

MACV COMMAND HISTORY 1965



Chapter 3 The Strategy



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CHAPTER III

THE STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

(C) In early 1965, military operations in the RVN were conducted essentially by RVNAF with US advice and support. The RVNAF were guided basically by RVNAF Plan AB 139, published in December 1964, which delineated how the war should be conducted in 1965.¹ This plan was prepared in direct support of the Chien Thang ("Victory") Pacification Program which had been initiated in February 1964 and continued in effect during 1965.² (See USMACV 1964 Command History, Chapter III).

(S) During the early months of 1965, the major effort of COMUSMACV's unilateral planning activity was devoted to the development or modification of US/SEATO contingency plans. With the decision to commit US combat forces in SVN in early 1965, a modification of one of these plans, Operations Plan (OPLAN) 32-64 (Phase II, RVN, which provided the basis for meeting counterinsurgency requirements),³ was necessary. Modifications to this basic plan continued during the first half of the year as adjustments to the changing situation became necessary. However, in mid-1965, with the impending massive buildup of US forces in RVN as indicated by the President's decision of 28 July, it became necessary to formulate an overall plan which would clarify the missions and deployment of the various forces. In response to this need, the USMACV Concept of Operations was prepared and published on 30 August.⁴ This overall plan, in conjunction with AB 139, thus provided the basic strategy for defeating the enemy.

RVNAF PLAN AB 139⁵

(C) This plan provided the objectives and missions for the various branches of RVNAF in terms of 1) defense of lines of communication and strategic bases, 2) harassment of VC bases and lines of communication, 3) surveillance of border and coastal areas and 4) support of the Pacification Program. (See Table III-1 for missions assigned to the various components.)

(S) The defense of LOC's and strategic bases was a basic responsibility of the respective corps commanders. Primarily using the RF, the corps commanders would defend the LOC's by:

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1) Determining the routes to be protected and assigning priorities,

2) providing protective measures to include: collection of route intelligence, ambushes along feeder routes, disruptive operations into nearby VC bases, defoliation along routes, establishment of New Life hamlets at population centers along the routes, defense of bridges and check points, and

3) providing convoy protection to include: air cover, quick reaction troops, irregular march tables, fire support and communications and control.

(S) In the defense of strategic bases, the corps commanders would:

1) determine bases to be protected and assign priorities,

2) establish security zones 4,000 meters wide (81-mm mortar range) around the area; within this zone conduct continuous patrols and ambushes to thwart VC attacks,

3) establish strong points within the security zone,

4) exercise population control to destroy the VC infrastructure,

5) conduct offensive operations against VC forces and bases,

6) establish ground intelligence nets, and

7) develop detailed defense plans.

(S) Corps and division commanders shared the responsibility to harass the VC bases and LOC's. They were to employ primarily ARVN and CIDG forces but would also use RF as necessary. Continuous harassment of VC bases and lines of communications was essential in order to keep the enemy on the defensive and impede his movements. The objective: to disrupt, disperse and/or destroy VC main force units, bases, and command and control. Priorities were to be established to insure proper utilization of resources. Harassment operations would be planned in terms of the following three phases:

1) The collection of intelligence would be a primary requirement in the early stages of planning but would be continued throughout all stages. Teams would be deployed to infiltrate the VC area, gather intelligence, guide raiding parties

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and direct artillery and close air support onto targets.

2) Harassment actions were to be marked with aggressiveness and surprise and conducted against limited objectives. Targets were to be attacked with the appropriate use of artillery, airpower and heliborne striking forces. Special Forces, Ranger, Artillery and Air Force elements primarily were to be employed in this phase until the bases or LOC's were neutralized.

3) In the last phase, an arrangement was to be made, such as the establishment of a base of operations or the organization of a combat intelligence network to prevent the VC from re-using the bases or LOC's.

(S) The surveillance of border areas was a corps commander's responsibility, employing ARVN and CIDG forces for this purpose. Given that a continuous defense system of the long and rugged borders of RVN was infeasible, a system of border control camps appeared to be the most practical means to survey the border areas and to block infiltration. To carry out this mission, corps commanders were to:

- 1) locate infiltration routes leading into SVN and VC LOC's within SVN,
- 2) establish border control bases to block each main route along the frontier; the CIDG-manned bases were to be interconnected so as to minimize VC alterations of their routes,
- 3) conduct continuous combat patrols and reconnaissance operations between bases,
- 4) conduct continuous air reconnaissance of the border,
- 5) conduct raids along the VC LOC's leading into the interior, and
- 6) provide heliborne reaction forces to reinforce CIDG camps.

(S) The surveillance of the coastal areas was a VNN responsibility in coordination with the pertinent corps commander. Junk force bases were to be established to block main suspected infiltration routes and coordinated with ground force counterinfiltration forces along the coastal regions. VNN authorities were to:

- 1) determine the techniques and routes used by the enemy in sea infiltrations,

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- 2) establish bases along the coastlines to block infiltrations and prescribe areas of responsibility for junk divisions operating from these bases,
- 3) prescribe sea and air patrol areas, "no fishing" zones, no transit zones, and contiguous land areas in which counterinfiltration operations would be conducted, and
- 4) establish coordination between land and naval forces.

(S) The execution of military actions in support of the pacification program was a corps commander's responsibility and would be accomplished in two phases: restoration of security and development. The restoration of security phase consisted of two subphases: in the clearing subphase, ARVN forces were to be primarily used, assisted by the RF, in clearing an area of organic main force enemy units. In the securing subphase, RF, PF and NP forces were to stabilize the area by:

- 1) destroying the VC infrastructure as it was reorganized,
- 2) providing security for the people and maintaining law and order,
- 3) protecting the GVN infrastructure, and
- 4) defending key installations and LOC's.

In the development phase, military and security forces would gradually improve their effectiveness in performing similar missions as in the securing phase.

(S) Specific corps priorities were as follows: I Corps-pacify coastal area inland to the railroad; II Corps-pacify key base areas, LOC's and vital coastal areas; III Corps-pacify the Hop Tac I area; IV Corps-pacify key base areas and districts. The VNAF was expected to provide air support to each corps to include air reconnaissance and air strikes, required airlift, and air defense of SVN. The VNN was to defend RVN's waters and vital waterways and provide coastal defense against sea infiltration and naval support within CTZ's and protect the RSSZ.

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COMUSMACV CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS⁶

(S) The first formal concept of operations for the employment of US forces in RVN, published on 30 August 1965, described the military operations and force deployments necessary, in conjunction with RVNAF, to eliminate the VC/NVA threat and establish GVN control over the nation. Discussed below are the operational concepts; the force deployments are described in Chapter II.

(S) In mid-1965, a precarious situation existed in the RVN: a series of victories scored by the enemy seemed to have deeply affected the morale and outlook of RVNAF personnel and the government installed in June 1965 had not yet had the opportunity to dispel the feeling of political uncertainty among the people. However, the entry of US combat forces into the conflict began to manifest itself, particularly by the outstanding success of operation STARLIGHT (Chu Lai area, 18-21 August 1965). The President's 28 July announcement that the US would commit additional massive military forces in SVN necessitated an overall plan clarifying the missions and deployment of the various components. COMUSMACV's Concept of Operations was prepared to fulfill this need.

(TS) COMUSMACV's objective was to end the war in RVN by convincing the enemy that military victory was impossible and to force the enemy to negotiate a solution favorable to the GVN and the US. To secure these objectives, US/FWMA forces would be built up and then employed to wrest the initiative from the enemy, secure vital areas and support the GVN in expanding its control over the country.

(TS) The concept visualized a three-phase operation:

Phase I - The commitment of US/FWMA forces necessary to halt the losing trend by the end of 1965.

Phase II - The resumption of the offensive by US/FWMA forces during the first half of 1966 in high priority areas necessary to destroy enemy forces, and reinstatement of rural construction activities.

Phase III - If the enemy persisted, a period of a year to a year and a half following Phase II would be required for the defeat and destruction of the remaining enemy forces and base areas.

(TS) Following this three-phased program, US/FWMA forces would be removed from SVN as GVN became able to establish and

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maintain internal order and secure its borders.

(TS) The overall concept was based on three assumptions:

1) That the VC would fight until convinced that military victory was impossible and then would not be willing to endure further punishment.

2) That the CHICOM's would not intervene except to provide aid and advice.

3) That friendly forces would maintain control of the air over RVN.

(TS) Specific military tasks were associated with the objectives of each phase.

Phase I:

"1) Secure the major military bases, airfields and communications centers.

2) Defend major political and population centers.

3) Conduct offensive operations against major VC base areas in order to divert and destroy VC main forces.

4) Provide adequate reserve reaction forces to prevent the loss of secure and defended areas.

5) Preserve and strengthen the RVNAF.

6) Provide adequate air support, both combat and logistic.

7) Maintain an anti-infiltration screen along the coast and support forces ashore with naval gunfire and amphibious lift.

8) Provide air and sea lifts as necessary to transport the necessary but minimum supplies and services to the civil populace.

9) Open up necessary critical lines of communication for essential military and civil purposes.

10) Preserve and defend, to the extent possible, areas now under effective governmental control."⁷

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Phase II:

1) All Phase I measures.

"2) Resume and/or expand pacification operations. Priority will be given to the Hop Tac area around Saigon, to that part of the Delta along an east-west axis from Go Cong to Chau Doc, and in the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Tri, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen.

3) Participate in clearing, securing, reserve reaction and offensive operations as required to support and sustain the resumption of pacification." 8

Phase III:

1) All Phase I and II measures.

"2) Provide those additional forces necessary to extend and expand clearing and securing operations throughout the entire populated area of the country and those forces necessary to destroy VC forces and their base areas." 9

(TS) Tactics and techniques applicable to the general tasks associated with the military operations were as follows:

1) Security of base areas - US ground combat forces would be employed in such a role, frequently in conjunction with RVN forces. Area and close-in security to prevent infiltration and sabotage would be necessary. Every effort would be made to secure an area 4,000 meters outward from the base by a defensive belt, saturation patrolling, and aggressive surveillance and intelligence, beyond the range of the 81-mm mortar.

2) Offensive operations against VC bases and forces - Again, US ground combat forces would be employed in such a role, frequently in conjunction with RVN forces. Frequent incursions into VC base areas would be necessary to render them useless to the VC and destroy forces which persist in maintaining them. Intelligence, quick reaction forces, blocking forces, fire and maneuver, and relentless pursuit would all have to be actively utilized to insure the destruction of the VC forces.

3) Defense of critical population and political centers - Such a mission could be anticipated on occasion, particularly when RVNAF was unable to defeat the threat. Techniques to be employed would be similar to those outlined for the security of base areas, referred to above.

4) Provision of reserve reaction forces - Such a quick reaction mission could be anticipated throughout RVN as a normal requirement for US forces in supporting the defense of bases, other critical areas, and in relief of other heavily committed forces. To counter anticipated VC ambushes, surprise, firepower and other counter-techniques would be employed. Command and control of combined forces would necessitate maximum use of prior planning and US advisors as liaison officers.

5) Pacification operations - US ground combat elements would conduct clearing and securing operations in order to extend secure areas around bases and population/political centers, as the initial steps in pacification. Clearing would remove the VC presence from the area; securing would prevent subsequent return. Following this, the other phases of pacification would be conducted, with US forces providing assistance to the program which would be under GVN control. These other phases would include elimination of VC infrastructure, recruiting and training of PF and local officials, and other programs necessary to establish a pacified area.

(U) Detailed concepts, tasks, and force requirements were developed for each phase in each CTZ.

Phase I

I Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

1) III MAF would continue the development and protection of secure base areas at Hue-Phu Bai, Da Nang and Chu Lai to prevent VC attack and conduct offensive operations in conjunction with ARVN I Corps to destroy VC forces and resources.

2) The established TACR would be modified only as required by the subsequent situation.

3) Unilateral (with RVNAF liaison), coordinated, or combined ground operations would be conducted by III MAF.

4) Such ground operations would include search and destroy, clearing, attack on VC units or bases, day and night combat and reconnaissance patrols and ambushes to find and eliminate VC forces, bases, resources, and political-military apparatus.

5) Reserves would continue to be provided for exploitation purposes.

6) A vigorous rural construction program would be emphasized by III MAF and RVNAF. The destruction of VC and protection of the

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populace would be stressed; seizure of terrain was not an objective in itself. Thus, operations would concentrate on heavily populated areas to clear villages and hamlets in the coastal region. Such operations would require maximum mobility, discriminatory use of firepower, and flexibility in adjusting to the situation in the particular area of operations. Close control of firepower would be maintained to minimize destruction of potentially friendly life and property. RVNAF, particularly RF/PF, would be used to the maximum for securing villages and hamlets. III MAF's major contribution would be in the fields of civic action, psychological warfare, and intelligence. Overall security would be provided by vigorous offensive action to preclude the dissipation of III MAF combat units in a static security role. Security would include land LOC's within the coastal region.

7) Efforts would be made to establish combined command arrangements in which RVNAF forces would be placed under the operational control of US commanders during specific operations.

8) Offensive and defensive tactical air operations would be conducted to include close air support, interdiction, reconnaissance, air superiority, air transport, search and rescue, and others as required in the effort to defeat the VC. III MAF aviation units would devote priority support to III MAF forces; excess resources would be made available to the 2d AD in supporting other forces.

II Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

1) Establish and secure major bases at Qui Nhon and Cam Ranh Bay and the minor base at An Xhe. Reserves for quick reaction to the VC attack would be located at each base.

2) Conduct offensive operations in coordination with RVNAF to destroy VC bases and forces operating from brigade home bases or forward operational bases at Pleiku, Kontum, Cheo Reo or Ban Me Thuot.

3) Assist RVNAF in defending province capitals, key district towns and in securing land LOC's by conducting reaction operations.

III Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

1) Establish and secure operational bases to include the major base at Bien Hoa and brigade bases at Ben Cat and Phuoc Vinh.

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- 2) Conduct offensive operations to destroy VC bases and forces thereby relieving pressure on the Hop Tac area.
- 3) Assist RVNAF in defending province capitals and key district towns by conducting reaction operations.

IV Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

No US/FWMAF deployments were scheduled for IV Corps; hence these concepts and tasks were applicable only to RVNAF:

- 1) Establish and defend bases at Can Tho, Vinh Long and Soc Trang.
- 2) Conduct offensive operations to destroy VC bases and forces.
- 3) Prevent the loss of province capitals and key district towns.

Phase II

I Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

With the increase of USMC forces in SVN to two full divisions plus supporting elements, III MAF would be expanded to a corps-sized HQ. However, because of the undesirable connotation associated with the label "corps" (see Chapter II), the HQ would remain III MAF rather than redesignated Marine Amphibious Corps.

1) First priority would be given to extending the three secure base areas of Hue-Phu Bai, Da Nang and Chu Lai into one contiguous area encompassing the entire coastal region of Quang Nam, and Quang Tin Provinces and the southern half of Thua Thien Province, followed by operations to secure the remainder of the coastal region of Thua Thien and the northern half of Quang Ngai Province. III MAF would assume the dominant role.

2) RVNAF, assisted as required by III MAF, would then secure the coastal regions of Quang Tri Province and the remainder of Quang Ngai. Land LOC's in these coastal regions would be secured and improved.

3) A continuous program of reconnaissance and surveillance would be conducted into the piedmont and mountain regions. Search and destroy, clearing, and attack operations would also be conducted to assist in the final defeat of the VC and the extension of GVN authority throughout I CTZ.

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4) Every effort would be made to extend III MAF operational control over ARVN units.

5) Continuing effort would be made to improve the RVNAF, increase their role in Phase II operations, and insure their ability to maintain control over I CTZ upon conclusion of Phase II.

II Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

1) Expand GVN control particularly in the heavily populated coastal areas.

2) US forces would conduct offensive operations to destroy VC bases and forces, ROK forces would provide base security, and ARVN forces would conduct clearing and securing operations to expand GVN population and area control.

3) Route 19 and portions of Highway 1 would be kept open to insure their continuous use as LOC's. Other LOC's would be opened as necessary.

4) Conduct offensive operations against VC base areas particularly in Binh Dinh and Kontum Provinces.

III Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

1) Implement the Hop Tac plan to clear, secure, and pacify its defined area. US/FWMA forces would assist by operating as a buffer between the Hop Tac area and the VC and conducting continuous offensive operations into War Zones C and D.

2) Protect the critical base of Bien Hoa.

3) Provide reserve/reaction forces in support of US/FWMA and RVNAF forces throughout SVN.

IV Corps Concepts and Tasks (TS)

At the time of its publication, the plan visualized no commitment of US combat units in IV Corps except temporary use of reaction forces from other CTZ's.

1) Continue expansion of GVN control particularly in the area between the Bassac and Mekong Rivers.

2) Continue to secure Can Tho, Vinh Long and Soc Trang and defend province capitals and key district towns.

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Phase III

(TS) It was expected that the following would have been accomplished during Phases I and II: the initiative would be regained in certain areas; heavily populated regions along the coast, around Saigon, and between Saigon and the Mekong would have been pacified; and offensive operations would have destroyed or neutralized a considerable portion of the VC main force.

(TS) If the foregoing should have failed to convince the enemy to halt the insurgency, an intensified campaign would be conducted to clear the entire country of his forces and pacify all areas. Operations against NVN and infiltration through Laos would be integrated with this effort. US forces would concentrate on the destruction of enemy forces, although some US/FWMA forces would be needed for continued base security. RVNAF would assist in this destruction but would devote the major portion of their effort to the military tasks of the pacification program.

Special Forces Concepts

(TS) Detachments would be committed to:

- 1) Further develop Montagnard forces, thereby reducing ARVN requirements in the highlands.
- 2) Expand the DELTA project so as to improve target acquisition capabilities.
- 3) Establish CIDG camps on the perimeters of War Zones C and D, thereby containing the VC.
- 4) Improve surveillance of the Cambodian border by increasing CIDG camps. Act as sector/subsector advisors in these locations so as to release USMACV advisory teams for deployment to critical interior provinces.
- 5) Establish new CIDG camps in I CTZ to extend GVN influence westward in that CTZ.
- 6) Develop the CIDG multi-purpose reaction force (MRF) to reinforce CIDG camps in each CTZ.
- 7) Form APACHE Scout Teams from CIDG assets for support of US forces.
- 8) Increase counter-infiltration operations in SVN.

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Naval Support of Phase I and II

(TS) The discovery of a VC supply ship in Vung Ro Bay on 16 February 1965 (see Chapter II) represented a major turning point for naval operations in SVN. It provided the impetus for MARKET TIME, a USN operation begun in March 1965 to provide coastal surveillance for the prevention of enemy infiltration by sea. The basic concept of this operation was to establish USN patrols offshore to detect such infiltration attempts and support and advise the VNN within their territorial waters in interdicting coastal traffic infiltration. Legal constraints permitted only VN personnel to board and search suspect vessels and then only when within the 12-mile limit unless flying the RVN flag, in which case boarding and searching were permitted anywhere.¹⁰

Phase I (TS)

US Forces

1) Patrol Ships - COMUSMACV recognized, in his concept of operations, that, even with the MARKET TIME program, the objective of positively preventing infiltration would require an excessively large number of vessels. Hence the objective was modified to make infiltration so costly to the enemy that he would cease his attempts to do so. This would be accomplished by raising the likelihood of detecting an infiltrator from the mid-1965 estimated probability of 30 percent to an end-1965 probability of 50 percent. Increased forces would be positioned to cover the center of the RVN coastline inasmuch as coastal lanes at the 17th parallel and the Gulf of Thailand appeared to be sealed.

2) Air patrols - Such patrols were established to augment the sea patrols. Patrols along the entire coast with a leg 60 miles offshore and supplemented by a night flight were considered essential. Additionally, an as-required patrol south of Hainan Island to detect southerly movement from the north was necessary. Additional resources would be necessary to improve close-in coastal surveillance and detect and react to night infiltration.

3) Base facilities - An expansion of facilities would be necessary to support the Phase I increase in forces.

4) Naval gunfire support - Increased requirements for naval gunfire would result from the buildup of US forces ashore and the need to harass and destroy VC forces and bases along

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the coastline which were the beneficiaries of the infiltration effort.

5) Intelligence - Waterborne and overland infiltration of men and supplies from Cambodia into RVN was suspected. In addition, it was suspected that such men and supplies were being moved by water or overland into Cambodia. However, no intelligence effort had been established to introduce agents into Cambodia, consolidate and centrally direct GVN resources, and improve border surveillance to detect and prevent such infiltration. Thus, such a program would be established.

6) Harbor Control - To improve coastal surveillance at the entrance of the Mekong-Bassac rivers and to provide security at the entrance of the Saigon River, a control post would be established at Vung Tau.

Improvement of VNN Forces

1) Sea, river and coastal forces - These forces were scheduled for expansion to enhance their operational missions. Supplemental construction measures would be necessary, however, to meet prescribed goals of the coastal (junk) force.

2) Offshore water control - Establishment of forbidden zones and curfew hours was essential to the coastal surveillance operation. Procedures in effect either were inadequate or were being inadequately enforced. Hence, the following zones would be established to accomplish the objective: prohibited areas in which only naval vessels would be allowed; no-fishing zones in which only transiting would be permitted; curfew areas which would include the entire coastline of RVN out to three miles and in which any vessel found in the time between 2030 and 0500 would be captured or destroyed; protected anchorages for fishermen at night, and fishing convoys which would be checked and escorted to and from fishing areas, particularly in the Mekong coastline area.

3) Coastal force equipment - Improvements in armament, detection devices and ancillary equipment would be required.

4) MARKET TIME communications - Additional equipment would be necessary to improve coordination and control of operations.

5) Security on the Mekong River - A program for detecting infiltration of supplies by vessels transiting the Mekong River was not in force. Surveillance teams would be placed aboard each vessel to inspect and secure cargoes.

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6) Cambodian border river surveillance - Waterborne infiltration from Cambodia between the Mekong River and Gulf of Thailand necessitated adequate surveillance. Thus patrols equipped to detect, halt and inspect such traffic would be established to reduce this threat. In addition, physical barriers would be constructed or the alternatives of free-attack zones and various anti-intrusion devices would be established to accomplish the overall objectives.

Phase II (TS)

US Forces

Surveillance of VC-held coastlines - Coastwatcher stations consisting of fixed and mobile stations would be employed to maintain such surveillance.

Combat and Logistical Air Support

(S) The Cdr, 2d AD, had the mission of conducting and coordinating offensive and defensive air operations, tactical airlift, air traffic control, search and rescue operations, close air support and reconnaissance operations in and out of country and exercised overall air defense responsibility within RVN.¹¹ His capabilities for executing these missions would be improved as follows:

In-Country Air Strike Requirements (TS)

Increased sorties, and hence increased forces, would be required in order to provide an improved air surveillance/reconnaissance program; added air support for the increase in numbers and activities of FWMAF and to meet an increased level of enemy activity.

Airlift Operations (TS)

An in-country air LOC would be established, necessitating increased airlift resources and bases, controlled by a single manager. Air traffic control facilities would be essential to minimize the increased flight safety hazard caused by increased usage of minimal airspace by a wide range of air operations. Communications would be expanded and improved. Airfield improvements would be necessary to permit the operation of C-130's for delivering troops, supplies and equipment from designated bases. Major marshalling/logistical airfields, secondary marshalling/logistical airfields, tactical employment airfields, and combat emergency landing zones would be required.

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Reconnaissance Requirements (TS)

An increase of Side Looking Airborne Radar (SLAR), infrared (IR) and visual reconnaissance requirements would be expected. USAF in-country requirements would increase to support additional forces in-country. Out-of-country requirements would also increase in order to maintain existing day reconnaissance capability, establish a night and all weather capability and increase Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) capability to a satisfactory level.

Rural Construction/Pacification

(C) The goal of the Rural Construction Program was to extend GVN control over the land and people of the nation by neutralizing the efforts and influence of the VC, encouraging the people to develop an allegiance to the RVN and to provide the means by which socio-economic conditions could be improved. All activities within the Rural Construction Program were to emphasize the central position of the GVN: the GVN was to pacify and all other forces and agencies simply would support the GVN in its plans and efforts. COMUSMACV's concept of his role in this program was thus defined in terms of advising, assisting and supporting the GVN. At the end of the year, in a revision of the GVN pacification plan, national and regional priority areas were established for pacification to insure realistic and attainable objectives (see later discussion in this chapter).

Concepts and Tasks (TS)

Phase I

- 1) Strengthen GVN's pacification at the national, corps and province level by improving their organization and assisting in the preparation of a realistic plan.
- 2) Improve US inter-agency coordination to insure a more effective contribution to the GVN program. Thus, the senior US tactical commander, acting in his role as advisor to the ARVN corps commander, would coordinate with USAID and JUSPAO representatives when furnishing advice and support related to the pacification program. These senior commanders would also provide assistance to GVN in handling refugee relief problems.
- 3) Follow-up in areas where pacification programs had begun to produce results in order to provide resources to insure continued progress.
- 4) Revitalize the Hop Tac program.

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- 5) Expedite the establishment of pacification programs in I, II, and IV CTZ's.
- 6) Develop a practical plan for security of the rural population and formation of the "Home Guard"¹² at hamlet level.
- 7) USMACV additionally would assist by reforming operating procedures and organization for pacification cadre, expanding GVN's ability to identify and eliminate the VC infrastructure, improving resources control measures and developing a political awareness among the rural populace.
- 8) As part of the NP, the National Police Field Forces (NFFF) would be formed to react to low level VC subversion and terrorism and execute an effective Population and Resources Control Program.

Phase II

Expand pacification operations rapidly into those areas newly cleared by military operations, capitalizing on VC waning interest as their military situation became more tenuous.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

(C) The objectives of US psychological operations (psyops) in SVN in early 1965 were: 1) to create, build and maintain confidence in the GVN, 2) to establish a climate of national unity behind the war effort, and 3) to expose the true nature of VC objectives and induce disaffection among VC and their supporters. In accordance with these objectives, USMACV's role consisted of advice and assistance to the RVNAF psywar structure from the JCS to sector level. The RVNAF's psywar goals were: 1) to boost the morale and encourage the sense of patriotism of its personnel, 2) to gain the loyalty of the rural population for the GVN, 3) to increase enlistments into the RVNAF and to control desertion, 4) to support combat operations, and 5) to lower VC morale and encourage defections under the Chieu Hoi program.

(C) With the introduction of massive US forces in SVN it became necessary to relate the commitment of these forces to the need for countering the mounting efforts of the VC. It was a further objective to explain the limited purpose of the US commitment and forestall communist charges of "colonialism" and "imperialism."

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(C) A sensitive element of propaganda strategy also involved maintaining the delicate balance in the highlands among RVNAF commanders and GVN officials, US Advisors and units (particularly Special Forces teams), and the Montagnard tribes. One objective was to dispel GVN suspicions that the US was trying to establish special relations with the Montagnards; a second objective was to improve GVN-Montagnard relations.

(C) The infiltration of major NVA units into SVN called for in-country propaganda, which included the VC as a target audience. Its theme was that the presence of major NVA units in SVN proved that the VC did not represent a national VN movement but were merely the instruments of foreign aggressors. The propaganda strategy also stressed that increases in the enemy's strength would be outmatched by the massed power of SVN, US and its Free World allies.

(C) Toward the end of 1965, JUSPAO developed a new National Psychological Operations Plan which redefined the broad objectives of US/GVN propaganda as follows:

1) to convince the SVN citizenry that the GVN ultimately would win against the VC and that they would be best advised to support the ultimate victor.

2) conversely, to impress upon the VC that they could not expect to win against the SVN populace, whose struggle for peace, security and independence was supported by the US and other FWMAF.

3) to create hope that the then current social revolution would produce a dynamic nation responsive to the will and aspirations of the people, and capable of finding VN solutions to VN problems and to encourage the citizens to active, personal and emotional identification with the RVN's quest for peace, humanity, social justice and a vital national identity.

4) conversely, to inform the people that NVN and the VC offered nothing but alien schemes which were oppressive and reactionary, have failed in all their endeavors and are, in fact, merely the tools of an international conspiracy and CHICOM imperialism; and to inspire the people with contempt for the VC who exposed the nation to death, destruction, misery and oppression, and who opposed the creation of a truly VN social order and the preservation of Vietnamese values and traditions.

(C) Propaganda directed at NVN audiences was initiated in April 1965; it explained US bombings of communications routes and

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warned the people to stay away from military targets. These objectives were expanded in the US Mission Three-Month Plan (15 July-15 October) as follows: 1) to warn the NVN people to stay away from installations likely to be hit, 2) to inform the NVN citizenry of the necessity of bombing at the root of the infiltration apparatus which the NVN government operates and also to place the blame squarely on the NVN regime and the Lao Dong Party, and 3) to create disaffection among the NVN citizenry with the NVN regime/Lao Dong Party by informing them of what their leaders have inflicted on SVN and how their leaders had persistently rejected the efforts of the GVN and its friends for a peaceful settlement and how slavishly their leaders acted towards their CHICOM masters.

(C) In a second Three-Month Plan, effective 15 October, a somewhat harder line was taken by substituting the following for objectives 2 and 3 cited above: to convince the NVN regime and people that the so-called liberation war in SVN was futile, that defeat in SVN was inevitable, and that unification, a common aspiration of both NVN and SVN, could be achieved only through peaceful means; and to create disaffection among the NVN citizenry with their government by informing them of the true nature of the aggressive war in SVN and relating their hardships and privations to the continuation of the war, and to stress that their government had rejected every effort made to find a peaceful solution and to suggest to the NVN population various passive resistance measures they might take individually against their government.

RVNAF PLAN AB 140/US-RVNAF PLAN AB 141

(C) A milestone was reached in December 1965 with the publication on 15 December of RVNAF Plan AB 140, basically a revision of AB 139 as required to support GVN's new rural construction program, and the combined US/RVNAF Plan AB 141, published on 31 December. This latter plan, the first US-RVN venture into combined planning, would set the stage for the military campaign in the new year that lay ahead.

RVNAF JGS Directive AB 140

(C) RVNAF JGS Directive AB 140 was the basic GVN military plan to support the 1966 rural construction plan. It was developed in coordination with the Ministry of Rural Construction and USMACV and was in consonance with the Joint Campaign Plan. The plan consisted of the basic directive and eight annexes. The basic directive included priority areas, both national

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and corps. National areas were to receive first priority and were to be cleared, secured, and development initiated in 1966. Corps priority areas were to be cleared, secured and developed to the extent of the capabilities in 1966. Corps commanders were given specific instructions to concentrate their efforts in the high priority areas and to provide military support to the rural construction program.

(C) Annex F, concept on the use of forces, listed those basic tasks for FWMAF and showed roles and missions of ARVN forces, RF, PF, NP, and CIDG in the three phases of rural construction. Annex G provided guidance and information on controlling and protecting natural resources. Annex I provided guidance on psychological operations and civic action which should be accomplished in the three phases of rural construction; placed a psywar battalion and a civic action company in direct support of each corps, directed that psywar and civic action annexes be prepared to support rural construction; and emphasized the requirement for coordination between tactical units, psywar and civic action agencies, and rural construction cadre.

RVNAF - MACV Campaign Plan AB 141

(C) The Campaign Plan established the basic mission of RVNAF and US/FWMA forces - to defeat the VC and extend GVN control in RVN. The plan established intermediate goals to accomplish the mission. Each corps commander, commanders of CMR, VMN and VNAF in coordination with their US/FWMAF counterparts, were given specific tasks which amplified and defined in detail the general tasks.

(U) The Campaign Plan consisted of the basic plan, maps depicting areas in each corps that were to be brought under GVN control in 1966, and four annexes: The Intelligence Annex, an annex outlining procedures for coordination of RVNAF and US/FWMAF operations, the Communications and Electronics Annex, and a Distribution Annex.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

(C) At the beginning of 1965, there were 15 contingency plans, the preparation for which General Westmoreland, in his three-hatted role as COMUSMACV, COMUSSEASIA (D), and CCRSFF (D), was responsible (see Table III-2).¹³ A brief discussion of the objective(s) of each of these plans and new plans which evolved is contained in this section.

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(TS) COMUSSEASIA OPLAN 1-64 was a US General War plan for SEASIA in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 1-(Yr). The mission of the SEASIA Command was to conduct defensive and offensive operations in defense of SEASIA, in coordination with available Allied Forces, in order to hold as far forward as possible, insure friendly control of SEASIA, and contribute to the defeat of the Sino-Soviet bloc. Change 1 simply updated the plan.¹⁴ No other changes were made during 1965.

(C) CCRSFF OPLAN 4-64 was a SEATO Plan with a restricted security classification.

(TS) COMUSMACV OPLAN 32-64 (Phase II, RVN) was a US plan to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the RVN in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 and SEATO OPLAN 7-(Yr). These US plans were applicable to operations short of general war and visualized four phases:

Phase I - Alert (in effect on 1 January 1965).

Phase II - Counterinsurgency (US unilateral action in RVN, Laos and Thailand).

Phase III - Overt NVN intervention.

Phase IV - Overt CHICOM intervention with or without NVN intervention.¹⁵

The Phase II, RVN, portions of these plans were essentially implemented by the US buildup during 1965, although on a larger scale than planned. No further revisions were therefore considered necessary.¹⁶

(TS) COMUSSEASIA OPLAN 32-64 (Phase III & IV) was actually two plans, one for each of the phases discussed above in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 and SEATO OPLAN 4-64. Two changes were issued during 1965: Change 5, published on 16 February, revised the staffing of COMUSSEASIA headquarters resulting from the phase-out of MAAG Vietnam in May 1964, and the requirement for a USMACV "stay behind" staff in Saigon in the event of activation of COMUSSEASIA headquarters. Change 6, published on 1 November as Annex I (Air Operations), provided guidance for the coordinated employment of the air resources of COMUSSEASIA with ground and naval operations.¹⁷

(TS) COMUSMACV/THAI OPLAN 33-63 provided for the employment of US forces in support of overt military operations against NVN in retaliation for specific communist insurgency

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activities in SVN and Laos. The US participation would be covert, but would include air strikes and support of raids by indigenous personnel in NVN. The plan provided a flexible means for directing operations against selected targets in NVN in order to attain the effect desired by higher authority.¹⁸ This plan was superseded by COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65, 4 March 1965.

(TS) COMUSMACV OPLAN 34-64 provided for USMACV advice and assistance to RVN on a covert basis to allow the RVN to engage in covert psychological operations against NVN and to conduct hit-and-run attacks against selected targets in NVN in order substantially to increase the costs to NVN for its involvement in subversion and insurgency in SVN and Laos.¹⁹ This plan was superseded by Annex X (Operations Support) to COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65 on 21 September 1965.

(C) COMUSMACV OPLAN 34A-64 was a Special Operations Plan and is not discussed herein because of its restricted security classification. It was also superseded by Annex X, COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65 on 21 September.

(U) COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-64 is discussed on page 163 of the USMACV 1964 Command History. This plan was also superseded by COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65 on 4 March 1965.

(TS) COMUSMACV OPLAN 38-65 was a US plan for the defense of SEASIA, in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 38-64. Primary emphasis was placed on air and naval power to conduct operations against NVN and CHICOM forces in SEASIA as part of an overall plan to conduct military operations against those same forces in both SEASIA and Communist China.²⁰ No changes were made to the plan in 1965 as it was considered basically impractical and duplicatory.²¹ The plan was redesignated COMUSSEASIA OPLAN 38-65 during the year (see Table III-3).

(TS) COMUSMACV OPLAN 39-65 was a US plan in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65 for the employment of US forces, in conjunction with available Allied Forces, to conduct limited war contingency operations against Communist China and NVN in the defense of SEASIA. Preemptive offensive or counter-offensive operations might be made using air and naval forces with minimal ground forces to deter, prevent, or cause cessation of CHICOM aggression.²² The plan remained basically unchanged during the year except for redesignation as COMUSSEASIA OPLAN 39-65 (see Table III-3).

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(C) COMUSMACV OPLAN 60-64 was a plan for the emergency evacuation of US and US sponsored non-combatants.²³ With the increasing concern that implementation of the plan was imminent early in the year, Change 4 was published on 11 January expanding the deployment of BLT's of the 9th MEB to TSN, Bien Hoa, Nha Trang and Da Nang instead of the single location at TSN as had been required previously, and tasking USASCV to prepare a helicopter evacuation plan in support of the basic oplan.²⁴ Following the implementation of a modified version of the plan in February, a revision was prepared, incorporating lessons learned from the evacuation, and published in September as COMUSMACV OPLAN 60-66 (see Table III-3).

(C) COMUSMACV OPLAN 61-64 was a plan for the physical security of critical US installations in SVN. Change 1 was published in early January to provide for more stringent security measures at all USMACV units and installations and the classifying of security conditions to permit maximum dissemination and implementation of instructions.²⁵ At the end of the year this plan was awaiting supersession as a result of the publication of USMACV Directives 380-8, 9 July, subj: Military Security - Physical Security, and 380-13, 3 December, subj: Military Security - Security of Key US Personnel.

(U) COMUSMACV OPLANS 98-64 and 98-64A are discussed on page 163 of the USMACV 1964 Command History. These plans were superseded by COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65 with Annex X during the year, on those dates previously mentioned.

(U) During 1965 several new plans were developed to cope with the ever-changing situation. These plans are discussed below.

(TS) COMUSMACV/SEASIA OPLAN 22-66, a plan prepared in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 22-66, awaited approval at the end of year. It was a US plan to provide military assistance in the event of revolutionary outbreaks in NVN. It envisaged a three phase operation:

Phase I - Planning, training, intelligence, paywar and covert and overt activities.

Phase II - All measures short of direct US intervention.

Phase III - All measures including direct US intervention. Military and paramilitary forces from SVN and active and passive groups from NVN would be employed.²⁶

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(TS) COMUSMACV OPLAN 37-65 was initiated in 1964 in support of CINCPAC OPLAN 37-65. The plan was published in March 1965 and superseded a number of other COMUSMACV OPLANS. The plan provided for the employment of US forces in conjunction with RVNAF for the purpose of halting NVN support of communist insurgent forces in RVN and Laos by the application of selected military pressures on Laos, Cambodia and NVN.²⁷ Annex X (Special Operations), which superseded several other COMUSMACV OPLANS as previously mentioned, and Change 1, minor revisions, were published in September and November, respectively.

(S) COMUSMACV's submission for Annex J to JSOP-71 was forwarded to CINCPAC on 10 September. It was based on the ultimate withdrawal of US/FWMA forces from RVN and represented a significant increase in projected RVNAF strengths over the 1964 submission. The more significant changes included:

(1) An increase of two ARVN divisions to a total of 12 in FY 67.

(2) Increase of RF/PF units.

(3) Modernizing VNAF and VNN.

(4) Providing an air defense capability by FY 70.

(5) Establishment of a reserve similar to the US National Guard by FY 71.²⁸

(U) Other planning activities of COMUSMACV are discussed in Annex G, J5 Studies.

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