven away from the population centers, the people located there are freed from external enemy intimidation and exploitation. But such areas do not always stay "liberated." Even the combat effectiveness achieved by South Vietnamese Armed Forces cannot insure continuous security at all levels—hamlet, village, district, and province. Consequently, in the hamlets, Revolutionary Development cadres train self-defense forces to participate in local defense. Near these same hamlets Popular Force platoons are deployed to secure key installations. By doing this, they protect local officials and resources, as well as highways, waterways, and other avenues of transportation and communications. Unlike the hamlet self-defense forces, which consist of citizens bearing arms, members of the Popular Forces are soldiers—militiamen who live in their home districts, often sharing their perimeter outposts with their wives and children.

These Popular Force platoons are recruited at the village level, operate under the supervision of the district chief, and are normally employed in the district.

At the province level there are somewhat better-armed and better-trained troops known as Regional Forces. In addition to the security mission they share with the platoons of the Popular Forces, these Regional Forces are used in local military operations. They are organized in companies which, like the Popular Force Platoons, are not organic to regiments or divisions.

Supplementing the military forces in the villages and cities are the national and local police. Eventually they will be responsible for internal security, when the policeman on the beat can take the place of the Army in preserving law and order.

WHY VIETNAM

Throughout this pamphlet we have attempted to describe the purpose of our military presence in Vietnam—to help the South Vietnamese people achieve the security necessary to permit their beleaguered nation to rebuild. This is a task to which the whole of South Vietnam is committed.

Yet this task is enormously complicated—because the struggle in South Vietnam is an example of the efforts of Communist powers to perpetuate subversion and aggression in the world. Although Communists describe their efforts as "Wars of National Liberation," they are clearly campaigns of insurgency and terrorism.

When local terrorism is widespread, the leadership ineffective, the population mortally afraid and thus fully controlled, external support by communist-led powers is applied and serves to expand the turbulence to full-fledged war.

This is the situation which confronts us today in South Vietnam. We have developed a strategy to respond to that threat—a strategy which calls for driving organized enemy forces away from centers of population and toward more remote areas, thus eliminating the external threat.

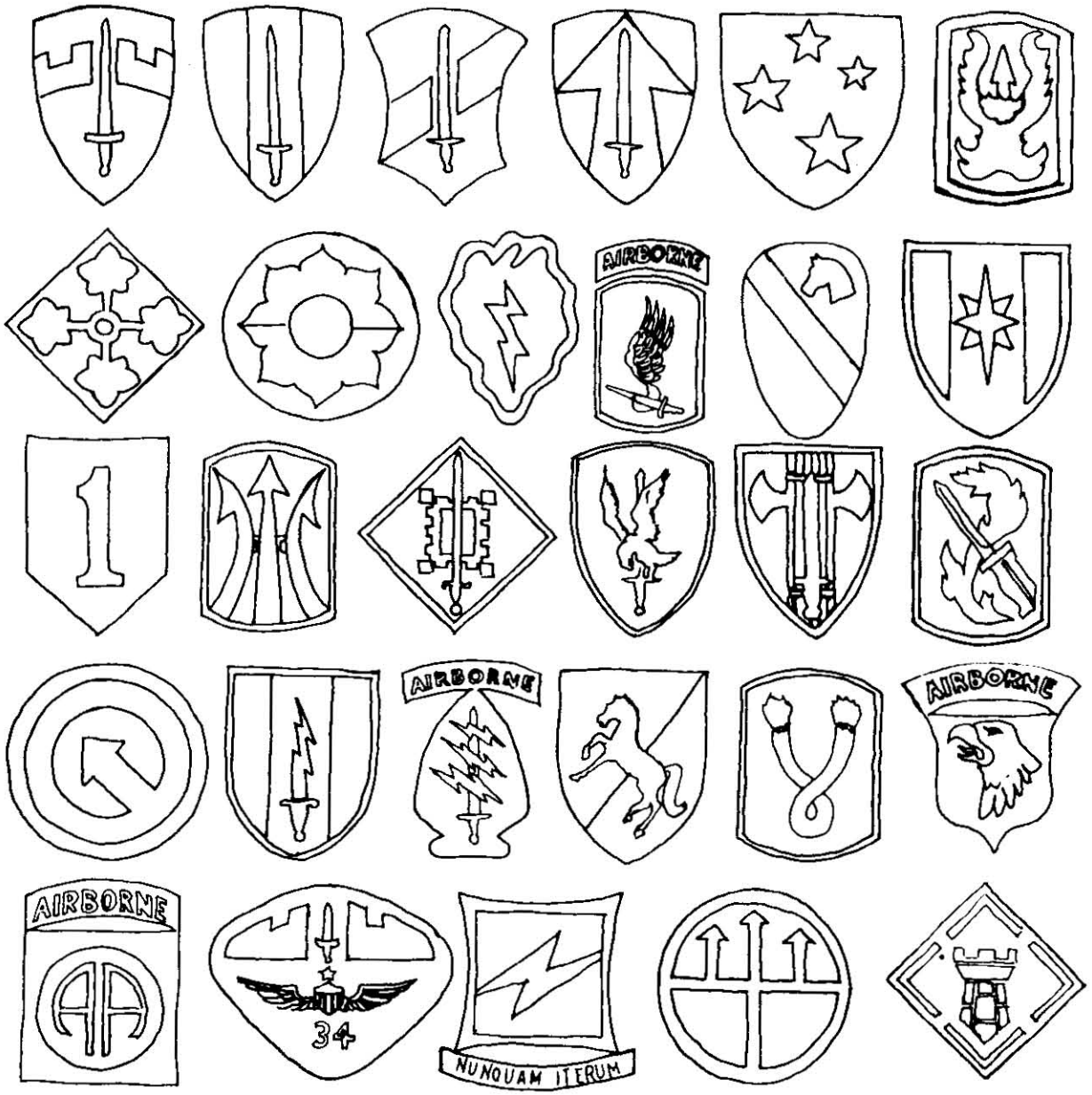
But after external aggression against South Vietnam ceases entirely, there still may not be peace. For the terrorist may still be present, applying his special brand of terror tactics in his efforts to retain control of the people.

Such terrorists are not defeated until the people among whom they operate no longer fear their threats—because the local leadership is more credible, more permanent, more desirable.

Consequently, as a fundamental part of Free World efforts in South Vietnam we must help the Vietnamese authorities provide security for the population—security which permits the people of that nation to help themselves—to peace, to prosperity, to happiness.

After all, these are the same values which we, as Americans, cherish so highly.

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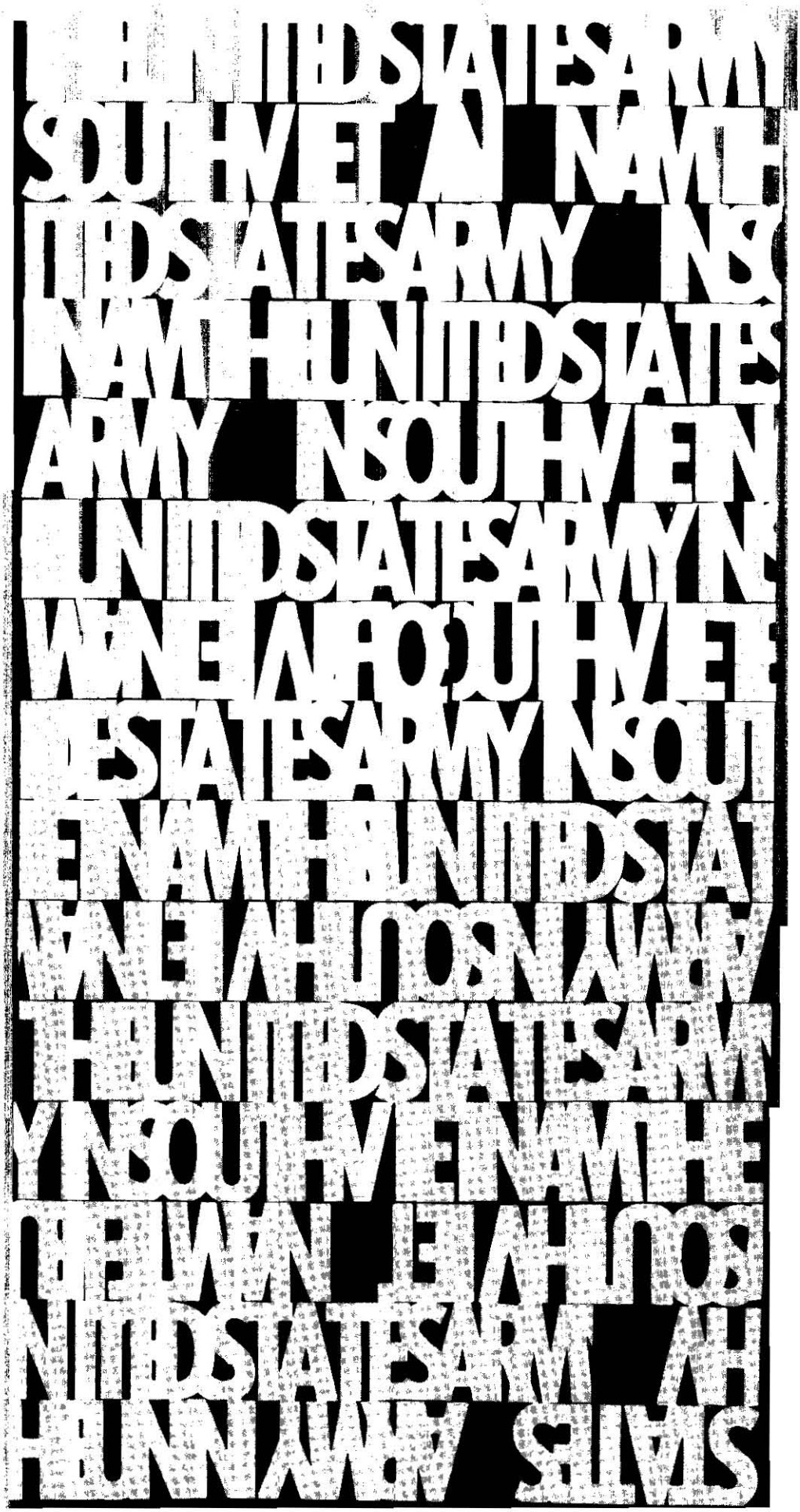
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