

# MACV COMMAND HISTORY 1965



## Chapter 4 The Employment



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CHAPTER IV

THE EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

(C) In 1965, the mission of US forces in the RVN was to assist and support the RVNAF in their efforts to defeat communist subversive insurgency, and to accelerate effective GVN control over the country. This required that the VC be defeated militarily, or otherwise persuaded to discontinue their efforts to overthrow the GVN.

(C) During 1965, the VC retained complete control over areas of SVN and maintained their grip over other areas by terrorism. This situation called for careful application and conduct of military forces at all times as the people in VC-dominated areas could not always be presumed to be pro-VC. While maximum effectiveness in operations was desirable, a conscious effort was made to minimize noncombatant casualties, requiring a high level of leadership, judgment and restraint not previously expected of US forces. These principles governed the tactics and techniques used in the counterinsurgency efforts of the RVNAF, US forces, and FMAP.

TYPES OF OPERATIONS

(C) COMUSMACV conducted operations which involved ground, air and naval forces. Ground operations were primarily of three types:

1) Search and destroy - operations in VC dominated territory aimed at neutralizing the enemy's main forces and destroying his supply and operational bases.

2) Clearing - operations in enemy-controlled areas designed to remove permanently those enemy forces remaining in the area.

3) Securing - operations to stabilize and maintain control of a cleared area.

(C) Each of these three types of ground operations was supported, when needed, by reserve/reaction forces. Ground operations were assisted by close air support and artillery fire and, when appropriate, by naval gunfire and B-52 strikes.

(C) Air operations consisted mainly of close combat air support, B-52 strikes, and interdiction operations in SVN and NVN.

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(C) Naval operations consisted of DAGGER THRUST amphibious operations, naval gunfire support, and surface surveillance. The naval air arm had essentially the same tasks as, and was integrated with, the land-based air elements of USAF, USMC and VNAF.

(C) The US forces in SVN during 1965 had a unique challenge. Guerrilla fighting was not really new, but now, for the first time, the American fighting man found himself participating in civic action, in political warfare, advising and teaching—in short, he was helping to pacify, secure and rebuild a nation.

### US MARINE OPERATIONS

(C) After the 9th MEB landed at Da Nang on 8 March 1965 (see chapter II), it was primarily engaged in securing its assigned area. A defensive perimeter was formed and aggressive patrol, ambush, and search and destroy operations were conducted within the TACR. Because of the brigade's limited size, it did not conduct any large-scale combat operations. As the 9th MEB grew in strength, it was redesignated the III MAF in the spring of 1965 and conducted many battalion and larger-size operations.

(C) All operations conducted in I Corps in 1965, whether unilateral or combined USMC/ARVN/VNMC, had a search and destroy mission.<sup>2</sup> The first significant campaign, Operation LIEN KET - 4, began on 28 July. The task force consisted of the VNMC 3d Bn (Rain); the ARVN 3d Bn, 51st Regt; and the US 2d Bn, 4th Marines. By agreement between CG, III MAF, and CG, I Corps, the operation was conducted under the tactical direction of the CO, 4th Marine Regiment.<sup>3</sup> (For a discussion of the scope of tactical direction see chapter II, Combined Command Relationships.) This was also the first land-based combined operation utilizing USMC and ARVN forces.

(C) Operation STARLIGHT, which began on 18 August, was planned when intelligence reports indicated a buildup of VC forces south of the Chu Lai (Quang Ngai Province) TACR. They were identified as the VC 1st Regt, and an attached infantry battalion, reinforced with 81mm mortars and 57- and 75-mm RR. The operational plan called for BLT 2/4 (Battalion Landing Team, US 2d Bn, 4th Marine Regt) to be heli-lifted to designated landing zones (LZ's), BLT 3/3 to conduct an amphibious assault and BLT 3/7 to remain in reserve aboard the carrier Iwo Jima. BLT 2/4 and BLT 3/3 (-) were to link up with a blocking force consisting of M Co, 3/3 located north of An Trung village, across from the Mai An Ha Peninsula. The operation proceeded as planned. After the link-up, the two battalions swept north, up the peninsula, destroying the VC in their path. The operation ended on 21 August and resulted in approximately 700 VC KIA; it had thwarted an incipient

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attack on Chu Lai. Operation STARLIGHT demonstrated the great value of intelligence gained from the people as a result of civic action efforts and illustrated that a firm, sea-based position, such as Chu Lai, which could not be outflanked, would oblige the VC to mass to destroy it frontally. Thus, it provided a secure base for an air/sea attack on the VC forces.<sup>4</sup>

(U) The Marine victory at Chu Lai was widely applauded by the US press. "American military professionalism is starting to tell in Vietnam," the Kansas City Star said on 19 August. "One victory doesn't win a war for us, but a defeat such as this for the Viet Cong will drive it home to him there are no easy pickings in Southeast Asia," said the Detroit News on 22 August. Mark Watson of the Baltimore Sun wrote, on 24 August, that "this operation is recognized as a true text-book example of an air-sea-land attack under ideal conditions." But James Reston of the New York Times, writing from Saigon on 22 August, said the victory was not "spectacular news" for the Vietnamese people:

Military victories, particularly at lonely military bases along the coast, will not win the country. In fact, it is almost a cliché to say in Saigon, not only in the American Embassy but even in the American military compound, that while victory at Chu Lai was important and even essential, it will be necessary in the end to win the people in order to win the war.

(C) FIRANHA (7-11 September) was a four-day search and destroy operation on the Bantangan Peninsula, 20 miles south of the Chu Lai TAOR. The plan was similar to that of STARLIGHT, in that it was a combined air-sea-ground campaign using BLT 3/7 as the helicopter landing force and BLT 1/7 as the amphibious force. Intelligence had indicated that two VC main force battalions were stretched across the eight miles of the peninsula axis, but subsequent operations revealed that the enemy forces had withdrawn from the immediate area prior to D-Day. As the assault gained momentum, more and more VC were contacted. Sporadic but spirited firefights resulted in 198 VC KIA, 38 WIA (wounded in action), and 265 VC suspects detained. US Marine casualties were one KIA and eight WIA, an example of the superiority of US forces over the VC.<sup>5</sup> A significant aspect of FIRANHA was that none of the approximately 3,300 dwellings in the III MAF portion of the objective area was destroyed and only 2 civilians were wounded. This was a direct result of troop indoctrination and the prudent use of supporting arms.<sup>6</sup>

(C) Several DAGGER THRUST operations were conducted during the fall and winter, usually with the 7th Flt SLF acting as the amphibious landing force. These operations normally lasted one to two days and were aimed at the destruction of VC installations and capturing or destroying VC personnel and material. Forces consisted

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of both surface and helicopter elements, and were supported by naval gun fire (NGF) and tactical air power. Enemy resistance was usually negligible.

(C) Operation GOLDEN FLEECE was a regimental-size, unilateral operation by III MAF during September 1965. Conducted in the southern portion of the Da Nang TAOR, its mission was to prevent the VC from seizing the newly-harvested rice along the Song Cau Do, Song Yen Song Bau and Song Vian Dien Rivers. GOLDEN FLEECE consisted of search and destroy operations, continuous patrols, and ambushes in the rice harvest area. The operation was highly successful in protecting the farmers during the harvest and denying the rice to the VC. The first of a series of similar operations, it positively demonstrated US/FW/GVN intent to provide security for the rural populace.<sup>8</sup>

(C) Operation BLUE MARLIN was the first combined III MAF/VNMC amphibious operation. In the first phase, one amphibious force would land in the vicinity of Tam Ky village (between Chu Lai and Da Nang in Quang Tin Province), and move south to the Chu Lai TAOR searching for and destroying enemy forces. Upon completion of this operation, the force would reembark upon the transport ships. The second phase would consist of another amphibious assault in the vicinity of Hai An village near the location of the first landing, followed by a search and destroy operation up the coast to the Da Nang TAOR. The forces involved were the VNMC 3d Bn and III MAF BLT's 2/7 and 3/3.

(C) On D-Day (10 November), BLT 2/7 landed as scheduled, and covered the landing of the VNMC 3d Bn. The VNMC battalion conducted search and destroy operations as planned. On D plus 5, the VNMC battalion landed after BLT 3/3, and carried out the second phase. BLT 2/1, 7th Flt's SLF, the landing force reserve, was prepared to land by helicopter, to reinforce or to exploit gains by the landing forces or to provide a blocking force if required. As the operation developed, the expected engagement with the VC did not occur and there was no need for the reserve. The operation ended with negligible casualties in both enemy and friendly forces.<sup>9</sup> The most important aspect of the operation was the exposure of the VNMC to operations with their American counterparts. The operation seemed to increase the confidence of the VNMC and revealed their competence to participate actively in future amphibious operations.<sup>10</sup>

(C) Operation HARVEST MOON was scheduled to last 10 days and began on 8 December. It was an ARVN/USMC search and destroy operation in the Hiep Duc - Que Son - Viet An area in Quang Nam Province. III MAF units consisted of BLT's 3/3, 2/7 and 2/1. ARVN units consisted of 11th Ranger Bn; 1st Bn, 5th Regt; and 1st Bn, 6th Regt. On D-Day, the 11th Ranger Bn was hit by VC forces estimated at one battalion. The VC allowed the Ranger battalion to approach within 20 meters of their positions before delivering a heavy volume of automatic weapons

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and small arms fire. Apparently, no security was provided by the ARVN forces. The VC executed a double envelopment and overran the Ranger battalion. Attempts by the 1st Bn, 5th Regt to reinforce the Rangers were halted by enemy small arms fire and inadvertent friendly air strikes on the ARVN positions. The reaction force, 1st Bn, 6th Regt, was heli-lifted into the battle area while the 1st Bn, 5th Regt maintained its position.<sup>11</sup> B-52's struck suspected VC positions on 12 and 13 December. Areas struck were exploited by III MAF ground units.

(C) BLT's 3/3 and 2/1 met only sporadic resistance during the operation. BLT 2/7 made a significant contact on 18 December toward the end of the operation. In this engagement, the VC 80th Bn suffered at least 105 KIA and lost numerous weapons.

(C) The operation resulted in 407 known VC dead and possibly 636 others. Large quantities of VC stores, equipment and manufacturing installations were captured or destroyed and many tunnels and caves in the battle area were rendered useless.<sup>12</sup> A complete evaluation of HARVEST MOON was still pending at year's end.

(C) During autumn, III MAF units were utilized as reaction/reinforcement forces for several assaulted outposts in the I CTZ. An example was the Song Ve 6-Thach Tru operation, in which elements of BLT 3/7 were dispatched on 23 November to sweep the vicinity of a beleaguered outpost of the ARVN 37th Ranger Bn in Quang Ngai Province. The VNMC 3rd Bn and 413th APC Troop were the reaction forces. USMC/ARVN/VNMC casualties were 71 KIA, 74 WIA and 2 MIA. ARVN reportedly accounted for 300-400 VC KIA for the total operation, but USMC body count confirmed only 175 of these casualties.<sup>13</sup>

(C) During 1965 thousands of night and day patrols, hundreds of ambushes and small unit offensive actions, and scores of battalion and regimental-size operations were conducted by III MAF against the VC. The primary mission of these actions was to seek out, destroy and disrupt insurgent strength. While some operations were spectacularly successful, the objectives of all actions were largely met. As a yardstick of assessment, III MAF expanded from a six square-mile TAOR on 8 March 1965, to a TAOR of 600 square miles by year's end.

(C) As the III MAF's TAOR expanded several new factors arose. First, operations were extending closer to VC dominated territory. Secondly, participating forces became less able to effect mutual support. It was expected that these factors would cause the VC to become more aggressive and employ larger size forces. The forces available to III MAF were considered insufficient to provide the necessary base security, conduct extended tactical operations against the VC and maintain adequate reserves.<sup>14</sup>

(C) The desired solution to this problem was to obtain and

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train adequate numbers of RF/PF to take over the peace-keeping and village security tasks so that III MAF forces could concentrate on offensive actions elsewhere in I CTZ. Until a suitable solution was realized it was considered necessary to limit extension of the TAOR. The expected increase in USMC forces and improvement of the RF/PF situation in 1966, provided hopeful indications that pacification efforts and offensive operations against the VC could be accelerated.<sup>15</sup>

#### US ARMY OPERATIONS

(U) Early in 1965, as VC forces boldly struck at targets throughout SVN, it was apparent that US Army forces were needed to assist in stemming the tide. The deployment of these forces and their commitment are discussed in chapter II. The overall concepts governing their employment are discussed in chapter III. The missions of USA forces in RVN were: 1) to defend bases vital to US interests; 2) to provide a highly mobile reserve to be used as a reaction force for RVNAF; 3) to search out and destroy enemy bases and storage areas; and 4) to search out and clear selected areas of SVN and assist the GVN in pacification efforts. The 173d Abn Bde, which was the first USA ground combat unit in SVN, initially provided base security at Bien Hoa and Vung Tau, III CTZ. The arrival of the 2d Bde, 1st Inf Div and the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div freed the 173d Abn Bde from its security roles and allowed it to become a highly mobile reaction force (see Chapt II). The arrival of the remainder of the 1st Inf Div and the 1st Cav Div (AM) opened the way for large scale search and destroy missions, and USA forces shifted from a primarily defensive role to the offensive, a role which they maintained throughout the rest of the year. Discussed below are some of the more significant offensive USA actions during 1965.

(C) During May, and until the latter part of June, the 173d Abn Bde engaged in an almost continuous series of small-unit actions in defense of its assigned TAOR and the air bases. In mid-June, the battalion which had been stationed at Vung Tau rejoined the brigade at Bien Hoa. That, coupled with the arrival of the 1st Bn, RAR, in early June and its attachment to the 173d, gave the brigade three infantry battalions for the conduct of operations.<sup>16</sup>

(C) During the period of 27-30 June, the 173d Abn Bde participated in a large-scale search and destroy operation in War Zone D (see Figure I-8). This was the first time in over a year that friendly forces had penetrated this VC base area and was an important "first" in fulfilling COMUSMACV's concept of denying freedom of action to the VC in these "safe havens". The operation was conducted in conjunction with two airborne battalions of the ARVN Abn

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Bde, the ARVN 48th Regt, and the 1/RAR. It resulted in over 25 VC KIA, 200 tons of food and supplies destroyed and the recovery of approximately 50 tons of rice for distribution by GVN authorities.<sup>17</sup>

(C) On 10 August the 173d, with the 2d Bn, 18th Inf of the 2d Bde, 1st Inf Div, moved to Pleiku, II CTZ, as a ready reaction force for RVNAF units in that area. Earlier in the month the VC had attacked the special forces camp at Duk Co west of Pleiku and, in response, ARVN units were conducting large-scale search and destroy operations in the area. Patrols were conducted around the Thanh Binh Pass area on Highway 19, and on 17 August the 173d provided protection for ARVN units withdrawing through the pass. After patrolling around Kontum the remainder of August, the brigade returned to Bien Hoa on 6 September.<sup>18</sup> Selection of the 173d for this mission was appropriate because of its mission as general reserve for all of Vietnam. The recently arrived brigade of the 101st Abn Div was not yet ready to assume this mission. Selection of the 2d Bn, 18th Inf to accompany the brigade was due to a need to strengthen the 173d with another battalion (the 1/RAR being confined to operations in the III CTZ).

(U) Operation HIGHLAND, begun by the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div in the latter part of August had the mission of opening Highway 19 from Qui Nhon to An Khe and securing the base area at An Khe to facilitate the deployment of the 1st Cav Div (AM). The brigade planned to accomplish its mission in four phases: 1) move to a forward assembly area near Binh Khe (on Highway 19 between Qui Nhon and An Khe, Binh Dinh Province); 2) open Highway 19 by combat operations to permit convoy movement from Qui Nhon to An Khe; 3) provide continuous convoy security along the highway and secure the base area at An Khe; and 4) relinquish control of the base area to the 1st Cav Div (AM) and return to home base.

(C) Phases I and II were accomplished without incident. During phase III, Operation GIBRALTAR<sup>19</sup> was planned to destroy a VC main force battalion believed to be operating northeast of An Khe. A ground/airmobile operation, it began on 18 September with the landing of battalion elements which were to push forward to the ground blocking force. After two companies landed, however, the VC opened up an extremely heavy volume of fire, causing the remainder of the battalion to abort. The blocking force commander was ordered to move his unit to aid the surrounded force. Another force consisting of US troops and ARVN Rangers was lifted to an LZ approximately 1500 meters east of the battle area. The ground force and the helilifted force were unable to link up before dark. At 0615 the next day link-up was effected and the beleaguered force extracted. Throughout the operation, over 100 tactical fighter sorties were flown and over 11,000 rounds of artillery fired. Although surrounded and outnumbered, the two companies held their perimeter and inflicted heavy losses on the

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VC. Friendly losses were 13 KIA and 44 WIA, compared to VC losses of 226 KIA and 9 captured.<sup>20</sup>

(C) On 1 October the 1st Cav Div (AM) assumed responsibility for Highway 19 and the An Khe base area. The 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div continued to conduct search and destroy operations in the area until that time. Total friendly casualties for operation HIGH-LAND were 22 KIA and 108 WIA while the VC lost 261 KIA and 577<sup>21</sup> captured. The brigade closed on its home base at Bien Hoa on 6 September, completing Phase IV.

(C) The VC attack on the Plei Me Special Forces Camp, Pleiku Province, on 19 October triggered a month long campaign by both ARVN and US forces. Operation SILVER BAYONET, conducted by the 1st Cav Div (AM), was designed to provide security and artillery support to ARVN forces around Plei Me. This operation began on 23 October with the commitment of a battalion task force which soon expanded to reinforced brigade strength. On 27 October this force, the 1st Bde, was given a search and destroy mission between Plei Me and the Cambodian border. On 1 November the brigade, having contacted a large enemy force, began to pursue VC/NVA forces west of the Plei Me camp, moving along the SVN/Cambodian border. During this pursuit the VC/NVA forces lost 216 KIA, 117 captured, and 18 suspects detained. Friendly losses were 55 KIA and 194 WIA.

(C) On 14 November, after the 3d Bde, 1st Cav Div (AM), had relieved the 1st Bde in the vicinity of Plei Me and Pleiku, the most significant phase of SILVER BAYONET began. Airmobile search and destroy operations were initiated, which resulted in very heavy and intense contacts with VC/NVA forces. CCMUSMACV requested a series of B-52 strikes to support ground operations in the vicinity of Chu Pong Mountain.<sup>22</sup> These strikes were delivered on 16 November (see US Air Opns, this chapter).

(C) Three US infantry battalions were closely engaged, supported by tactical air sorties and artillery. The VC/NVA forces which exceeded division strength, continued active resistance to the US forces from well-entrenched positions. The battle of the 3d Bde against numerically superior VC/NVA forces continued until 18 November in the vicinity of Chu Pong and the Ia Drang Valley. Fighting was often hand-to-hand, with many small units temporarily out of from their parent organization.

(C) On 20 November, the 2d Bde, 1st Cav Div (AM), moved to Pleiku to relieve the 3d Bde. The VC/NVA had lost 1,286 KIA, 19 captured and approximately 1,000 weapons destroyed or captured. US losses were 217 KIA, 232 WIA and 9 MIA (missing in action).<sup>23</sup>

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(U) In commenting on the action around Plei Me, COMUSMACV stated that the conflict was unprecedented in intensity and the degree of success achieved by friendly forces. He said:

the performance of the American troops and the Vietnamese have been magnificent. At no time during the campaign have American troops been forced to withdraw except for purposes of tactical maneuver. When the dust of the battlefield settled, the American troops were present to clear the battlefield of killed and wounded, both friendly and enemy. The enemy had fled the scene. American casualties were heavier than any previous engagement but small by comparison with the enemy.<sup>24</sup>

(C) The final phase of the battle around Plei Me began on 18 November, with three battalions of the RVNAF Abn Bde conducting a search and destroy operation west of Pleiku. The operation, titled THAN PHONG 7, made light contact with the VC for two days. On 20 November, a force of unknown size was engaged and over 180 enemy were killed. When the operation terminated on 26 November, there were 265 VC KIA and 10 captured. The ARVN units, which lost 21 KIA and 61 WIA, also captured 49 individual and several crew-served weapons.<sup>25</sup>

(U) Press commentators in the US hailed the results of the Plei Me and Ia Drang operations and discussed the implications. The Washington News said on 30 October:

Plei Me is not exactly Stalingrad nor the bank of the Marne nor Gettysburg, Pa. It is a miserable collection of huts, trenches and barbed wire in the Vietnam highlands. Yet in a strange way, it may mark a turning point in the Vietnamese war just as surely as did those famous battlefields in other conflicts.

The New York Journal American editorialized on 28 October that Plei Me was

a big psychological victory for the South Vietnamese and American forces, and a big psychological setback for the enemy. The battle is heartening as an example of the revitalized morale of the South Vietnamese troops that has followed the buildup of American strength.

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The New York Herald Tribune of 19 November said the battle's significance was that "the war is developing more and more into a contest between the armed forces of the United States and those of North Vietnam, with the Communist and anti-Communist units of South Vietnam assuming a correspondingly lesser role". The Newport News Press editorialized in their 23 November issue: "Unhappily, we must face the possibility that Plei Me and the Ia Drang Valley will prove to be the forerunners of more costly actions. . . a lessening of the US military effort could only encourage Hanoi to push harder". The New Orleans Times-Picayune of 22 November said:

One significant aspect was that the encounter proves conspicuously that at least the portion of Cambodia nearest the battlegrounds is a secure haven for Communist troops. . . Now, it appears, regular units of the North Vietnamese army are sheltered there despite Cambodian Prince Sihanouk's categorical denials.

(C) On 5 November, the 173d Abn Bde began another search and destroy operation into War Zone D. This operation, named HUMP, marked the fifth time the brigade had been in War Zone D. Three task forces, built around three infantry battalions and one artillery battalion, were formed. These forces had the mission of launching airmobile assaults into the operational area and conducting search and destroy operations to find, fix and destroy VC personnel, supplies and installations.

(C) Intelligence developed before the operation revealed that there was a VC stronghold surrounding the junction of two rivers in the operational area as well as two VC battalions equipped with the latest family of Soviet and CHICOM weapons. Additionally, the VC had the capability to mass approximately 8,500 troops from contiguous areas within 48 hours.

(C) The operation began with two airmobile assaults by the 1st Bn, 503d Inf and the 1/RAR into separate LZ's against light enemy resistance. The two forces then established base positions in their operation areas without any major action. For the remainder of D-Day, and the next two days, the friendly forces conducted search and destroy operations. They found numerous tunnel systems and fortifications as well as several huts but no significant contact with the enemy was made.

(C) On 8 November, acting on intelligence acquired late on D plus 2 that a VC force of unknown size was located approximately 2,000 meters west, the 1st Bn, 503d Inf moved toward the area and made contact at 0800 with a company-size unit engaged by a VC

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battalion. During the ensuing battle fighting was at such close quarters that supporting fires could not be employed on the line of engagement but were used to seal off the battle area. A request for reinforcement from the 2d Bn, 503d Inf, the brigade reserve force, could not be honored due to the lack of helicopters. The VC's repeated assaults against the perimeter of the airborne troops were repulsed with heavy VC casualties.

(C) The main battle ended during the afternoon, with sporadic machine gun and sniper fire on the US units throughout the remainder of the day and night. The 1/RAR, south of the Dong Nai River, contacted a well-entrenched VC force of about 100 men during the late afternoon. During the following fire fight, four VC were killed before the VC broke contact.

(C) On 9 November, the 1st Bn, 503d Inf cut an LZ into the dense jungle through trees up to 250 feet high, to enable helicopters to evacuate the friendly forces. This was completed by 1900 that evening, ending operation HUMP.

(C) Supported by 1,747 helicopter sorties and 117 USAF tactical air strikes, the operation resulted in 403 VC KIA, 200 additional possible KIA and five VC captured. Losses by the US and Australian troops were 51 KIA and 89 WIA.<sup>26</sup>

(C) On 4 November the CO of the ARVN 5th Div requested that the US 1st Inf Div clear and secure Route 13 north of Ben Cat, Binh Duong Province, and provide artillery fire in support of 5th Div operations beginning on 11 November. This request was granted and the mission was assigned to the 3d Bde, 1st Div, which was stationed at Lai Khe, just north of Ben Cat. The 3d Bde further assigned the mission to the 2d Bn, 2d Inf and attached to it an artillery battery; a cavalry troop; Co A, 2d Bn, 28th Inf; and engineer elements. This operation was named ROADRUNNER.

(C) The reinforced battalion cleared and secured Route 13 on 10 November and emplaced artillery to support the movement of the ARVN 7th Regt. Advance parties of the ARVN elements passed through on the afternoon of 11 November and the battalion formed a perimeter for the night. Early on 12 November an estimated VC battalion launched a heavy mortar and automatic weapons attack, followed by repeated infantry assaults against the perimeter. Despite direct fire by artillery from within the perimeter and tactical air strikes, the VC remained in contact for six hours. After coordination with ARVN district officials, a nearby village, which was sheltering the VC, was destroyed by air strikes. Friendly losses were 21 KIA and 103 WIA, with VC losses 198 KIA.

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(C) After completion of operation ROADRUNNER, the 3d Bde was ordered by the CG, 1st Inf Div to conduct search and destroy operations south of the Michelin rubber plantation, Binh Duong Province, from 14 to 17 November to follow up and exploit B-52 strikes scheduled for 14 November. This operation, BUSHMASTER, was later extended to 22 November. Intelligence reports indicated that three VC regiments and a separate VC battalion had base areas in or near the operation area. The operation began on 14 November and continued with sporadic contact until 20 November. Late that day, while friendly elements were conducting a tactical search toward their base areas, they were attacked by VC from a village to their front and from both sides of the road. A perimeter was formed and air strikes directed against the enemy positions. This action resulted in 70 VC KIA. Friendly losses were six KIA and 38 WIA.

(C) BUSHMASTER, which terminated on 22 November, resulted in the capture or destruction of over 100 weapons, 100 tons of rice, and large quantities of ammunition and supplies. In the total operation 277 VC were killed, five captured, and 350 estimated wounded. Friendly forces lost 27 KIA, and 176 WIA. <sup>27</sup>

(U) During the year, as more and more USA combat forces arrived in SVN, the emphasis in USA operations shifted from passive defense of key installations with occasional forays into enemy held territory to small scale search and destroy operations. These search and destroy missions grew from battalion operations to reinforced brigade operations supported by ARVN and other services. In their role as reaction forces, USA forces increased the scale of commitment from company standby reserve to reinforced brigade pursuit operations. By the end of the year continuous USA offensive operations coupled with constant harassment from the air had uprooted the VC from many of their once impregnable strongholds and had caused them to seek new sanctuaries, and increased their vulnerability to further attack. Hundreds of tons of war materiel and foodstuffs were either captured or destroyed. Thousands of VC/NVA troops became casualties, lowering their offensive capabilities and their morale. The enemy lost the initiative in many areas and was faced with increased pressure from USA operations as 1966 arrived.

#### US NAVY AND VNN OPERATIONS

##### Market Time

(C) At the beginning of 1965, VNN forces were not sufficient to prevent enemy infiltration of men and equipment by sea. The VNN was furnishing an average of 16 Sea Force ships and 200 Coastal Force junks for coastal surveillance. However, since junks normally traveled in pairs, there was in effect only the equivalent of 100

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junks on patrol each day. This effort was not sufficient to adequately prevent suspected infiltration by sea from NVN.<sup>28</sup>

(S) Due to the inability of the VNN to effectively counter infiltration efforts by the insurgents it was determined that additional help in the form of USN boats, planes, personnel, equipment and facilities was necessary. With this in view a gradual buildup of forces (discussed in Chapter II) and planning for coordinated operations<sup>29</sup> by the USN and VNN began in January 1965. This culminated in the formation of MARKET TIME operations in March. From that point on the USN and VNN became a composite and effective force in the war effort.

(C) Flights conducted by USN SP-2 aircraft during January proved the feasibility of effective communication between US aircraft and VNN patrol units for fast reaction in developing operational and intelligence information. The flights also demonstrated to VNN flight observers that the patrol elements of Sea and Coastal Forces were not carrying out their anti-infiltration mission, a fact long known by CHNAVGP, but not previously substantiated to the satisfaction of VNN authorities. Improvement began shortly after Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (DCNO) VNN observed this evidence first hand.<sup>30</sup>

(C) The major development which occurred subsequent to inception of MARKET TIME was the announcement, during April, of the decision of the SECDEF (see Chapter II) to transfer operational control of MARKET TIME forces from CINCPACFLT to CHNAVGP, as agent for COMUSMACV. The decision was based on NAVGP's location in-country and experience working with VNN plus the direct impact of MARKET TIME on COMUSMACV's responsibilities for the overall war effort.<sup>31</sup>

(C) The Coastal Surveillance Force (TF 115) was activated on 30 July. On that day, operational responsibility for MARKET TIME was passed from CINCPACFLT to COMUSMACV and operational control was assigned to CTF 115 (CHNAVGP). This marked the creation of the US Navy's first command integrating sea, air and shore-based units for the primary mission of countering sea infiltration. CINCPACFLT retained logistic support responsibility for all surface units, through COMSEVENFLT.<sup>32</sup>

(C) Prior to 11 May, US personnel participating in MARKET TIME were prohibited from boarding any vessel. But due to pressure on the GVN by CHNAVGP and COMUSMACV authorization was approved by GVN on 11 May for TF 115 forces, to stop, search and seize vessels not clearly engaged in innocent voyage within a zone extending out to 12 miles offshore. Outside that zone, vessels were liable to search with compensation paid by GVN if suspicions proved unfounded. All boarding parties were to be led by a VNN liaison officer stationed on each MARKET TIME vessel. This change in the rules of engagement contributed

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measurably to the efficiency of the patrol by making it unnecessary to call in VNN units to investigate each suspicious ship. Much delay was avoided and both USN and VNN were able to search a larger number of vessels in any given time.<sup>33</sup>

(C) A new type of infiltration ship, reported by a VC captured in June, caused a realignment of MARKET TIME forces to place emphasis on the area from the 17th parallel south to Phan Thiet in Binh Thuan Province. VNN likewise shifted forces to the area where the ship was reported to be located. The information regarding this new type steel hulled ship, motorized, seventy feet long, with a sixty-ton capacity, was of sufficient consequence to expedite the formation of US Coast Guard Squadron One and procurement of Swift boats to combat this type of infiltration ship (see Chapter II).<sup>34</sup>

(C) The RSSZ was the only land area under the control and responsibility of VNN. It was assigned to VNN because of its inaccessibility by land. The RSSZ commander, a Lt Cdr, was placed directly under DCNO (N-3 operations) in July, which was to insure that RSSZ would receive proper attention. Other steps were also taken in July to improve the situation in the VC-saturated area: all ships were forbidden to transit the zone at night, and twice-weekly mine-sweeping operations were begun.<sup>35</sup>

(S) During the November visit of the SECDEF the evaluation of MARKET TIME program was again discussed (as it had been in July, see Chapter II). COMUSMACV included in his November evaluation the resources involved and a general discussion of problems involved in a coastal surveillance system in an area where numerous coastal boats, junks and larger vessels were operating. The difficulty lay in distinguishing the innocent fishermen from the infiltrator. Various regulations were inaugurated such as a curfew, and no junks were allowed in certain areas. Although these regulations were restrictive, they could not be adequately enforced because many fishermen lived in some VC-controlled areas and required access to those fishing grounds. As a result of this situation the district chiefs reserved the right to modify these restrictions as they deemed necessary.

(C) COMUSMACV's conclusions as presented to the SECDEF were: 1) in terms of reliable potential from available resources, the MARKET TIME effort was satisfactory; 2) the planned operational concept was sound; 3) the primary deficiency of inadequate shallow-draft vessels would be corrected by the spring of 1965 when 54 Swifts would become operational (see Chapter II); and 4) the VNN effort was less than optimum both in patrol aggressiveness and reporting accuracy. This last situation could be improved only

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by patient and deliberate advisory efforts; the GVN had made inroads on the problem of watercraft regulatory measures, but the clarity, promulgation and enforceability thereof would require further improvement. COMUSMACV concluded his evaluation by recommending that MARKET TIME continue as planned. No major changes were necessary and none were anticipated so long as programmed forces materialized.<sup>36</sup>

(C) During November, CHNAVGP recommended that a more adequate system of ship inspection in the Saigon River be initiated. At that time, a ship's captain simply declared his cargo and no one questioned him further. This caused a great deal of tax revenue to be lost. The CHNAVGP suggested that these vessels be "convoyed" to insure control of their movements. This suggestion was not well received by GVN authorities, because they wanted the movements of foodstuffs and produce to reach their destination without delay. So this proposal, which would have created a system of ascertaining which ships were carrying contraband, was still pending at the end of the year.<sup>37</sup>

#### RVNAF Amphibious Operations

(C) Prior to April 1965 the amphibious warfare capability of VNN's three LST's and seven LSM's had seldom been employed because of other commitments. The potential value of the capability became more apparent after the Vung Ro Bay infiltration incident as attention was focussed on possible infiltration points located in coastal VC areas. In April, RVNAF JGS directed CINCVNN to develop a permanent capability for amphibious raid operations. Initial plans called for the complement of LST 502 to begin amphibious training and to be available for operation in the latter part of May. Tentative proposals for force assignments included a VNN 3-inch gun ship, a USN destroyer for gun fire support and the LSM (H) hospital ship for medical support and psywar activities. It was anticipated that a VNN Sea Air Land/Underwater Demolition (SEAL/UDT) team would be assigned to the landing force. The major hurdle was the assignment of troops. Special Forces and local troop units not available for operations outside their own area were discussed as possibilities. Chances were dim for obtaining more than a company for use on a permanent basis.<sup>38</sup>

(C) During May the plans for company-sized amphibious raids were overtaken by concepts of a grander scale. JGS stepped in to take a leading role in planning. One significant step forward was the designation of units of the VNMC as the landing force, rather than the miscellaneous ARVN, RF or FF units which had been previously considered. It was hoped that by mid-June JGS would begin battalion-size operations employing each of the five VNMC battalions, with VNN sealift and VNAF/USAF air support as required. It was

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planned that from August to early October operations would be conducted using two or more VMC battalions with VNN naval forces augmented by USN sealift and naval gunfire support (NGFS). Consideration was also given to combined VMC/USMC operations, presumably beginning in November, but JGS desired to commence amphibious operations unilaterally. Corresponding to this "go it alone" attitude was the little interest shown in US offers to conduct demonstration landings with III MAF landing forces. The major problem confronting the VNN in carrying out their unilateral intentions was the diversion of the VNN LST's and LSM's to amphibious operations would place a heavy strain on the already critical logistics situation in SVN. The logistic missions and the capacity of Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS) to take on any additional mission was severely limited.<sup>39</sup>

(G) This planning was overtaken by events in June 1965. The drastic increase of VC activity began to absorb reserve strength throughout the country. As the VMC was part of the general reserve, this commitment precluded their use as the landing force for planned amphibious operations. As a result, all planning was postponed indefinitely. The only amphibious operation during the year was conducted on 10 November when the combined USMC/VMC operation BLUE MARLIN was executed (see USMC Operations). With the advent of additional LST's and LSM/LSSL's during 1966 there was a probability for renewed interest in this type of warfare.<sup>40</sup>

#### Naval Gunfire Operations

(C) On 17 April, the GVN and USG agreed in principle to the use of US NGF in support of anti-sea infiltration efforts and in support of RVNAP and US ground operations (verbally transmitted to the US Ambassador 17 April).

(C) During April 1965, CINCPAC, in anticipation of authorization for amphibious operations and NGFS in RVN, requested COMUSMACV and CINCPACFLT to develop and submit plans for these operations on a priority basis. COMUSMACV replied on 19 April with his plan concerning the employment of US NGFS in RVN. This plan outlined a general concept for NGFS operations using MARKET TIME ships and, from time to time, other 7th Flt ships against selected VC targets and in support of US and ARVN amphibious and ground operations. At this time, COMUSMACV inquired as to the availability of an Air, Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) for RVN.

(S) Representatives from CINCPACFLT, COMSEVENFLT, COMUSMACV, FMFPAC, and III MAF, met in Saigon 3-5 May for the purpose of developing procedures for the conduct of NGFS in RVN. The procedures formulated at the conference were agreed to by CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACV and forwarded to CINCPAC for approval. CINCPAC approved the procedures for execution on 14 May.<sup>41</sup> On 16 May they were issued to the corps senior advisors.

(G) The NGFS procedures were as follows:

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1) USNFG ships were provided by Commander Task Group 70.8 (Cruiser/Destroyer Force). These units were assigned NGF missions against VC targets in SVN in order to support anti-infiltration and COMUSMACV/RVNAF operations. NGF ships remained under the operational control of the cognizant 7th Flt task unit commander.

2) All NGF missions were observed by US personnel and were undertaken on order of CTF 115, in coordination with the Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer (NGLO) at the Corps Tactical Operations Center (CTOC) and responsible RVNAF officials.

3) Request for non-scheduled NGFS missions were sent to CTOC's for coordination. The NGLO would then send requests for naval gunfire through ANGLICO to the gunfire support ships in the area, or to the nearest Coastal Surveillance Center. This center would relay the request to the ship assigned to the area, or to CTF 115 if a ship had not been previously assigned. The NGLO at the CTOC would arrange for a spotter to be on station for the mission and inform CTF 115 of the mission.

4) In the case of pre-planned missions (requests for support at least 48 hours prior to the time required) the NGLO at CTOC forwarded requests to CTF 115. CTF 115 assigned a NGFS ship to the mission and informed the CTOC and Coastal Surveillance Center of the ship assigned. The NGLO and CTOC arranged for the spotter to be on station for the mission.

5) ROK requests for NGFS were channeled through PFORCESV for necessary coordination and execution.<sup>42</sup>

(C) In the fall of 1965, COMUSMACV published an LOI on the conduct of artillery and NGFS which set forth rules pertaining to firing on VC targets in and out of hamlets. The rules stated that henceforth unobserved fire could be used on VC forces outside of hamlets in target areas declared hostile by GVN, VN liaison personnel, observers, or Forward Air Controllers (FAC). Prior to promulgation of this procedure, unobserved fire missions were prohibited. Missions against known or suspected targets in hamlets and villages occupied by non-combatants would be controlled by airborne or ground observers, only after receipt of US/GVN/RVNAF approval, as appropriate. Hamlets or villages unassociated with ground operations would not be attacked by gunfire without prior warning. Attacks without warning, in conjunction with ground operations involving the movement of troops through the area, could be made if, in the judgement of the ground commander, his mission would be jeopardized by such warning. In the vicinity of RVN/Cambodia border only observed fire missions were allowed on targets within 2,000 meters of the border. Unobserved fire missions could be fired outside of this 2,000 meter zone. During December,

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owing to increased infiltration of VC and NVA forces, CINCPACFLT recommended these procedures be modified by authorizing CO's of NGFS ships to make emergency utilization of unobserved fires on any target in grave circumstances when friendly forces were known to be under hostile fire and when gunfire support could be effected with positive assurance that the friendly forces and/or non-combatants would not be harmed.<sup>43</sup> This recommendation was approved by CINCPAC on 22 December.<sup>44</sup>

(C) On 20 May the 7th Flt ship, USS Hamner (DD-718) conducted the first scheduled NGF mission in SVN in II CTZ. By month's end, 13 gunfire missions had been conducted and included illumination firing in I CTZ, ten gunfire missions in II CTZ and one gunfire mission in R332. Results were considered generally effective. One mission fired by the USS Somers (DD-947) was credited with relieving VC pressure on a district town in Phuoc Tuy Province and resulted in 12 VC killed and 20 wounded. In addition to the USS Hamner and the Somers, other 7th Flt units provided NGFS during the first month of operations.

(C) In order to provide expert control and direction of US naval gunfire, detachments from 1st ANGLICO, FMFPAC Hawaii, were deployed to RVN. On 14 May one shore fire control party (SFCP) was in position in I CTZ and one SFCP and a radar beacon team were in position in II CTZ. Additional ANGLICO units arrived in-country 25-27 May. After briefings in Saigon, these additional units were assigned as follows:

- a. II Corps - one NGF Spot (Det of SFCP) team and a radar beacon team.
- b. III Corps - one SFCP.
- c. IV Corps - one SFCP and one radar beacon team.<sup>45</sup>

(C) The ANGLICO units provided a gunfire liaison team at each CTOC and spotting teams strategically located along the coast. A control team of three officers and 27 EM were located in Saigon to provide administrative and logistic support to units in the field.<sup>46</sup>

(C) In May COMUSMACV determined that ANGLICO detachments would be attached to the senior US advisor to each corps to provide experienced control, coordination and spotting for NGFS in each corps. The first detachment of ANGLICO arrived in-country on 6 May and reported to CG, III MAP. On 15 May, COMUSMACV approved the NGFS employment in RVN under MARKET TIME charter. Voice fire mission requests, and activation of the Corps GVN Liaison Office (OLO) or Marine Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC) control frequencies, would be received over the MARKET TIME Surveillance

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Coordinating and Reporting Net. All ships would guard this net.<sup>47</sup>

(C) By 1 June, six detachments of the 1st ANGLICO were in-country with personnel assigned to each Corps, and placed under HSAS for administrative purposes. After several months of operating under control of 7th Flt, COMUSMACV, in Directive No. 10-11 of 10 November, set forth command relationships between ANGLICO commanders and COMUSMACV. In the section outlining responsibilities and command relationships between subordinate commands and advisory elements he stated that CTF 115 would "conduct air and surface surveillance, NGFS, visit and search, psywar, combat support (such as support of commando raids, UDT and search and rescue) of US and RVN forces and other operations as directed, along the coast and in the major rivers of RVN in order to assist the RVNAF in the detection and prevention of communist water-borne movement and infiltration from the sea". Thus the groundwork was laid and the pattern set for future NGFS activities.<sup>48</sup>

(C) The operational control of NGFS in-country was handled by the four corps senior advisors under COMUSMACV through the CTOC's. Each Corps had assigned an SFCP, and a detachment of Sub-Unit One, 1st ANGLICO, to provide personnel and communications equipment necessary for the control of naval gunfire in each of the areas.<sup>49</sup>

(C) The primary mission of the ANGLICO detachments was to support US and friendly elements by providing the liaison necessary between the ground elements of the landing force and units involved in conducting close air support and naval gunfire in the amphibious assault and in other operations. This included the provision of limited support to airborne units.<sup>50</sup>

#### 7th Fleet Air Support

(S) Following the NVN PT boat attack on the USS MADDOX on 2 August 1964 in international waters about 40 miles off the NVN shore, the US increased the readiness posture of US forces in the Pacific. In retaliation for the unprovoked attack on the MADDOX, US naval forces were directed by JCS to conduct air strikes on selected targets in NVN.<sup>51</sup>

(S) During the period August 1964 to February 1965, use of 7th Flt aircraft in both SVN and NVN was sporadic and primarily on a contingency basis. However, the attack on Fleiku Airfield on 7 February 1965 resulted in a change of concept and naval aircraft henceforth assumed a major role in the air war in SEASIA. After extensive discussion between CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, it was determined that naval air strikes on pre-planned targets approved by higher authority would be coordinated with VNAF and 2d AD.<sup>52</sup> In February a liaison section (air control team of two officers) from

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7th Flt was thus attached to the TACC, 2d AD for the purpose of this coordination.<sup>53</sup> This close association and coordination increased air power effort during 1965.<sup>54</sup>

(U) In February 1965, when the President decided to enlarge the US military effort in SVN, the 7th Flt was poised off shore to participate actively in the conflict. Within minutes after receipt of the message clearing 7th Flt for action, naval aircraft were over VC and NVN facilities, dropping hundreds of tons of bombs. From February through December 1965, USN aircraft flew 37,210 sorties, 14,560 of these north of the 17th parallel. USN A4 Skyhawks, A3 Sky Warriors, F4 Phantom II's, A6 Intruders and propeller driven A1 Skyradiers attacked NVN bridges, barracks, storage and power installations. They also struck defensive positions around these facilities and the two major NVN cities of Hanoi and Haiphong.<sup>55</sup>

(U) One of the highlights of the year came on the evening of 20 June when two Skyradiers shot down a MIG-17 jet 40 miles south of Hanoi during a bombing raid.<sup>56</sup>

(U) In early November aircraft based on the carrier USS Oriskany recorded another first when they demolished a NVN missile site about 55 miles south of Hanoi. Five A4 Skyhawks bombed and strafed the SAM site with rockets and 250-pound bombs. Two missiles were destroyed and another damaged. On the morning of 22 December, 60 aircraft from three carriers dropped more than 30 tons on the Ung Bi Thermal Power Plant, 14 miles northeast of Haiphong. The plant, which supplied 25 percent of the power for NVN, was heavily damaged.<sup>57</sup>

(U) During 1965, 72 US naval vessels were involved in the increased role of the 7th Flt in VN waters. This fleet, operation in support of COMUSMACV, provided NCFB ships, amphibious squadrons for operations and transport of troops and replenishment of supplies.<sup>58</sup>

(S) Aircraft based on the three to five 7th Flt CVA's stationed off SVN during the year, participated in such air operations as BARREL ROLL, STERIL TIGER, ROLLING THUNDER, and others. Two CVA's and support elements were assigned duty at Yankee Station, 100 miles off Da Nang. This group operated largely north of the 17th parallel. One CVA was assigned to Dixie Station, 100 miles off Vung Tau, with the primary responsibility of assisting with air strikes in SVN.<sup>59</sup>

## US AIR FORCE AND VNAF OPERATIONS

### In-Country Operations

(C) In early 1965, the VC not only maintained the initiative in military actions but also had the advantage of opposing forces,

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which, though supported by US military advisors and equipped with modern weapons, were constrained by certain policies and concepts.<sup>60</sup> The VC were thus able to attack under advantageous conditions and regroup under the largely secure conditions of their forest hide-outs. In a situation characterized by an increasing number of setbacks suffered by the RVNAF, COMUSMACV undertook studies of measures which might be employed to check and reverse these trends.<sup>61</sup> Air power was recognized as a means by which continuous pressure could be exerted on the VC:

Attack aircraft now in the hands of the government constitute a unique strike force whose operations the Viet Cong cannot defeat, match, or even anticipate. . . . Air power could project the government's power to all parts of the country and keep large areas under continuous surveillance. It could strike the Viet Cong in their strongest and most remote positions--in areas where the Vietnamese Army simply does not tread.<sup>62</sup>

(S) The optimum use of air power in SVN was not attainable in early 1965 due to the slow reaction or unavailability of aircraft. The concept of continuous airborne alert over critical<sup>63</sup> areas required resources which were not available in-country. Nevertheless, airpower available made its mark. It was observed that the VC would have had the capability in 1965 to move into Phase III, the mobile, conventional warfare phase, had air strength been unavailable to support the GVN's effort. Operations on the scale of the late 1964 battles of An Lao and Binh Gia could be expected and in these operations, the application of air strikes would be extremely favorable. In late 1964, experiments in visual reconnaissance activities had proven successful as a means of finding targets. COMUSMACV believed that a coordinated visual reconnaissance effort using the aircraft resources of USAF, USA and VNAF, as well as pilot reports from commercial aircraft would provide an almost untapped source of good targets. Interpretation of aerial photography supplemented by IR (Infra-red) reconnaissance and other technical means also gave indications of probable current VC activity at fairly precise locations. Organized in 1964, the RVNAF III Corps Target Center, by January 1965 had developed 149 static targets in an area centering in Zones "C" and "D". In addition, the newly organized USMACV J2 Target Research and Analysis Center (TRAC) had identified and passed to III Corps a total of 171 transitory target indications since early November 1964. TRAC operations were planned for expansion and Target Centers were planned for I, II and IV Corps.<sup>64</sup>

(TS) Early in the year, decisions were made to employ the air resources which theretofore could not be used effectively.<sup>65</sup> A summary of the constraints affecting USMACV counterinsurgency

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operations was prepared by COMUSMACV on 13 January and forwarded to CJCS through CINCPAC on 21 January.<sup>66</sup> Among these were the problems of VNAF observers in FARMGATE (VNAF-marked USAF) aircraft<sup>67</sup> and the prohibited use of jets within SVN.<sup>68</sup>

(TS) No longer was there the extremely sensitive approach to military air operations which for years was looked upon as endangering the primary effort of economic and political reconstruction of SVN and winning its people over to GVN. No longer were there the great concerns of maintaining a semblance of conformity to the agreements of the 1954 Geneva Accords and of ensuring the appearance of the purely "advisory" role of US Forces in RVN.<sup>69</sup> The restrictions limiting target designation and air-ground coordination had to be changed:<sup>70</sup> more "free bomb zones", especially the main VC base areas had to be designated and air-ground coordination had to be through pure US procedures. However, much of the groundwork was already laid for increased air activity. The Tactical Air Control System (TACS) was a flexible functioning organ which could absorb additional workloads.<sup>71</sup> Jet fighters and bombers had been introduced into SVN following the initiation of YANKEE TEAM operations<sup>72</sup> in May 1964 and the Tonkin Gulf incident in early August 1964.<sup>73</sup> Plans were under way for increasing the VNAF from four to six squadrons.<sup>74</sup> New weapons such as Lazy Dog,<sup>75</sup> CBU (Cluster Bomb Unit)<sup>76</sup> and the side-firing FC-47,<sup>77</sup> were ready for commitment. Coordination with RVNAF ground forces, US helicopter forces and USMACV was improved and there was a greater appreciation among all services of the usefulness of air in the current phase of the struggle.<sup>78</sup>

(S) On 26 January 1965, COMUSMACV asked CINCPAC for authority to employ US jet aircraft in a strike role in RVN.<sup>79</sup> In this request, COMUSMACV described intelligence reports which indicated the possibility of impending VC attacks on critical US installations aimed at achieving a spectacular victory, the impaired capability of RVNAF due to commitment of elements to control civic disorders and the diminished efficiency of the VNAF because of its Commander's (Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky) preoccupation with political activities. On 27 January, JCS authorized COMUSMACV to employ US jet aircraft in SVN in emergency situations under certain conditions.<sup>80</sup> It was specified that only COMUSMACV or his deputy could commit jet aircraft. The US Ambassador's concurrence was required and the situation had to be of such criticality that the VC would probably gain a major victory or number of American lives would be lost. Additionally, US jets would be controlled by ground or airborne observers in touch with the ground situation. Jets could be used to reinforce VNAF or FARMGATE aircraft<sup>81</sup> when they were unable to adequately cope with the major VC concentrations. CINCRVNAF's prior clearance would have to be granted and the immediate and full explanation of the use of this emergency authority would have to be made to CINCPAC and JCS.<sup>83</sup> With the relaxation of the rules of engagement, COMUSMACV was

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prepared to enter the war on a new dimension.<sup>84</sup>

(S) The 27 January authorization greatly relieved the anxiety of US military leaders in SVN, particularly in view of intelligence reports which indicated that the VC were planning a major offensive in the central highlands.<sup>85</sup> Although the 2d AD had one F-100 squadron at Da Nang for operations in Laos and two B-57 squadrons at Bien Hoa for VNAF crew training, these jet aircraft could not be used tactically in SVN prior to the authorization. The US non-jet tactical combat strength available for RVNAF support had thus been limited to the southern half of SVN, particularly Bien Hoa where the then 1st Air Commando Squadron and the 602d Air Commando Squadron were located. The VNAF had one A-1H squadron at Da Nang, another at Pleiku, and two squadrons at Bien Hoa. In December 1964, Cdr 2d AD had clearly seen the shortage of tactical air power in the central area and had quickly sent from Bien Hoa a detachment of USAF A-1E Sky Raiders to Qui Nhon.<sup>86</sup>

(U) On 7 and 10 February, the VC attacked US BEQ's at Pleiku and Qui Nhon, cities which were the terminal points of Highway 19. Starting on 7 February, retaliatory strikes against NVN targets were conducted by USN, VNAF, and USAF aircraft. This policy of continuing attacks on NVN enabled the 2d AD to expand and reorganize, to acquire new types of aircraft and develop new control systems. On 19 February, B-57 jet aircraft were used for the first time in combat in SVN in Phouc Tuy Province; on 24 February both B-57's and F-100's were used along Highway 19 near An Khe and saved a CIDG and a Ranger unit from almost certain disaster; some 220 troops were helilifted to safety while jets pinned down the superior surrounding VC forces with bombs, napalm and cannon fire.

(S) On 19 February, VNAF was tactically paralyzed when ARVN coup aspirants took control of the TSN airbase during a major coup attempt. VNAF Commander, Air Commodore Nguyen Cao Ky, who had successfully stopped a similar coup attempt in September 1964, again diverted his attention to solving political problems. During this uneasy month, USAF jets were continually used in Binh Dinh and Quang Tin provinces causing heavy enemy casualties and frequently harassing his movements.<sup>87</sup>

(C) In March, there were few reported sightings of VC units larger than company size. This may have been a response to the increases in US air strikes. After a rather uneventful month, the greatest armada of aircraft (456) ever assembled over SVN participated in the bombing of a section of War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province. The intent was to apply pressure on VC base areas, where preparations were underway for the monsoon offensive, to boost ARVN morale and to encourage ARVN offensive operations into VC base areas. Naval aircraft from US 7th Flt carriers and USMC aircraft from the 9th MEB

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(which had arrived at Da Nang in March) joined in the effort. In a single day, 15 April, 443 sorties were conducted and more than 1,000 tons of bombs dropped. This was twice the average monthly tonnage dropped in 1964. The jets were continually used in major close support roles and in harassment actions, including the interdiction of VC movements. They more than doubled the airstrike power which existed prior to their authorization. A primary reason for the great increase of VC defectors, to 600 in April, was apparently due to the in-country bombing program.<sup>88</sup>

(C) VC prisoners interrogated in the summer of 1965, expressed amazement at the amount and intensity of airpower which had been used against them. Over the years, the meager air actions against the VC by the GVN were not taken seriously by the VC. Once bombed, they could expect to rest safely for an extended period. Many VC units operating in the northern areas, had never experienced air attacks. The bombings apparently affected the VC way of life in their strongholds as well as on operations.<sup>89</sup>

(C) On 19 April, the first F-104C squadron to be assigned to SVN arrived at Da Nang air base. A steady flow of A-1H and A-1E aircraft was also being unloaded from Saigon docks for transport to VNAF squadrons throughout SVN. The VNAF was building its strength up to five A-1 squadrons with a sixth scheduled to arrive in late summer 1965. The combined US-VNAF air strength available for strikes against the VC on the eve of the May monsoon season was more than triple that at the beginning of the year.<sup>90</sup> In the meantime, US and FVMA ground forces were also building up and moving into position, largely as security forces for US bases.<sup>91</sup>

(C) On 11 May the VC launched their first major monsoon attack, when an estimated VC regiment attacked Song Be, the Phuoc Long Province capital, after overrunning ARVN troops on the fringe of War Zone D. Rangers and other ARVN forces, supported by massive air strikes, drove back the heavily armed main force VC regiment, after it had occupied Song Be for seven hours, in the biggest battle of the VN war up to that time. Although the enemy's big push was expected in II CTZ, on 29 May the VC struck Ba Gia near Quang Ngai in I CTZ. Heavy fighting raged under the light of 3,000 flares dropped by C-123 and C-47 aircraft. In addition to 1,600 structures reportedly destroyed and 423 damaged, an estimated 226 VC were killed, mostly by air. Air power was thus increasingly the decisive factor in major battles and began to account for a good share of enemy casualties.<sup>92</sup>

(C) On 10 June, the VC launched a major pre-dawn attack on the military camp at Dong Xoai under a heavy 500-foot cloud ceiling. The enemy succeeded in taking his objective but suffered about 700 killed. COMUSMACV credited air power with inflicting heavy losses

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on the enemy forces. In this battle the VC demonstrated an improved antiaircraft capability and struck many of the Sky-raiders and jet aircraft with .50 caliber ground fire.

(C) On 18 June, in the first B-52 attack on a VC target in SVN,<sup>93</sup> 27 Guam-based bombers dropped some 300 tons of bombs on VC targets near Ben Cat in Binh Duong Province, 25 miles north of Saigon. Two B-52's were lost when they collided over the ocean after take-off. This, then, was the prelude to the program of B-52 bombings in SVN.<sup>94</sup>

(U) During June, however, despite US air strikes against land routes of supply and efforts by the 7th Flt to intercept enemy supply shipping, the VC logistic system seemed to continue to provide adequate ammunition and weapons.<sup>95</sup>

(C) Realizing the effectiveness of air strikes and to gain a psychological victory, the VC made numerous attempts to neutralize US airpower by a series of night attacks on the airfields. On 1 July, a VC special mission team supported by 81-mm mortars and 57-mm RR, successfully raided the Da Nang airfield complex and destroyed two C-130's and two F-102 aircraft. They also used mortar fire against the Nha Trang, Cheo Reo, Bac Tranh, Bac Lieu and Can Tho airfields in late June and July. Later, on 24 August, they used a 75-mm howitzer in a harassing attack on the Bien Hoa air base.<sup>96</sup>

(S) As the employment of B-57 and F-100 aircraft had released the A-1 aircraft for more close support missions, the B-52 attacks similarly allowed the jet fighters and small bombers to concentrate on more immediate support missions. This development was a marked contribution to the greater flexibility and capability of air power in SVN at a time when the number of immediate requests for air support was rising in meeting the intensified VC activity.<sup>97</sup>

(S) Overall air activity increased sharply during July. VNAF provided over 450 sorties in support of major ground operations. USAF sorties increased by more than 2,200. Missions controlled by FAC's doubled those flown in June. SAC supported the ground effort during July with four B-52 strikes in II and III CTZ's. US Army aviation activities continued at the same high level as June and air mobile operations increased during July to 48 as compared with 29 during June. Air activity rose to a new high in July with nearly 11,000 combat sorties flown and more than 12,000 tons of bombs dropped on enemy positions throughout SVN. On 10 July F-100's rigged with 750 pound bombs, attacked a base 60 miles north of Bien Hoa where some 1,000 VC were observed. About 350 VC were killed in what Cdr, 2d AD called "the most successful USAF mission yet flown in

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(S) VC troop losses for July were equal to the strength of a division. Some 3,050 were killed and another 500 captured in ground attacks with another estimated 4,000 killed by air strikes. Friendly losses for the month were 1,335 killed, 1,765 wounded and 750 missing. The intensity of fighting, both in the air and on the ground, continued into August, when the VC appeared to make a major effort for the control of the central highlands. US troop strength was nearing 83,000 and friendly forces were assuming a more aggressive role. B-52 raids were becoming almost routine. F-102's joined in the fighting and the VNAF was equipped with its first jet aircraft, the B-57. Apart from B-52 raids, the number of sorties rose to some 11,500.99

(S) In October, 2c AD and VNAF supported ARVN infantry, airborne and armored ground operations triggered by a VC attack on the Plei Me Special Forces Camp in Pleiku province. ARVN relief columns suffered heavy casualties and equipment losses, but sustained air strikes drove off the VC; ARVN forces entered Plei Me on 25 October. The entire action was characterized by massive use of air power countered by fanatic VC air defense (one VC was found chained to his machine gun). Four aircraft were shot down and 21 were damaged. In all, 696 air strike sorties, 18 flare missions, 83 FAC missions, and 41 reconnaissance missions were flown. Confirmed enemy losses were 201 KIA and 6 VCC. 100

(S) In November, in its operations against several NVN regiments in the Chu Pong mountain area of western Pleiku Province, the 1st Air Cav Div (AM) in Operation SILVER BAYONET had continuous air cover for several weeks when the fighting was heaviest. C-123's and HC-47's were available at night. In mid-November, the 1st Cav Div (AM) was supported by some 50 sorties daily. In the Chu Pong area the division's entire TACR was considered hostile and thus air strikes did not require the province chief's approval. This resulted in unusually timely and effective close air support operations. During Operation SILVER BAYONET, B-52's were utilized for the first time in direct support of ground operations.101

(S) The VC made careful studies as to how to effectively counter air attacks. They tried to avoid detection or becoming a worthwhile target by transporting supplies on their backs over tree canopied trails. They selected situations for attack when air power was least effective and dispersed and took advantage of natural cover to a degree unmatched in previous wars. They merged with civilian groups

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and moved in physical proximity to friendly elements wherever possible to render the feasibility of air strikes questionable. They dispatched trained suicide squads to attack US aircraft on their bases and developed techniques in the use of small arms and automatic weapons for anti-aircraft defense purposes.<sup>102</sup>

(C) However, although the VC had built up momentum for a major offensive early in the monsoon season, they could not maintain it and their offensive faltered. IR reconnaissance and better intelligence were helping to pin point their sanctuaries and major supply points. Airpower played a substantial role in frustrating the VC's efforts in practically every major engagement thereafter to the end of the year.<sup>103</sup>

(U) At the close of 1965, Cdr, 2d AD announced that USAF tactical pilots had flown 48,510 strike sorties in support of the RVN during 1965. USAF pilots, flying jet fighter-bombers, logged about 10,570 tactical strike sorties over NVN. In addition to USAF efforts, VNAF pilots flew over 23,700 tactical strike sorties. Most of the VNAF effort was in SVN. SAC B-52 bomb crews also logged more than 1,000 sorties. During 1965, an average of 6,100 strike sorties per month were flown by USAF and VNAF. This effort was 5.5 times greater than in 1964.<sup>104</sup>

(S) Tactical fighter pilots of the USAF dropped over 80,280 tons of bombs. Of these, 56,670 were dropped on VC targets in SVN while 23,610 tons were dropped over NVN. VNAF fighter pilots dropped 26,600 tons of bombs.<sup>105</sup>

(S) The increase in tempo of USAF operations in SVN during 1965 was the direct result of VC/NVN escalation of the war and the US reaction to that escalation. The year 1965 represented the largest employment of US airpower since the Korean conflict. US/VNAF airpower was responsible for killing more than 15,000 enemy personnel during the year. In addition to destroying VC sanctuaries, USAF/VNAF airpower with USN and USMC aircraft struck VC/NVA LOC's day and night, leveled tens of thousands of enemy structures, stopped several major VC/NVA assaults on friendly positions, and made enemy existence increasingly hazardous both in and out of RVN.<sup>106</sup>

#### Control of Air Firepower

(S) With the commitment of US ground and air forces, COMUSMACV became directly concerned with the minimization of noncombatant casualties.<sup>107</sup> In mid-August, a rash of sensational press reports on a III MAF operation triggered a message from the CJCS which requested information concerning

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missions which might result in noncombatant casualties, namely village clearing operations and air interdiction and close air support activities.<sup>108</sup> COMUSMACV replied that the mission of US forces to destroy VC bases required operations in populated areas. All air strikes were made either at the request of the ground forces commander or the ARVN observer, upon clearance by a RVN province or district chief. The tendency to consider hamlets in VC controlled territory as "fair game" did, however, adversely affect pacification efforts when friendly forces entered the hamlet. This required judgment on the part of US personnel of a type never before demanded. Thus every effort was made to indoctrinate these personnel so as not to frustrate achievement of one of the USMACV missions in the performance of another.<sup>109</sup> CJCS inquired if it were possible to distinguish between villages/hamlets in which the populace were formerly pro-GVN and those which had never been loyal and were probably bonafide VC. He thought that the former should be struck by air only if used as a base for attack but that no restraints were necessary for the latter. He added that advisory pressure on the VN should be exerted to insure they appreciated the necessity for preventing civilian casualties.<sup>110</sup> COMUSMACV replied that nearly all hamlets were at one time loyal to the GVN so the issue usually was left to the judgment of authorities in the field. He clarified that living areas in the VC war zones were considered "fair game." He reemphasized that the battle was for the hamlets and that US forces could not be restricted to operations in unpopulated jungles. He proposed three measures to improve the situation: explain to the US public that the war was being fought for the control of the RVN population and their hamlets; exercise limited control of the press to prevent "self-inflicted wounds"; and intensify the indoctrination of US troops in RVN.<sup>111</sup>

(S) In mid-September, CJCS suggested that the designator "free strike zones" be changed to "special strike zones." The original term implied no restrictions whatsoever on air strikes whereas, in fact, such strikes in these zones were either under radar or FAC control.<sup>112</sup>

(S) Considering that an overall evaluation of the use of air power was due, COMUSMACV, in early September, appointed a board of officers to study the problem. He felt that eagerness of pilots to get into the war might contribute to indiscriminate and wasteful use of air strikes.<sup>113</sup> The terms of reference, issued to the board on 10 September, directed the accomplishment of two basic objectives: 1) design a target acquisition and identification system which

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would maximize effectiveness of air firepower and minimize non-combatant casualties and; 2) recommend necessary changes to organization, policy and procedures for air operations in RVN.<sup>114</sup> COMUSMACV pointed out that with the increased presence of US forces in RVN, an increase in undesirable incidents could be expected. It was essential that these incidents not be exploited to dampen US-VN relations. He wanted the board to interpret its mission in the broadest terms possible and review all systems for delivering such air firepower but to include an investigation into the following specific areas:

1) redesignation of "free bomb zones" as suggested by CJCS.

2) FAC's and strike pilots' familiarity with the area in which they operate.

3) adequacy of identification procedures for targets in villages/hamlets.

4) clarification of attitudes toward "targets of suspicion".

5) attempts to develop an airpower force structure and analyze the effectiveness of weapon-/fire control equipment.<sup>115</sup>

(S) Conclusions of the board were:<sup>116</sup>

1) The existing TACS was well designed to provide the restraints necessary for the controlled application of air firepower in RVN. Incidents of errors were surprisingly few in number. Hence, changes were necessary only to cope with the US buildup in RVN.

2) Operational personnel in the field did not fully understand COMUSMACV's policies on target selection criteria and rules of engagement.

3) "Free bomb" zones should be retained because of the operational flexibility they permitted. However, there was a recognized need to limit attacks in these zones without FAC control. The term "Free Bomb Zone" implied inaccurate and adverse connotations.

4) A USA TOC was not available though considered essential to eliminate a serious deficiency in the TACS.

5) Communications suffered several serious deficiencies as did air traffic control.

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6) US ground force senior advisors had inadequate G-2/G-3 air staffs and organic intelligence personnel.

7) There were insufficient RVNAF observers to accompany FAC's and US armed helicopters.

(S) The board thus recommended that:

1) Air attacks on known or suspected VC targets in hamlets and villages should be controlled by airborne or ground FAC's, or an RVNAF observer in the case of armed helicopters, and should be accomplished only after joint US/VN approval. Prior warning to the villagers was necessary except in conjunction with the movement of ground forces through the area. Such restrictions were also recommended for artillery and naval gunfire.

2) COMUSMACV policy on target selection and rules of engagement should be placed in a single document.

3) "Free bomb zones" should be renamed "Specified Strike Zones", portions of which would be designated "Jettison Areas" for free bombing and the remainder would require the control by a FAC of all bombing in daylight.

4) Establishment of a USMACV TOC.

5) Improvement of communication, air traffic control, advisory staffs and availability of ARVN observers, to follow-up on conclusions 5 thru 7, listed above.

(C) All of these recommendations were implemented before the end of 1965. USMACV Directive No 95-2, Subj: Aviation, Employment of and Operational Restrictions on US Military Air Delivered Firepower in RVN (U), 20 December, was the materialization of recommendation 2. This directive provided definitions, designated responsibilities, described the concept of operations and included guidance concerning target planning, specific instructions regarding use of close air support and jettison areas and operations near border areas.

#### B-52 STRIKES

(TS) On 4 March 1965, JCS proposed the employment of SAC B-52's in SVN. Although daylight attacks were not ruled out, it was visualized that night raids conducted at medium and high altitudes would achieve maximum surprise. JCS also recognized the possibility that these attacks might subsequently be extended to NVN. 117 CINCPAC, CINCSAC and COMUSMACV comments were solicited. CINCSAC stated that, while such

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attacks on SVN were feasible, the use of B-52's was undesirable since other available forces could do the same job.<sup>118</sup> He therefore recommended that B-52's be used in SVN only when weather and other conditions precluded the use of other forces.<sup>119</sup> CINCPAC agreed, stating that it was important to maintain a SAC quick reaction capability for NVN targets.<sup>120</sup> COMUSMACV's position was that military and psychological benefits might be realized by employment of B-52's; hence further study of the proposal was justified.<sup>121</sup>

(C) A mass tactical air raid involving 400 2d AD, 7th Flt and VNAF fighter bomber aircraft and lasting 12 hours was conducted against War Zone C on 15 April. The raid was intended to boost ARVN morale, encourage ARVN operations into VC base areas and disrupt, if not neutralize, VC preparations for a monsoon offensive. The VC apparently suffered only minor losses due largely to the ragged bomb pattern of the raid resulting from poor visibility caused by smoke and dust from earlier strikes during the raid. It was concluded that fighter bombers were not efficient for saturation bombing. This provided the necessary impetus to obtain JCS approval for B-52 raids on VC sanctuaries in SVN. On 18 June under the code name "ARC LIGHT,"<sup>122</sup> B-52's assigned to CINCSAC's 3d AD at Andersen AFB, Guam, commenced operations over SVN with an attack near Ben Cat in War Zone D, 40 miles NE of Saigon.<sup>123</sup>

(TS) The purpose of the ARC LIGHT program was the destruction of major VC command and control, training, manufacturing, supply and storage facilities.<sup>124</sup> After the first B-52 strike, COMUSMACV expressed to CINCPAC the need to employ B-52 forces routinely. He also urged exploitation by US troops, in view of RVNAF's failure to do so after the first strike.<sup>125</sup> COMUSMACV was also concerned about security leaks during the planning stages of B-52 strikes; he advised that operations orders should not be issued until the last possible moment by either USMACV or JCS to minimize the possibility of a leak.<sup>126</sup>

(S) In late June, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC supported an increase in B-52 sortie rate to 800 per month although not all of these missions could be exploited by ground follow-up.<sup>127,128</sup> In mid-July the CJCS expressed concern that, because of the lack of post strike ground exploitations, the significance of B-52 strikes could not be properly evaluated.<sup>129</sup> Five ARC LIGHT strikes were made in July.<sup>130</sup>

(C) To offset misunderstanding and skepticism concerning the value of B-52 strikes, COMUSMACV gave a briefing to the press in late August. He felt that the connotations of

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the term "Strategic Air Command" created an undue expectation for spectacular results from B-52 raids. His evaluation of the cumulative results was:<sup>131</sup> 1) several VC permanent installations had been destroyed; others had to be relocated, 2) VC leaders were probably greatly disturbed over these strikes which could not only destroy their bases but also adversely affect the morale of their troops, 3) contrary to unofficial reports, some VC had been killed, 4) the destruction of munitions had been indicated by secondary explosions, and 5) the VC were considering infiltrating headquarters elements into friendly population centers as a protective measure.

(C) COMUSMACV regarded the following as advantages of B-52 raids: 1) area saturation was far more effective than that of fighter bombers, 2) highly suited to striking fixed targets, 3) sorties were not a drain on USMACV resources, 4) surprise, 5) reduced VC safe havens, and 6) encouraged ARVN operations into VC base areas.

(S) In mid-September, COMUSMACV congratulated CINCSAC for excellent execution of the B-52 raids and included the following quote from the Chairman of the National Leadership Committee Maj Gen Nguyen Van Thieu:

Please accept here, General Commander of US Forces VN, the assurance of my warmest congratulations. Fruitful performances US Bombers B-52 have effected during Lam-Son operation over Ba-Long secret zone (Quang Tri) August 17, 1965. This accurate and timely bombardment upon VC concentration area inflicted them heaviest human casualties.<sup>132</sup>

(TS) The protection of non-combatants and friendly forces was of primary concern to COMUSMACV and each target was carefully scrutinized with the GVN prior to requesting a strike.<sup>133</sup> In mid-September, COMUSMACV in a message to CINCPAC, recommended that he (COMUSMACV) be given the responsibility for authorizing B-52 strikes. The issue arose when a strike was cancelled in Washington because of the target's proximity to a village. COMUSMACV stated that he was fully aware of this situation at the time of the request and had taken necessary precautions to prevent error. Because of the cancellation, tactical air support was directed to strike the target but only after some delay which probably allowed the VC to depart. This change in plans also caused cancellation of an exploitation operation which was to have been conducted by the 173d Abn Bde. COMUSMACV's concern was one of principle: the feasibility

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of a strike was a military decision, and the commander on the ground was in the best position to make it.<sup>134</sup>

(TS) The SAC forces which had been directed by JCS to support CINCPAC by strikes in SVN were provided mission/logistic support by PACOM elements.<sup>135</sup> On 21 September, CINCPAC outlined COMUSMACV responsibilities in nominating ARC LIGHT targets and their priorities.<sup>136</sup> In early October, CINCPACAF directed the 2d AD to provide Search and Rescue (SAR) support, escort and pre and post strike reconnaissance when requested in support of B-52 sorties over SVN.<sup>137</sup>

(U) By late September, US press reports were becoming favorably impressed by B-52 missions in SVN. For example, Joseph Alsop, syndicated US newspaper columnist report on 24 September stated:

When SAC's great B-52 bombers began operating from Guam against targets in South Vietnam, the twaddle merchants at home and not a few misinformation merchants here in Saigon united in a loud, goose-like cackle.

The American command was accused of using sledge hammers to kill gnats: there were said to be no gnats to kill anyway, and so on and on. In fact, however, these B-52 operations, which still continue, are among the most important and most interesting of the war here. They deserve to be better understood . . . For years on end the Viet Cong units coming in from operations in the countryside could enter one of these bases with perfect confidence that they would find everything they needed. The slowly accumulated stocks of supplies were, and still are truly enormous.

In one VC base briefly penetrated by government forces some months ago, there was a year's supply of rice for an entire regiment. Another base visited more recently by a patrol after a B-52 attack, had contained 200,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, uniforms and cloth to make uniforms for a couple of battalions, and many other useful things as well.

Nowadays, however, neither the units using the bases nor the supplies accumulated in them are secure any longer. In the first place, greatly improved collection and carefully coordinated analysis of intelligence have permitted the great majority of these formerly secret bases to be rather exactly pinpointed. And in the second place, General Westmoreland, ignoring the goose cackle, has insisted

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on continuing the B-52 operations on an accelerating tempo.

The SAC bombers are used, in part, because the tactical bomb squadrons here in Vietnam are already fully occupied. But the main reason for using B-52's is the nature of these targets, with their buried store chambers and strong fortifications. Only the heavy bombers can damage them seriously, and that is just what the B-52's have been doing, as both photo and ground reconnaissance have shown.

It is a dramatic and remarkable development - this beginning of progressive denial to the Viet Cong of the enormous base-network that has always sustained them until now.

Total denial will not be accomplished, to be sure, until the huge supplementary forces now entering this country are everywhere ready to assume the offensive. But at any rate, SAC's sledge-hammers are not being used to kill gnats.

(S) On 29 September, the SECDEF delegated to JCS authority to approve B-52 strikes in five established special bomb zones. All other strikes required approval by higher authority.

(TS) To avoid noncombatant and friendly unit casualties, JCS on 5 October directed that all ARC LIGHT target nominations must include precise location data of friendly forces, enemy forces and noncombatants in the requested strike area. Additionally, COMUSMACV must revalidate each target prior to execution.

(TS) Target cancellations became a source of embarrassment for COMUSMACV in his relationships with RVNAF officials. He informed CINCPAC and JCS on 31 October that he had noted that many proposed ARC LIGHT targets were being disapproved by higher authority. These targets had been nominated only after extensive study of all aspects by competent personnel in CVN, concurrence of corps commander/senior advisor involved, personal approval by COMUSMACV and agreement by RVNAF JCS and the US Ambassador. GVN leaders found these cancellations difficult to understand. In order to derive maximum effects from B-52 strikes, COMUSMACV recommended that: he be allocated F-2 sorties on a monthly basis for use in accordance with guidance by higher authority; 3d AD be given the mission of reinforcing the 2d AD in support of COMUSMACV with limitations as deemed necessary by higher authority, and that COMUSMACV or his AFCC deal directly with 3d AD in accomplishing these missions.

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(S) In early November, COMUSMACV, with CINCPAC's concurrence, repeated his proposals to JCS for the decentralization of control of B-52 strikes. He felt his proposals were well founded in view of the following considerations: 1) since joint US/RVNAF target selections were approved by the GVN through the US Embassy, political problems should not arise; 2) public and press reactions to the strikes were favorable; 3) excessive time was being spent on target development because of control arrangements; 4) timely use of intelligence and quick reaction to enemy initiatives were essential; 5) the change of operational plans each time a target was disapproved jeopardized Vietnamese confidence in COMUSMACV; and 6) COMUSMACV was responsible for the outcome of these strikes regardless of who approved them.<sup>142</sup>

(TS) On 6 November, CINCPAC recommended that JCS promulgate a basic ARC LIGHT directive requiring CINCSAC, to provide a fixed number of B-52 sorties on a monthly basis. CINCPAC would then issue a basic directive clarifying procedures and amplifying the JCS directive to require:<sup>143</sup>

1) COMUSMACV's B-52 strike requests to be submitted at least 48 hours in advance to 3d AD or CINCSAC. JCS and CINCPAC would be informed of these requests. If no objections were voiced by JCS, CINCPAC or CINCSAC, approval would be automatic;

2) 3d AD to issue strike intent 24 hours prior to time-on-target;

3) direct liaison between COMUSMACV and 3d AD;

4) COMUSMACV to submit through CINCPAC for JCS approval, any special requests such as waiver of restriction or increase in monthly sortie allocation.

(TS) In mid-November COMUSMACV requested B-52 strikes in direct support of the combined US/RVNAF ground operation SILVER BAYONET near Pleiku.<sup>144</sup> CINCPAC promptly concurred and relayed the proposal to JCS on 16 November. Approval was granted the same day by JCS. CINCPAC and CINCSAC were allowed to delegate authority to COMUSMACV and 3d AD to coordinate directly in conducting the strikes.<sup>145</sup> This authorization included execution of strikes with the possibility of veto by higher authority.<sup>146</sup>

(TS) CINCPAC advised COMUSMACV on 17 November that in view of CINCSAC's desire to retain direct channels with CINCPAC, COMUSMACV would continue to submit B-52 target nominations to CINCPAC with information to CINCSAC, JCS and 3d AD.

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Upon approval of target nominations, CINCPAC would request CINCUSAC to conduct strikes with information to COMUSMACV, JCS and 3d AD. Concurrent approval by JCS would be assumed, subject to continued monitoring and possible veto. Time-over-targets would be confirmed to all concerned as soon as possible rather than 24 hours in advance.<sup>147</sup> COMUSMACV found these developments satisfactory and tasked his staff with developing procedures which would permit a strike as rapidly as possible after acquiring suitable target intelligence.<sup>148</sup>

(TS) The SECDEF reviewed the ARC LIGHT program during his Saigon visit in November 1965 and requested COMUSMACV's evaluation and comments. COMUSMACV reported that although specific results in terms of the number of enemy casualties and the amount of supplies and facilities destroyed were not known, evidence gathered from post-strike ground operations, ralliers, prisoners, captured documents and agents revealed that the ARC LIGHT program had been highly successful. Targets were being developed faster than they could be struck. Overall improvements in USMACV's intelligence capabilities had provided abundant data on the enemy's location and his facilities. The integration of the ARC LIGHT program into USMACV's operational framework substantially increased the striking power available for use against the VC. It greatly bolstered the morale of US and ARVN forces; it demoralized the enemy with a weapon that he could not see or hear. ARVN forces became eager to penetrate areas bombed by B-52's - areas in which they had been extremely reluctant, if not unable, to tread previously.<sup>149</sup>

(TS) ARC LIGHT program responsiveness to the latest field intelligence was a major step in providing massive air support to troops engaged in combat. COMUSMACV commented that the authorization of minimum approval channels was an arrangement which should be continued. Quick reaction by ARC LIGHT forces was not only applicable to major ground campaigns but individually requested targets such as convoys in staging areas or VC occupied base areas.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, mid-November investigation of security measures involved in the planning and execution of ARC LIGHT missions revealed that they were excellent.<sup>151</sup>

(TS) Toward the end of the year, consideration was given to developing B-52 targets in southeastern Laos through such means as photo reconnaissance, OV-1 aircraft and SOG. The importance of destroying enemy rest camps, truck parks, supply routes, infiltration routes and marshaling areas used by VC/NVA infiltration into SVN demanded the

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use of all available forces.<sup>152</sup>

(TS) In his briefing for the SECDEF in late November 1965, COMUSMACV emphasized that ARC LIGHT target requirements exceeded the number of sorties that could be supported by 3d AD assets. The shortage of sorties would be substantially greater if targets in Laos were approved for execution. By late November, B-52 sortie rates had leveled off at approximately 300 per month. In anticipation of an increase in targets, modifications were being studied to allow the B-52 to double its weapon carrying capacity. If this were realized, a shortage of HE bombs in SEASIA was foreseen. B-52 aircraft carrying napalm and bomblets were to fly among other B-52's carrying iron bombs beginning in December. This was one measure which would assist alleviation of the iron bomb shortage. If strikes in Laos were approved, use of napalm on those targets was also recommended. COMUSMACV also continued to press for further decentralization of ARC LIGHT target approval procedures especially since effectiveness was directly related to timeliness. COMUSMACV recommended that: 1) ARC LIGHT target approval channels be decentralized to CINCPAC/CINCSAC with 3d AD placed in direct support of USMACV, 2) targets identified in southeastern Laos be approved for execution to include authorization to use napalm, and 3) shortage of HE bombs resulting from increased B-52 bomb carrying capacities be alleviated.<sup>153</sup>

(S) Of 19 ARC LIGHT missions flown in November, ten were follow up exploitations of previously struck areas. These missions involved 261 B-52 sorties in raids over six SVN provinces. On five consecutive days beginning on 17 November, strikes were conducted in support of ground operations in Pleiku Province. Tay Ninh Province target areas were struck on 2-4 November. Other provinces with targets which were struck in November were: Kien Hoa on the 7th, Binh Long on 12-14th, Binh Tuy on the 26th and 27th, and Binh Duong on the 28th.<sup>154</sup>

(S) On 1 December JCS requested information from CINCSAC regarding the capability and requirements, including leadtime, to increase ARC LIGHT sorties to 800 per month. JCS planned to submit a summary report to SECDEF by 3 December.<sup>155</sup>

(S) During December, 39 ARC LIGHT missions were flown. Target areas in eight RVN provinces and one target in Laos were struck by 306 sorties. Nine strikes were made in Binh Duong Province and five in Pleiku. Other targets struck were in the following provinces: Phuoc Tuy, Vinh Binh,

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Quang Tri and Tay Ninh. Ground forces exploited 11 ARC LIGHT struck target areas in the following provinces: Pleiku, Binh Duong, Quang Tin, Phuoc Tuy, Vinh Binh and Quang Tri.<sup>156</sup>

(U) Quang Tin Province received three ARC LIGHT contingency strikes on 12-14 December in support of HARVEST MOON operations. CG, III MAF praised the successful operation with the comment that the Marines "were more than impressed - they were delighted with the results. The timing was precise . . . bombing was accurate and the overall effect awesome to behold."<sup>157</sup>

(S) During 1965, there were more than 1,500 ARC LIGHT sorties. Flying 135 missions in support of COMUSMACV, B-52 crews dropped 31,500 tons of conventional bombs. The CSAF stated:<sup>158</sup>

. . . there are several reasons for choosing the B-52 for the job in SVN. It can carry fifty-one 750 pound HE bombs, twelve under each and 27 in the bomb bay, which makes it ideally suited to thorough coverage of a large area within minutes. It can reach its target from a distant home base which is far beyond the reach of the enemy . . . It can bomb with utmost accuracy from a wide range of altitudes, day and night, and in any kind of weather.

(U) In late 1965, COMUSMACV commented to the US Secretary of the Air Force, during the latter's visit to the RVN, that "sorties flown by B-52 had not only produced a demoralizing effect on the VC but had strengthened the combat effectiveness of the US and GVN armed forces team."<sup>159</sup>

(U) During his last visit to the RVN in 1965, the SECDEF concluded that "no longer could the communist forces feel secure in their formerly unpenetrable jungle bases . . . these (B-52) attacks had, and will continue to have, a considerable effect on the outcome of the war in Vietnam."<sup>160</sup>

(TS) At the close of the year, COMUSMACV reviewed the status of B-52 strikes, projected strike plans and approved targets for submission in early 1966. He noted that USMACV was developing targets faster than available B-52 sorties could strike them, and that "he could use very easily three times the number of sorties available" at the end of the year.<sup>161</sup>

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In the meantime, CINCPAC had already commented on COMUSMACV's request to the JCS for an increase in B-52 sorties to 450 per month beginning with the new year, with further increase to 600 per month in April-June and 800 per month thereafter. CINCPAC recommended 300 sorties per month to COMUSMACV largely because of the limitations based on munition resources allocated to CSAF. Unallocated bomb resources were insufficient to support the expanded B-52 sortie rate requested except for a very limited period.<sup>162</sup>

#### ROLLING THUNDER

(S) ROLLING THUNDER was the code name for programmed air operations over NVN. The precedent for ROLLING THUNDER was set on 7 February 1965 when JCS directed<sup>163</sup> strikes against NVN in reprisal for the VC mortar attack on US installations at Pleiku on that same date. Aircraft from 7th Flt carriers attacked Thanh Hoa, NVN, on 7 February; the next day, 24 A-1H VNAF fighters, supported by 6 A-1E's and 25 USAF jets, struck Vinh Linh and Tram Bhe Barracks in NVN with 97,920 pounds of ordnance.<sup>164</sup> On 11 February, 28 VNAF A-1H aircraft, supported by 24 USAF F-100 and three F-101 jets, bombed Chap Le Barracks in NVN in retaliation for the VC bombing of a US Forces BEQ in Qui Nhon.<sup>165</sup>

(U) With these actions, there was nearly unanimous press agreement that the war had entered a new phase. Philip Geyelin, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal, on 8 February gave a typical comment: "The latest US air assault on North Vietnam significantly raises the level of the conflict in South Vietnam. It clearly deepens this country's involvement there. It also poses a grim prospect of wider, drawn-out Southeast Asian war." A USIS public opinion survey for the week ending 13 February showed "overwhelming Congressional and press support" for the bombings, with virtually all agreeing that the retaliation for the VC attack at Pleiku was "appropriate and justified."

(S) CJCS felt that the US public should understand that US/GVN air attacks over NVN were not justified simply on a reprisal basis following spectacular attacks; a sustained program could well be justified in response to the daily outrages committed by the VC; it was also militarily effective and would provide US/GVN forces the initiative.<sup>166</sup> On 11 February, JCS recommended to the SECDEF an eight-week program of graduated military pressures against NVN. Four US/VNAF air strikes per week were recommended against targets south of the 19th parallel.<sup>167</sup> SECDEF approved this program shortly thereafter which in actuality was the beginning of the ROLLING THUNDER program.

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(S) The questions of target selection and control over air operations against NVN arose almost immediately following inception of the program. COMUSMACV felt that target selection should be accomplished by USMACV in conjunction with GVN; he acknowledged CINCPAC's authority to assign targets to forces involved, since not all such forces were under COMUSMACV.<sup>168</sup> He stressed the importance of insuring that GVN was treated as a partner by allowing RVNAF authorities to select targets and to clear missions, so as not to create the impression that such strikes were a US show only.<sup>169</sup> CINCPAC pointed out, however, that the need for rapid response required pre-planned targeting which precluded the arrangement proposed by COMUSMACV. After approval of CINCPAC/COMUSMACV's target list, Washington made the decision on the strikes. Reaction time would be too slow if handled as COMUSMACV recommended.<sup>170</sup>

(S) Another issue arose in February when CJCS expressed dissatisfaction with the handling of press briefings by the field.<sup>171</sup> CINCPAC urged that he, rather than COMUSMACV, handle the releases since he was the overall commander of the participating forces.<sup>172</sup> COMUSMACV disagreed: responsibility should not be changed because of an acknowledged slip-up; the key issue was to insure US/GVN cooperation; the latter would not adhere to US ground rules if they felt that they were not real partners in the program.<sup>173</sup>

(TS) In early March, COMUSMACV reemphasized to CINCPAC and CJCS that the policy and procedures for ROLLING THUNDER strikes with centralization of control in Washington tended to leave the VN out of the picture.<sup>174</sup> CINCPAC insisted on adherence to established procedures because the US was the major participant. He added that control should be retained in Washington while encouraging the VN to plan their portion of the operation with appropriate US authorities. Doubt concerning GVN security made it essential that targets not be assigned to VNAF until the latest possible moment.<sup>175</sup> CJCS sympathized with COMUSMACV's views but felt that control must be retained in Washington because of the possibility of CHICOM intervention. He believed that policy restrictions would be eased after the program got underway and that he would press for such a relaxation.<sup>176</sup>

(TS) Strictly speaking, the first ROLLING THUNDER strikes were conducted on 2 March when USAF aircraft hit the Xom Bang supply area, and VNAF with USAF support struck Quang Khe port. In spite of unfavorable weather, both

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strikes were very successful. Six aircraft were lost to ground fire: three F-105's, two F-100's and one A-1H. Later strikes produced poor results. However, by 15 March adequate damage level was achieved when 120 USAF and USN aircraft struck Phu Qui Ammunition Depot, inflicting heavy destruction with no loss of aircraft.<sup>177</sup>

(S) PACOM resources participating in ROLLING THUNDER included PACAF tactical aircraft based in Thailand, Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) (7th Flt) aircraft based on carriers located off the NVN coast in the South China Sea (location referred to as Yankee Station), and USMACV (2d AD & III MAF) aircraft based in SVN. VNAF also participated in the program. CINCPAC continued to direct the employment of these resources on ROLLING THUNDER operations as he had done during the reprisal strikes by issuing appropriate orders through his subordinate commanders (CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACV), who in turn directed their subordinate commanders to execute the missions.

(S) In mid-March, COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC that GVN authorities, particularly VNAF Commander Ky, were pressing for VNAF participation in BARREL ROLL operations (US air interdiction of NVA infiltration routes through northern Laotian Panhandle). He implied that this undesirable role for VNAF could be prevented if GVN was treated as an equal partner in ROLLING THUNDER operations. He therefore proposed that ROLLING THUNDER strike missions be executed under COMUSMACV control based on a program of preplanned targets approved by higher authorities. VNAF targets would form the basis for all strikes. VNAF and 2d AD would operate as a combined force, with 7th Flt coordinating with them and operating north of the 19th parallel.<sup>178</sup>

(S) CINCPAC disagreed with this concept. He felt the difficulties were caused by the insertion of VNAF into the operation, particularly in executing concurrent strikes with US forces. He felt that VNAF strikes should be coordinated with the US but that the operation would be simplified if they were not required to be concurrently executed. He also disagreed that VNAF targets should form the basis for all strikes. In a strongly worded statement, he emphasized that he intended to control the operation through CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACV with no restrictions placed on 7th Flt operating areas.<sup>179</sup>

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(S) In early April, in response to Washington reports reflecting disappointment with the results of ROLLING THUNDER strikes, COMUSMACV commented to CINCPAC that he felt the pilots were doing an admirable job and that consistently poor weather precluded text book results. He reaffirmed his previous position that if operational control were decentralized, there would be better results.<sup>180</sup> In his message to JCS, CINCPAC agreed that the performance of the pilots was outstanding and noted that losses of aircraft were not excessive when compared with those of World War II and the Korean conflict. He did not consider the NVN MIG threat to be serious but did acknowledge the unfavorable psychological impact of the loss of two US aircraft on 4 April to MIG's. CINCPAC emphasized the need to continue the program and maintain the pressure on NVN.<sup>181,182</sup>

(C) In a mid-April message to CINCPAC, COMUSMACV described the coordination procedures for out-of-country air strikes. Upon receipt of instructions to execute a ROLLING THUNDER mission, the US Ambassador notified the Prime Minister, COMUSMACV notified CINCRVNAF and the Minister of Defense, and the Cdr 2d AD informed Cdr, VNAF, of his target assignments. CINCPAC assigned missions directly to the Cdr 2d AD, by-passing COMUSMACV. COMUSMACV requested authority to cancel CINCPACAF control when more lucrative targets appeared in-country inasmuch as such missions had a higher priority than out-of-country strikes.<sup>183,184</sup>

(TS) In a peace move, a standdown of armed reconnaissance and strike missions was ordered 13-18 May; during this period an intensive photo reconnaissance program over NVN was conducted. News commentary widely speculated over probable reactions by the Hanoi government to this action. A 16 May Gallup Poll survey revealed that 59 percent of Americans favored continued bombing of NVN, 21 percent thought it should cease and 20 percent had no opinion. Minority oppositions in the US included such expressions as found in the April editorial of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists which stated:

The present American policy of "carrying the war to North Vietnam" amounts in effect to an admission of defeat in South Vietnam . . . . Our situation is not so desperate as to call for desperate measures. Even the total loss of Vietnam would not mean the loss of Southeast Asia.

(TS) In mid-June, while considering the idea of destroying the SA-2 missile defenses in the Hanoi-Haiphong area and the MIG-capable Phuc Yen Airbase, COMUSMACV expressed the

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view that such offensive actions should include destruction of all NVN jet air bases. Preparations for reprisals, including CHICOM intervention, should be made. Special attention should be given to acts aimed at destruction of US air forces in SVN; such a loss would have a great adverse effect on the entire counterinsurgency effort.<sup>185</sup>

(TS) On 24 June COMUSMACV presented the following possible courses of action for US air operations against NVN: 1) use B-52's against military targets in remote areas, 2) interdict the Nanning-Hanoi-Kunming railroad which carried 10 percent of all tonnages for Hanoi, 3) mine Haiphong, 4) conduct leaflet operations and 5) continue air interdiction of LOC's. At the same time, he stated his belief that US and world opinion should be prepared for the rigors that lay ahead.<sup>186</sup>

(S) ROLLING THUNDER sorties increased to 900 during August 1965. The first aircraft loss to NVN SAM fire occurred on 12 August. Special mission "Iron Hand" was undertaken to locate SAM sites for armed reconnaissance missions.<sup>187</sup> This mission later resulted in reducing the number of sorties available for ROLLING THUNDER.

(S) On 26 September, all Hanoi newspapers published editorials, special articles, photos and statistics to support claims of destroying 600 US aircraft since August 1964. The actual number lost over NVN through 26 September was 114, 57 USAF and 57 USN. NVN public announcements obviously were meant for psychological purposes, particularly in view of the continuing sustained air operations over NVN.<sup>188</sup>

(TS) On 9 September a USMACV press release stated: "four USAF F-105's struck a railroad bridge in NVN approximately 17 miles south of the Chinese border and 140 miles NW of Hanoi. The target was closer to the Chinese border than any target yet hit." In a 10 September message to COMUSMACV, CINCPAC cited JCS and CINCPAC ROLLING THUNDER directives which prohibited armed reconnaissance closer than 30 miles from the CHICOM border. Investigation revealed that 2d AD reports did not confirm the action described in the press release and it was doubtful if there was an actual bombing within the 30 mile zone. In any case, CINCPAC declared that there should never have been any release to the press which was not in accordance with US policy and which emphasized closeness to the Chinese border. CINCPAC regarded it as essential

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that effective preventive measures be undertaken. It had been a hard struggle in Washington to state ground rules in a manner which would allow the tactical commander maximum latitude for effective action. But press access even to inadvertent errors could ultimately result in demands for restrictions which would seriously hamper air operations.<sup>189</sup>

(C) In September, US aircraft were suspected of bombing a bridge over the Ben Hai River in the DMZ on two separate occasions. Since air attacks in the DMZ were forbidden, an investigation and report of the incidents to the International Control Commission (ICC) was necessary. On 23 September, COMUSMACV reported to CINCPAC that, although he had no official cognizance over the conduct of 2d AD and 7th Flt air missions over NVN, he had, as the senior military officer in SEASIA, responsibilities for reporting DMZ military incidents to the US Ambassador so that the ICC would be informed. He directed Cdr, 2d AD and 7th Flt Lt In O to investigate. A thorough investigation by 2d AD revealed that one F-100 based at Korat, Thailand did expend ordnance at the south end of the bridge causing considerable damage to life and property. The 7th Flt Liaison Officer (LO) reported that the evidence did not support USN involvement in the other strike. COMUSMACV recognized that there was no conclusive proof linking the strike to a carrier based aircraft but circumstantial evidence convinced him that such did occur. He informed CINCPAC that this represented a somewhat lose and awkward situation. While not suggesting a modification of operational control arrangements, COMUSMACV felt that CINCPAC might consider designating COMUSMACV his agent to handle similar investigations in the future.<sup>190</sup>

(TS) In an early September evaluation of ROLLING THUNDER targeting and tactics, COMUSMACV concluded that improvements were in order. On 23 September, he requested reorientation of ROLLING THUNDER targets as it was becoming increasingly apparent that a number of designated targets were no longer lucrative. Some barracks appeared unoccupied; others had been dismantled and moved. There were no secondary explosions at some ammunition depots but there were some in nearby wooded areas. A significant portion of ROLLING THUNDER efforts and resources appeared to have been wasted. COMUSMACV recommended:<sup>191</sup> 1) greater diversification of assigned ROLLING THUNDER targets, 2) discontinuance of strikes against targets that were obviously unoccupied and/or had been subject to multiple strikes, 3) areas adjacent to targets which could

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conceal troop facilities, supplies and ammunition be designated for attack, and 4) target selection be permitted wider latitude and strikes be in an irregular time pattern. Within six weeks, COMUSMACV detected a definite improvement. 192

(S) By mid-October, a total of 13,000 ROLLING THUNDER armed reconnaissance sorties had been flown. On 17 October, the first NVN operational SAM site was completely destroyed northwest of Hanoi. 193

(C) In early November, CINCPAC requested information to insure maximum effectiveness in the application of air power. He pointed out to COMUSMACV that the emphasis of ROLLING THUNDER had gradually shifted from strikes on large, significant, JCS fixed targets to a wide ranging armed reconnaissance program, and that planning and analyzing for the latter program greatly differed from that for the former. The activities involved in the armed reconnaissance program required the combined efforts of component services and timely assessments of ROLLING THUNDER operations in relation to other factors. 194 COMUSMACV was in a good position to provide this data because modus operandi and effectiveness of ROLLING THUNDER were constantly being evaluated since it affected the aircraft resources available for operations in SVN and Laos. 195 CINCPAC's ROLLING THUNDER armed reconnaissance operations were divided into the following priority tasks: 196 1) photo reconnaissance planning and exploitation in support of combat air operations, 2) route/area armed reconnaissance to collect information, to present an inhibiting presence and threat of destruction through frequent day and night surveillance, 3) attack on fleeting targets, 4) interdiction of NVN LOC's by destruction of bridges, ferries, bypasses and LOC support facilities, and 5) disruption, harassment and attrition of military support activities within authorized areas of operation.

(S) In mid-November, COMUSMACV evaluated the SA-2 missile system and concluded that the weapon was not as formidable as expected. He noted that highly effective techniques and tactics had been developed to counter it. 197

(S) In November 1965, Cdr, 2d AD developed more specific procedures for aircraft operating near the DMZ. 198 COMUSMACV considered the plan an excellent insurance against a DMZ violation and forwarded it to CINCPAGAF for CINCPAC consideration. The plan required ground radar positioning of aircraft striking targets within 20 miles of the DMZ. COMUSMACV noted, however, that COMSEVENFLT did not agree to this restriction stating that strikes on targets north of the DMZ under good

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weather conditions should be left to the pilot's prerogative insofar as navigation and target identification were concerned. COMUSMACV considered this procedure inadequate. 199

(U) December ROLLING THUNDER operations accelerated until the 24th when terminated by the Christmas truce. <sup>200</sup> This halt, which was conceived originally as a one day cessation of hostilities, was extended for the remainder of 1965 and well into the new year as an effort by the President to convince the world of the US desire for a peaceful settlement of the war. While subsequent events proved Hanoi's lack of interest in such a settlement, the halt did permit a thorough evaluation of the ROLLING THUNDER program.

(S) USAF jet pilots logged 10,570 strike sorties and dropped 23,510 tons of bombs over NVN in 1965. The operations which expanded over the areas authorized for strikes covered most of the country outside of the Hanoi-Haiphong area. Several hundred bridges had been destroyed or damaged, thousands of primarily military type buildings smashed, roads and railways interdicted, runways of several airfields cratered and numerous anti-aircraft and SAM sites and radar installations attacked. During the last few months of 1965, an estimated 300 vehicles were destroyed in NVN month. <sup>201</sup>

(S) When ROLLING THUNDER operations began on 2 March 1965, it was hoped that Hanoi would be pressured to cease its aggression through increasing strikes on selected NVN targets accompanied with the threat of more massive losses. But even in early 1965, CINCPAC held the view that the US leaders should realize that punitive attacks and the threat of destruction of capital resources of NVN probably would not bring Hanoi to the conference table. Ho Chi Minh had never doubted victory. From CINCPAC's point of view, the prospect of eventual VC defeat might convince NVN/VC leaders that they should seek other alternatives to their objectives. The immediate objective of ROLLING THUNDER operations was thus to make it as difficult and as costly as possible for NVN to continue its support of the VC. <sup>202</sup>

(U) Press reports in late 1965 showed mixed reactions to NVN bombings: The US News & World Report on 6 December reported that

Demand is growing both in the US and in South Vietnam for stepped-up actions against North Vietnam due to casualty lists that week by week are growing longer, and appearance of more and more pictures of American dead and wounded are feeding this demand. Behind the pressure for a change in the rules, to

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permit expanded war against North Vietnam, is a growing feeling that the US is being sucked into another Korea-type war on the ground, a war that could drag on for years and still end in a stalemate.

Associated Press military writer Fred Hoffman summed up 10 months of NVN bombing on 20 November as "far from a success" because it had failed to cut down the flow of NVN soldiers and supplies to the south and had reportedly inflicted "no basic dislocation" in the north. There were conflicting reports on the effect of the bombing on the NVN population. There is no evidence that the punishment has significantly impaired the will of the NVN to carry on, Seymour Topping of the New York Times wrote from Saigon on 10 December. Writer Felix Greene, back from a visit to NVN, was quoted by the Associated Press in London on 12 December 1965 as saying: "The bombing of their country has united the NVN as nothing else could have done." But Roscoe Drummond in the New York Herald Tribune wrote from Washington on December 13:

Civilian morale in Communist North Vietnam is beginning to hurt . . . (official) articles are insistent that much more needs to be done 'to consolidate the rear' and in their very insistence they show that Hanoi is increasingly worried about the state of public morale as the air strikes of the US and South Vietnamese mount.

(TS) However CINCPAC, in evaluating the overall effectiveness of ROLLING THUNDER, stated that there had been significant disruptions which US/FWMAF could capitalize on if operations were to be resumed after the stand-down. NVN had been forced to expend great effort to repair roads and bridges and to prepare defense of urban areas for possible attack. Necessary internal operations had been severely disrupted and military support for the VC and Pathet Lao had been slowed, but not slowed enough. Reconstruction of communications links had been designated as a primary strategic problem and numerous NVN citizens had to be organized into repair gangs. The NVA had been given the supervision of reconstruction in damaged areas, which no doubt detracted from their military duties. As a reflection of these pressures, the NVN news agency in Hanoi had been increasing the tempo of propaganda relating to US air attacks. These facts and others indicated that Hanoi had felt the pressure and that US/RVN were presuming that the NVN government was faced growing internal problems. 203

(TS) In light of limited objectives of the air campaign

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over NVN, CINCPAC continued, ROLLING THUNDER had done quite well. On the other hand, ROLLING THUNDER operations had not been conducted in such a manner sufficient to increase the pressure on Hanoi in late 1965. Targets vital to effective military operations had not been struck in significant numbers. Military and civilian activities had accommodated to limited operations. In fact, the psychological pressure had decreased but regardless of how ROLLING THUNDER had been conducted, the important fact was that the nature of the war had changed since the NVN air campaign began. ROLLING THUNDER had not forced Hanoi to the decision which the US had sought. There was now every indication that Ho Chi Minh intended to continue support of the VC until denied the capability to do so. He had the politico-economic support of the CHICOM's which had increased his obligation to that regime. This, together with pressure from that direction to continue support, probably left him little alternative. This resolve had caused a significant change in the complexion of NVN support to the VC. With this final conclusion, CINCPAC recommended resumption of the program. 204

#### YANKEE TEAM/BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER/TIGER HOUND

(S) In January 1964, various studies were made analyzing the reasons for the effectiveness of VC infiltration into SVN. One such study was conducted by a US group under CINCPAC. The group concluded that: 1) VC infiltration of personnel and equipment was taking place in undetermined but sufficient quantities successfully to support and supply VC military operations and 2) the primary source of supply continued to be from NVN via Laos and Cambodia with deliveries by porters on foot trails, by boat and sampans on rivers and canals and along the coast by larger sea going craft. 205 After intensive study and analysis, COMUSMACV concluded in early 1964 that control of the borders, as a means of checking infiltration, was feasible. 206

(TS) These were the conditions which gave impetus to the concept and initiation of air operations over areas contiguous to the SVN border. On 19 May 1964, YANKEE TEAM air reconnaissance flights over Laos began using USAF RF-101 aircraft based in Thailand. The initial JCS directive provided for a short term effort of low-level photo-reconnaissance missions during daylight hours. 207 However, JCS later authorized the establishment of a continuing program for these missions. Conducted by USAF and USN aircraft, the YANKEE TEAM missions had the following objectives: 1) provide timely tactical intelligence for use by friendly forces in Laos, 2) substantiate the extent and scope of infiltration of war material, troops and resources from NVN via Laos into SVN, 3) provide a psychological boost to the Laotian, Thai and other friendly forces in SEASIA, and 4) demonstrate overtly to the

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communist forces the US concern over, and determination to stay in, SEASIA. The YANKEE TEAM forces were responsive to the requirements of the US country team in Laos and to COMUSMACV, CINCPCAC, CJCS and higher authority. 208

(S) The YANKEE TEAM program grew at a substantial rate during 1964 and was continued throughout 1965. 209

(TS) At the beginning of 1965, COMUSMACV faced not only the harsh military reality that the "neutral" territory of Laos was being used by NVN for infiltration of thousands of soldiers, but that there was increasing evidence that Cambodia also was being used as a VC sanctuary. 210 RVNAF and US intelligence indicated that ammunition, explosives, arms and military equipment were being shipped from Haiphong, NVN, up the Mekong River to Sihanoukville, Cambodia, and then transported overland into SVN. 211

(TS) To limit the infiltration of military materials and enemy personnel into SVN by land, COMUSMACV in 1965 launched an air bombing program in the Laotian Panhandle and in the northern Laos area. The overall objective of the bombing program was destruction of VC/Pathet Lao/NVN bases and interdiction of the enemy's overland infiltration of material and men. The air effort was designed to block passes, interdict road segments, destroy convoys moving both day and night, destroy bridges, supplies, ammunition and POL depots. Armed reconnaissance and tactical air interdiction operations over the NE portion of Laos started in December 1964 under the code name BARREL ROLL. In April 1965, BARREL ROLL operations were divided as a result of a second program, called STEEL TIGER, which covered that portion of the Laos Panhandle south of the 17th parallel. 212 In the first part of 1965 the original BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER target list contained 42 military installations, supply areas and bridges. By July the list of targets was expanded to 147 to include truck parks, open storage areas, road segments and choke points (road defiles). 213

(S) During the year, air operations over Laos were conducted by Thailand, SVN and CVA based aircraft. Resources available at these bases and command relationships are discussed in Chapter II. Initially, only Thai-based aircraft were used in this program. In April, aircraft based in SVN commenced to supplement the program, and COMSEVENTHFLT allocated sorties which were excess to ROLLING THUNDER requirements. By December, COMUSMACV was authorized to allocate sorties on a priority basis from all available sources to BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER (see below). 214

(S) YANKEE TEAM stepped up its photo reconnaissance operations

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starting early in 1965 to support both BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER. STEEL TIGER armed reconnaissance/strike missions began in April with 90 sorties flown out of 104 scheduled. During the month of June STEEL TIGER dropped to 41 sorties flown out of 73 scheduled due primarily to monsoons and strike cancellations caused by higher priority operations. BARREL ROLL, starting with 13 missions in February reached a cumulative total of 255 missions flown out of 338 scheduled by 30 June. Weather was the major limiting factor. 215

(TS) Between 1 January and 18 June 1965, 326 BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER missions were flown, of which 155 were armed reconnaissance and 163 were missions attacking highway choke points. The remaining 8 missions were strikes against military area targets only. The initial emphasis was on armed reconnaissance missions. However, in July the program was adjusted to include major strikes against fixed targets, and armed reconnaissance became, in effect, a secondary mission. 216

(TS) COMUSMACV recognized that securing the infiltration routes through Laos would not necessarily deny communist access to RVN. The communists could extend and expand their LOC's through Cambodia, and on the sea. Therefore, COMUSMACV had to consider a naval blockade of Cambodian ports and coastal areas, and expand counter-sea infiltration efforts in RVN. Consideration had also been given to the deployment of US ground forces in Laos to block infiltration. The US Ambassador to Laos in early 1965 point out that, for political reasons, Laotian leaders would probably strenuously object to the deployment of massive US forces in their country. 217

(TS) In July 1965, COMUSMACV believed air strikes, following possibly by hit and run ground raids with air support, was the most feasible action to reduce infiltration. A major ground action would require the commitment of excessive forces. 218 Since only meagre reliable intelligence data on NVN activities in the southern Panhandle of Laos was available, COMUSMACV stated that an expanded effort, to include cross-border operations of small intelligence gathering units, was necessary. 219 Among his recommendations to SECDEF were proposals to establish: 1) ground/airmobile observer teams in Laos; 2) a tactical air control system that could bring all of COMUSMACV's varied assets to bear on the targets; 3) "free strike" zones suspected of containing bivouacs, rest stops and supply areas; and 4) armed reconnaissance missions to cover rivers known or suspected to support infiltration. 220

(S) In early September, in an effort to improve the detection and interdiction of infiltration through the Laotian Panhandle, COMUSMACV tasked his staff to explore the possibility of using III

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MAF's Air Wing for armed reconnaissance missions south of the 17th parallel. 2d AD had found this mission difficult to accomplish because long endurance sorties of Thai-based F-105 and in-country F-100 aircraft required refueling for which a shortage of tankers existed. 221

(TS) On 25 September, COMUSMACV requested CINCPAC's approval of an expanded air interdiction program to check the reported increasing infiltration through the southern part of the Laotian Panhandle. 222 CINCPAC agreed that COMUSMACV could use more SVN based aircraft for additional interdiction in Laos, but advised him not to use Thailand based aircraft because of the sensitivity of US air operations based in Thailand. CINCPAC concurred in USMACV plans; execution of the program was contingent on coordination and approval of US Embassy, Vientiane. 223

(TS) In November CINCPAC established an SOP for missions (which had been individually approved since May 1965) in which USMACV and PACFLT aircraft would conduct armed reconnaissance to strike targets of opportunity in BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER areas. BARREL ROLL operations were limited to the northern areas of the Laotian Panhandle bounded by a line from the confluence of Nam Ca Ding and Man Muone rivers to the Laos/NVN border at a point just north of the Nape Pass. STEEL TIGER operations were to be conducted in that portion of the Panhandle south of the BARREL ROLL areas. 224 Both BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER operations were restricted to targets and routes for armed reconnaissance as approved by the US Embassy, Vientiane, and promulgated by COMUSMACV, or his designated representative. COMUSMACV was designated as coordinating authority. Numerous stringent rules defined the assigned responsibilities. 225

(TS) On 21 December the US Embassy, Vientiane, published a revised "list" for BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER validated targets consisting of: 226 1) validated targets of major significance, 2) validated targets of lesser significance, and 3) validated targets, regardless of significance which could not be struck for political or military reasons. Targets remained on the "non-strike" list as long as political or other considerations by either US or Laos prevented their execution. Once targets were placed on list 1 they could be struck at COMUSMACV's direction until effectively destroyed, or it could become a target of lesser significance on list 2. If political considerations required adjustments, the target could be placed back on list 3. Target approval procedures for air operations over Laos were cumbersome and complex. Coordination with the US Embassy, Bangkok, was required when aircraft based in Thailand were used in missions flown against Laotian targets. 227 Initially, approvals were sought separately for each planned mission. In early October,

COMUSMACV requested the Ambassador's approval of weekly target schedules. The Ambassador replied that the list of BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER missions, accompanying the request, lacked detail, without which approval could not be considered. He insisted on details of the type contained in OPREP-1's such as targets to be hit and routes to be cratered. <sup>228</sup> In the meantime, Cdr, 2d AD expressed his concern over further restrictions imposed upon air operations over Laos. He cited a specific case in a discussion early in October with COMUSMACV regarding the Royal Laotian Government's (RLG) restrictions on STEEL TIGER strikes: no attacks on inhabited areas; no attacks more than 200 yds away from LOC's approved for armed reconnaissance; and no attacks on antiaircraft weapons' concentrations unless they interfered with mission accomplishment. <sup>229</sup> Positive visual identification by flight leaders prior to attack was mandatory. These restrictions sometimes made the accomplishment of missions extremely difficult. The Cdr, 2d AD requested COMUSMACV's approval for the use of FAC's to direct strike aircraft.

(TS) In October COMUSMACV in a message to CINCPAC stated that infiltration of NVA forces had been greater than expected. VC action in the SVN highlands appeared designed to protect infiltration routes and to fragment ARVN general reserve forces. COMUSMACV requested that the US Ambassador, Vientiane, fully support a strike program against infiltration routes. <sup>230</sup> COMUSMACV reviewed with CINCPAC the difficulties in satisfying the targeting requirements fo US Embassy, Vientiane. As a result arrangements were made for interested agencies to meet periodically with US Embassy, Vietiane to develop suitable targets. <sup>231</sup>

(TS) On 24 November, the US Ambassador, Vientiane, concurred with COMUSMACV's request to the JCS for B-52 strikes against VC concentrations along the Laos/SVN border. He cautioned, however, that any public statement regarding the strikes should describe it as "just another mission in SVN". <sup>232</sup>

(TS) On 25 November, US Embassy, Vientiane approved the use of defoliants on infiltration routes in the Panhandle of Laos. In anticipation of communist propaganda which might capitalise on this, he suggested that the US comment that air reconnaissance had been conducted over Laos at RLG request since May 1964. <sup>233</sup>

(TS) Sorties over Laos totaled 1,282 in November, including strike and reconnaissance flights. Beginning 20 November the interdiction program in southern Laos was substantially increased. During the week 20-26 November more than 250 sorties were flown with 21 bridges reported destroyed or damaged, 28 roads cuts reported, and our troop concentrations attacked. Strikes of this magnitude should have significantly reduced the flow of troops and supplies into the RVN, but infiltration rates appeared to remain

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on an upward trend.

(S) The increasing NVA infiltration through Laos was a major concern of the Command. In late November COMUSMACV established the TIGER HOUND program to counter this buildup. A joint organization was established under the Cdr, 2d AD. USAF and USA aircraft would acquire targets using visual reconnaissance, SLAR and IR techniques which would then be struck by USAF, USMC and USN aircraft. Missions began on 5 December. 235

(TS) During his November trip to Saigon, the SECDEF was informed that the STEEL TIGER operation had not been fully effective in containing the infiltration of men and material. The communists had been infiltrating major NVA forces into SVN through the Laotian Panhandle in increasing numbers; the enemy had devoted major engineering efforts building roads bypassing choke points, camouflaging route segments, repairing portage areas on major roads previously damaged by repeated air strikes; and was probably infiltrating up to 300 tons of supplies daily into SVN. The southeastern portion of the Panhandle contained the best potential targets, but US aircraft were not permitted to operate in any substantial degree in the southern Panhandle area until November when RIG granted limited approval for US operations in the area. 236

(TS) Soon after the SECDEF November conference COMUSMACV changed the functional responsibilities for the Laotian bombing program. On 10 December he delegated coordinating authority to the Cdr, 2d AD. 237 The Cdr, 2d AD was assigned complete responsibility for planning, scheduling, coordinating and executing air operations in support of the Laos interdiction programs and YANKEE TEAM. COMUSMACV retained overall responsibility and furnished policy guidance in accordance with instructions from higher authority. 238 Centralizing responsibility for these programs under Cdr, 2d AD, was directed because of the need for closer coordination of plans and operations. 239

(TS) The Cdr, 2d AD, coordinated matters pertaining to operational aspects of these programs with the appropriate US Embassy (Vientiane and Bangkok). Matters pertaining to policy, as differentiated from the actual execution of air operations, were referred to COMUSMACV. The Cdr, 2d AD, acting for COMUSMACV, submitted nominated targets to Vientiane for validation. TIGER HOUND was accorded intelligence priority support sufficient to insure rapid responsive targeting. Procedures for requesting and coordinating YANKEE TEAM reconnaissance remained in effect. The YANKEE TEAM program responsibility was

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retained by COMUSMACV. The 2d AD supported the YANKEE TEAM program in the Laotian Panhandle and in the BARREL ROLL areas in northern Laos. 240

(TS) NVA/VC infiltration/exfiltration along the SVN/Cambodian border also concerned COMUSMACV. On 9 December, COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC that the border area of Cambodia contained motorable infiltration routes, command centers, base training and supply areas similar to those in Laos. Not until late 1965 had the full range of the enemy's effort in infiltration become apparent, and even then COMUSMACV could not produce any "legal" evidence. 241 COMUSMACV requested that he be authorized to conduct the following actions whenever US troops operated in areas adjacent to the Cambodian border: use of artillery and air strikes against enemy weapons firing against US troops from positions up to 10 kilometers within the Cambodian side of the border; maneuver of US ground troops up to 2 kilometers into Cambodia if necessary for the preservation of the force or the attainment of the objective within SVN; use of observation aircraft and airborne FAC's in support of US operations; and the flying of reconnaissance and surveillance missions within a 10 kilometer strip on the Cambodian side of the border. 242

(TS) On 17 December CINCPAC replied to COMUSMACV that in each instance, when planning operations near the Cambodian/RVN border, advance approval of necessary actions or counter-actions against VC/NVN forces was required. 243 COMUSMACV, on 21 December, so informed his commanders. 244 He stated that, in emergency situations, US forces were authorized to take necessary counteractions in exercise of the right of self-defense against VC/NVA attacks directed at US/RVNAF forces from locations inside Cambodia. COMUSMACV would be kept closely advised. An emergency situation was considered to exist when in the judgment of the Commander, the urgency for taking timely counteractions in self-defense of US/Allied forces precluded obtaining prior approval. As necessary, such counteractions could include air and artillery strikes against enemy firing from the Cambodian side of the border against US/RVNAF troops. Also permitted was maneuver by US troops, while in actual contact with VC/VNA forces, into Cambodia as necessary for preservation of the force. This authority was to provide for the defense of RVN and of US/Allied forces, and would not be applied toward widening the war in SEASIA. The military Commander retained the right to defend his command against armed attack with all means at his disposal. Commanders were advised that in the event of such attack, immediate aggressive action would be taken against attacking forces. 245

(U) A summary of the accomplishments and expectations for the BARREL ROLL-STEEL TIGER-TIGER HOUND programs was presented during the SECDEF's visit to SVN 28-29 November, and is discussed below. 246

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(TS) Despite the limited effort committed to the BARREL ROLL program <sup>247</sup> during the rainy season, it had achieved some success in containing the communist advance in northern Laos. As an example of this effort, 400 manned strike sorties of all types were flown from 1-25 November. This included an average of about 6.3 sorties per day from the Thai-based on-call strike force. Some indications of effectiveness were:

1) Food shortages and associated native dissatisfaction with communist forces as reported by refugees and captured enemy troops.

2) Resupply of the enemy forces by road had been brought to a virtual standstill.

3) Noticeable improvement of Royal Laotian Forces (RLF) morale and aggressiveness.

However, increased air strikes during the rainy season were necessary to check communist commitments in northern Laos. These operations would have a direct effect on the war in the south by draining off NVN resources into northern Laos.

(S) The major change required to achieve success in the BARREL ROLL program was to increase the strike effort to insure that northern Laos operations were not adversely affected by ROLLING THUNDER and STEEL TIGER priorities. Effectiveness could be further enhanced by permitting more flexibility in the rules of engagement which were then as restrictive as those applicable to STEEL TIGER in southern Laos.

(TS) The STEEL TIGER operation <sup>248</sup> had not achieved full effectiveness in interdicting the infiltration of men and materials. Major NVA forces had been and were continuing to infiltrate through the Laotian Panhandle. The enemy also had devoted major engineering efforts to new road construction and bypass of choke points. Route segments and portaging areas were camouflaged. Major roads previously damaged by US air strikes were repaired. As a result of these efforts, it was estimated that up to 300 tons of supplies could be infiltrated into SVN daily. In mid-November, when RIG opened the southern Panhandle to US armed reconnaissance and interdiction, COMUSMACV requested 100 sorties per day in the STEEL TIGER area. A comparison of sortie rates indicates the stepped up tempo of operations in the STEEL TIGER area, particularly in the lower Panhandle. Prior to 19 November, 25 sorties per day had been allocated to STEEL TIGER. It was planned to increase this rate to 50 sorties per day for the ten day period beginning 19 November. However, because of restrictions on the timing of programmed strikes, the planned sortie

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rate for the period 20-25 November was further increased to an average of 72.5 per day.

(S) However, weather and accelerated requirements for ROLLING THUNDER forced cancellation or diversion of many of these STEEL TIGER missions. An average of 17.8 sorties per day were flown prior to 20 November while an average of 39.5 sorties per day were flown from 20-25 November. Most of the sorties flown prior to 19 November had been armed reconnaissance and as a secondary mission had seeded and cratered roads, thus creating choke points. After 20 November at least 20 sorties had cratered or seeded roads daily. The peak effort for any one day was on 24 November when 55 road cratering and armed reconnaissance sorties were flown. These increased efforts were expected to result in a sizeable reduction in, or at least a slow down of infiltration activities.<sup>249</sup>

(TS) COMUSMACV and his staff were in constant contact with the US Ambassador, Vientiane, in an effort to improve and expand US operations throughout Laos, particularly with respect to the southeastern Panhandle area. Unfortunately there were Lao, Kha, and various Montagnard tribesmen in the areas because of which the RIG and the US Ambassador were reluctant to permit any form of a carte blanche strike program. In view of then recent intelligence, a proposal was made to the US Ambassador in Vientiane to define an area in Laos contiguous to SVN under exclusive enemy control. Within this area streamlined approval procedures would be applied to increase responsiveness in striking newly discovered targets. Target approval procedures in the past had been quite rigid and formalized, requiring extensive photography, photo interpretation, collation, and briefing. Final approval was made by RIG. This required laborious transporting of the targeting materials from Hawaii or Saigon to Udon (2d AD's HQ in Thailand) or Savan-nakhet Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) HQ and Vientiane.

(TS) Project TIGER HOUND<sup>250</sup> developed and tested operationally in late December a highly responsive Airborne Command and Control system for gaining RLAF strike approval for targets discovered within a limited area by US FAC's intimately familiar with the area. Strike approval had been obtained from RLAF through an elaborate communications net until it was proposed that Lao observers fly with the US FAC's and grant on-the-spot approval. This procedure would be similar to that established in SVN where approval by the province chief was obtained prior to each strike. Although the required communications system would necessarily be more extensive and needed further testing, it seemed to be an

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acceptable method of reducing the time required for obtaining target approval.

(TS) The TIGER HOUND rules of engagement permitted unlimited armed reconnaissance along all motorable roads within a specified area of the Laos Panhandle. However, only targets of opportunity which were within 200 yards of the road could be struck. Beyond 200 yards from motorable roads or anywhere outside the specified geographical area, strikes could be made only on previously approved RLAF targets or those targets marked by RLAF PAC's. Infiltration trails or way stations could not be attacked. Napalm could not be employed.

(S) In summary, procedures and programs were being established which gave every indication of considerably enhancing US efforts to counter infiltration through Laos. The SECDEF's response to these plans indicated full support for requirements generated by them.<sup>251</sup>

(U) See Figure IV-1 for US/VNAF aircraft losses during 1965 in operations over SVN, NVN and Laos.

#### ARVN OPERATIONS

(C) In 1965, RVNAF was assigned two primary objectives: 1) to defeat VC forces in SVN and to force their withdrawal and 2) to extend GVN control in SVN. In order to accomplish these objectives, the missions assigned to ARVN were to: 1) destroy or drive off organized VC military forces; 2) harass VC secret bases and lines of communications; 3) control national boundaries and 4) provide elements of the general reserve, corps reserve, division reserve, and sometimes sector and sub-sector reserve. ARVN also had the mission to defend key installations and axes of communication in situations where RP were not available. The following summaries of selected operations illustrate ARVN attempts to fulfill these missions. They are representative of success, failure, lessons learned, or demonstration of a new tactic or trend.

(S) One of the most successful operations of the year, QUIET THANG 127, was conducted near the village of An Ninh, Binh Dinh Province, on 14 March. Intelligence reports indicated the presence of a PW camp located near the village, guarded by an estimated VC company. The operation began with the helilift of two companies of the 3d Abn Bn to an LZ near the village, with two companies in reserve. Landing at 1000, the helicopter-borne force searched the area, liberated 38 friendly PW's and evacuated them by 1215. The two companies then received a change in mission and assaulted a VC village,

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killing five VC. The unit was extracted at 1800 and suffered no losses. This action was significant in its extensive use of intelligence, thorough planning and vigorous execution.<sup>252</sup>

(S) DAN CHI 129 was a six-battalion search and destroy operation under 21st Inf Div control, which forced an engagement on two VC main force battalions. The operation took place 4-6 April in Kien Long District, Chuong Thien Province near the edge of the U Minh forest. Operations were planned for this area because the U Minh forest was a known VC sanctuary. Friendly forces consisted of the 33d Inf Regt, minus one battalion; the 1st and 2d Bns, 31st Inf; 42d Ranger Bn; 44th Ranger Bn; four RF companies; one APC troop; the 26th RAG; and 18th River Boat Co, supported by one platoon of 105-mm howitzers and four platoons of 155-mm howitzers.

(C) The scheme of maneuver was to move the 26th RAG and 18th River Boat Co, along waterways to Kien Long District, transporting the 2d Bn, 31st Inf, which was to provide protection for the force and remove obstacles and vegetation. Two battalions of the 33d Regt were to conduct a heliborne assault into a LZ west to secure the water route for the flotilla, then move further west to the U Minh forest. The 1st Bn, 31st Inf, and the APC troop were to advance NW to an objective area at the edge of the U Minh forest. Two RF companies were to block along the province border of the LZ. The two Ranger battalions were in reserve.

( ) The heliborne assault force moved out as scheduled on 4 April and captured 25 VC suspects. On 5 April, at 1620, the flotilla was ambushed along the Cai Nua canal. The heliborne force, which was supposed to have secured the waterway, had a difficult time getting through the swamps and could not link up. One Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP) was sunk, one French Patrol Boat (FPB) damaged and one naval adviser killed. The 2d Bn, 31st Inf debarked and attacked, killing 70 VC and capturing one, while sustaining 4 KIA and 24 MIA. Since it was obvious that the 33d Inf could not link up in time, plans were changed to helilift one or both Ranger battalions into the new objective instead of ground exploitation by the 33d. On 6 April following air strikes on the new objective, the 1st Bn, 31st Inf, and the M113 troop began their attack and soon made contact. Ground fire grew in intensity and at 0925 an A-1H was downed. At 0955, two armed helicopters were downed. By this time the M113 troop was heavily engaged. Division HQ then committed the 44th Rangers. The VC force was estimated at two battalions and were well dug in. The M113 troop, 1st Bn, 31st Inf, and 44th

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Rangers converged on a triangle north of the aircraft wreckage and fought steadily until 1700. The division commander then called off the engagement because the VC had a well prepared defense in depth, the endurance of friendly troops was lagging, and he wished to preserve the high fighting spirit of the troops. Friendly losses were 22 KIA (6 US), 85 WIA, one A-1H destroyed, two UH-1B's destroyed, one LCVP sunk, two M113's damaged, and one FOM boat damaged. Enemy losses were 278 KIA, 7 VCC, 25 VCS, one 75-mm RR, four MG's, two 60-mm mortars, three rocket launchers, 44 individual weapons, 200 structures destroyed and four junks sunk. This operation was noteworthy for the aggressive spirit displayed by the troops and the ability of commanders to adjust rapidly to changes in plans. For its part in the operation, the 44th Ranger Bn was subsequently awarded the US Presidential Unit Citation.<sup>253</sup>

(S) The battle of the An Thai hamlet, QUYET THANG 131, occurred on 7-9 April in the northernmost district of Binh Dinh Province during a road clearing operation. The 22d Inf Div intended to reopen Route 1 between Hoa Nhon District capital and the Quang Ngai Province border. On 1 April, an infantry battalion and an M113 troop task force moved north from the district capital, followed on 3 April by two VNNMC battalions moving by helicopter near the province border. No resistance was encountered. On 4 April the task force pulled out, leaving the VNNMC battalions to secure the northern portion of the road. One company of the 2d Marine Bn drew fire as it crossed a bridge near the village of An Thai. Even though air and artillery were called in, the VC fire was not suppressed. The company was reinforced by another from the same battalion, but still could not force its way through. Soon the remainder of the battalion closed on An Thai and the company across the river pulled back to the hamlet. Defensive positions were set up utilizing VC trenches around the hamlet. The position was attacked by, an estimated reinforced VC battalion every half hour from 0100 to 0430. At 0500, a human-wave attack penetrated the western portion of the perimeter. At first light the battalion commander ordered a counter-attack followed by a short pursuit. Friendly losses were 4 KIA and 22 WIA. The VC lost 205 KIA ten captured, 43 individual weapons, six machine guns, nine automatic rifles and one radio. This battle illustrated what could be accomplished by a highly trained unit, occupying sound defensive positions, and inspired by good leadership. In this battle these factors overcame the numerical superiority of the enemy.<sup>254</sup>

(S) The decision to enter the southernmost part of Kien Hoa Province, unvisited by RVN troops for 15 months, to penetrate a secret VC base, was based on three months of intelligence effort. The operation, TIEN GIANG 19/65, was planned in

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three phases. The first phase, bombing of selected targets, occurred one month before troop deployment and was immediately followed by Phase II, the psywar effort, telling people to seek refuge outside the VC-controlled area. More than 3,000 villagers responded. As of 28 April when Phase III, the active part of the operation, began the known VC force consisted of two companies guarding a secret base plus 200 to 300 recruits in training. Friendly forces consisted of two infantry battalions and an armored cavalry troop as Task Force Alpha, plus one infantry battalion and one Ranger battalion as the airmobile force. Another Ranger battalion and an infantry battalion were kept in reserve. Support was furnished by an artillery battery of 105-mm howitzers and a platoon of 155-mm howitzers. The VNN and 21st RAG provided shore bombardment, blockade of the coast, and amphibious transport for the operation.

(S) The plan was to land the amphibious force (Task Force Alpha) on two beaches on the SW coast of Kien Hoa Province after a ten-minute naval bombardment and air strikes. One hour later, air strikes were to precede the landing of the airmobile force on two LZ's 8 kilometers NE of the beachhead. These two forces would make a pincer movement on the mangrove swamp where the VC camp was located.

(S) The operation proceeded as planned. Units encountered only light resistance throughout the day, capturing a VC supply officer with documents which described a weapons cache in the area. On the third day this cache was found. It contained 240 Springfield rifles, 98 Czech submachine guns, three 60-mm mortars, 21 East German light machine guns, 53 antiaircraft tripods, one 82-mm mortar, six CHICOM flame throwers and 193 cases of CHICOM 70-mm artillery rounds. In addition, 162 VC were killed and 66 captured, as opposed to friendly casualties of 3 KIA and 15 WIA.

(S) This action was an excellent example of staff planning, command and control. Intelligence was fully exploited, and influenced ground movement and air action throughout the operation. Psywar was fully integrated. Air strikes were extremely effective, accounting for most of the VC casualties.<sup>255</sup>

(S) On 11 May, an estimated four VC battalions attacked Song Be, the province capital of Phuoc Long Province. VC forces succeeded in penetrating the town and a suicide squad penetrated the USMACV compound, but the defenders held. A two-battalion reaction force, consisting of one Ranger and one infantry battalion, was sent in the next day. Enroute

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the Ranger battalion detected and avoided an ambush four kilometers in length. The infantry battalion, while not falling into an ambush, had a running engagement with another group of VC and succeeded in killing 40. The intent of the relief force was to reinforce Song Be, not to engage the VC outside the town. After repeated air attacks, the VC finally withdrew. Friendly losses were 63 KIA (five US) and 109 WIA (13 US) and 83 MIA. Also lost were 109 weapons, 21 radios, four armored cars, and one B-57. VC losses were 297 KIA and nine weapons.

(S) The significance of this battle was that it clearly presaged a warning of events to come--utilization by the VC of large forces to overrun and hold district and province towns and well-laid ambushes to destroy relief forces, expected to come to the town's assistance.<sup>256</sup>

(S) TU LUC 150 was a major battle fought 13 kilometers west of Quang Ngai City, Quang Ngai Province, on 29-30 May following an attempt to relieve ambushed forces. Friendly units consisted of the 51st Inf Regt (-), the 39th Ranger Bn, 3d Marine Bn, and one M113 troop, with one platoon of 155-mm howitzers and two platoons of 105-mm howitzers in support. The VC 1st Regt's plans, later captured, revealed a scheme to ambush an ARVN road-clearing force, then deploy and destroy the expected reaction force. This plan was executed exactly as conceived.

(S) While on a road clearing operation one company of the 1st Bn, 51st Inf, was ambushed by the VC. A second company, sent to its relief, also became heavily engaged. The battalion commander then committed the remainder of his unit minus a small reserve to reinforce the two engaged companies. The VC, expecting this, assaulted the battalion from two directions and overran it. A few survivors managed to escape. At this point the first two phases of the VC plan had worked perfectly.

(S) The plan for 30 May specified that the 2d Bn, 51st Inf, the 39th Ranger Bn, followed by the 3d VNMC Bn would move to the battle area and occupy widely separated terrain features. Once again the VC had anticipated this move, even to the correct selection of the terrain objectives. The RVN forces occupied the objectives without incident but at 1400 heavy fire was placed on the Rangers. The 2d Bn, 51st Inf, was ordered to support the Ranger battalion, but before it could do so both it and the Marine battalion were attacked. All three units, still widely separated, were subjected to numerous assaults throughout the day. The 2d Bn, 51st Inf, with the M113 troop, managed to disengage. Throughout the

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night repeated attacks were made on the Marine and Ranger positions and the center Ranger company and battalion HQ were overrun. The VC were continuously bombed and strafed which caused them to withdraw shortly before daylight. In all, 446 sorties were flown and very possibly saved the RVNAF force from complete annihilation.<sup>257</sup> Friendly losses totaled 107 KIA, 123 WIA, and 367 MIA plus 384 individual weapons, ten crew-served weapons, and 58 radios lost. Eighty-four VC bodies were recovered and 24 weapons found, although it was estimated that the VC suffered over 800 casualties during the engagement.

(S) The VC attack on Don Luan (Dong Xoai) District town in Phuoc Long Province began shortly before midnight on 9 June with an intensive barrage against the Special Forces compound just outside the town. This barrage was followed by an assault thirty minutes later. Friendly defenders consisted of three CIDG companies, one US and one VN Special Forces A team, one RF company, an armored car platoon, a platoon of 105-mm howitzers, and a USN CB civic action team. The compound was penetrated at 0230, 10 June. Three armored cars were seized by the VC but were destroyed later by air strikes. By daylight, defenders in the compound were surrounded. At 0940, elements of the 1st Bn, 7th Inf, were lifted to an LZ three kilometers north of Dong Xoai. By 1015 these forces were surrounded and at 1030 reported being overrun. At 1255 the remainder of the 1st Bn, 7th Inf, began landing at the Thuan Loi rubber plantation six kilometers north of the town. This force was immediately attacked by mortar and small arms fire. Only 80 men were landed and contact with them was lost within twenty minutes. The other reaction force, the 52d Ranger Bn, landed on the road south of the compound at 1655 following a heavy air strike. Fire was received from the compound so it was struck by air after which the Rangers retook it. At 0920 on 11 June, the 7th Abn Bn landed near the compound, then moved to the LZ of the 1st Bn, 7th Inf. By this time the VC, subjected to constant heavy air attack, had begun to withdraw from the area and offered only scattered resistance. Total friendly casualties for the entire action were 416 KIA, 174 WIA, and 233 MIA. Also lost were 20 radios, 389 individual weapons, three crew-served weapons, three armored cars, four trucks, two  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks, and three armored cars damaged. VC losses were 300 confirmed with an additional 625 estimated KIA and 104 weapons captured.

(S) This action by the VC succeeded in its mission

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of overrunning and occupying a district town plus the destruction of ARVN relief forces. It was both a tactical and psychological victory for the VC. Its effect on ARVN morale was far reaching.<sup>258</sup>

(S) QUIET THANG 165 was an operation designed to retake the Phu Cu post, Binh Dinh Province, which had been overrun by an estimated two-company force of VC on 23 September. Friendly forces under control of the 22d Inf Div were the 2d Bn, 41st Inf; 3d Bn, 41st Inf; one company of the 4th Bn, 41st Inf; the 23d Ranger Bn; 3d Trp, 3d Armd Cav Sqdn; 731st and 732d RF companies, and the 2d Bn, 40th Inf. The 2d Bn and 3d Bn, 41st Inf were directed to attack south from Bong Son to Phu Cu. One company of the 4th Bn, 41st Inf, and the APC troop would attack north from Binh Khe to Phu Cu. Movement of both elements started at 1230. At 1540, the 41st Inf force found the front and rear of its column, blocked by an estimated VC regiment. It was then attacked in the center, splitting the column. When friendly aircraft arrived to support the ARVN force, they were fired upon by groups of VC standing in the open. One F-100 was shot down but direct hits were scored on the exposed VC with napalm and CBU causing them to break off the attack at 1900.<sup>259</sup> In a related battle, the 23d Ranger Bn was hit by a VC force while moving toward Phu Cu to reinforce the 2d Bn, 41st Inf. Fire fights occurred sporadically around Phu Cu from 23 to 29 September resulting in total friendly losses of 93 KIA, 116 WIA, with VC losses an estimated 2,050 killed and five captured.<sup>260</sup>

(S) When the VC attacked the Special Forces camp at Plei Me, Pleiku Province, on 19 October, their purpose was to ambush relief forces, not to overrun the camp. With two regiments deployed around the camp, they allowed small CIDG patrols to re-enter the camp. In response to urgent requests for relief, an armored task force was formed on 20 October, consisting of HQ 3d Armored Cav Sqdn; 3d Co, 5th Tk Bn (16 M41 tanks); 2d Trp, 6th Armored Cav Sqdn (15 M113); the 21st Ranger Bn; one platoon of 105-mm howitzers, and a platoon of engineers. On 23 October, the 22d Ranger Bn and 1st Bn, 42d Inf, were attached to this force. This relief operation was named DAN THANH 21 (Plei Me).

(S) The commander of the special zone (24th) in the area around Plei Me correctly evaluated the purpose of the attack as ambush of relief troops, and correctly located the probable ambush site to within one kilometer of its actual position. In order to relieve some of the pressure on the camp, the task force was moved to Phu My on 20 October as a feint while waiting for other forces to join it. On 21 October, two companies

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of the 91st LLDB Ranger Bn, suspecting an ambush on the camp's airfield, were landed at an LZ five kilometers north of the camp. They fought their way into the camp on 22 October.

(S) On 23 October the 22d Ranger Bn and the 1st Bn, 42d Inf, were airlifted to LZ's between Phu My and Plei Me. At the same time the armored task force started toward Plei Me. The column was split with the heavily armored vehicles two kilometers ahead of the trains, which consisted of lightly armored vehicles guarded by two companies of the 21st Ranger Bn. At 1750 hours both elements were attacked simultaneously near the expected ambush site. The attack was beaten back but the trains element suffered heavy losses. The column entered Plei Me on 25 October. In a sweep around the camp the tanks and APC's encountered difficult terrain and attempted to double back. In the ensuing confusion the unit was attacked, suffering moderate casualties. After this encounter subsequent sweeps around the camp produced only one VC KIA. On 28 October the entire force returned to home stations.

(S) Friendly forces suffered 95 KIA, 222 WIA, and 19 MIA. Material losses in addition to the aircraft, were two 5-ton trucks, two gas tankers, two tank retrievers, two 105-mm howitzer truck tractors, 24 weapons, and four radios. Damaged, but repairable, were two 5-ton trucks, one tank retriever, one bulldozer, one lowboy, two 3/4-ton trucks, and two 105-mm howitzers. The VC lost 201 KIA, six VCC, 81 individual weapons, and 24 crew-served weapons.

(S) This action was significant because of the commander's correct evaluation of the reason for the attack, his correct estimation of the VC force involved, his estimate of where the ambush would occur and his avoidance of contact until he felt his force was sufficient to engage the enemy.<sup>261</sup>

(S) VC levies on revenue from the Michelin rubber plantation, Binh Duong Province, reached the point in October where it was uneconomical to operate the plantation. Hundreds of workers living in the plantation's 22 hamlets were thrown out of work. When the plantation owners refused to pay the levy, the VC shelled one manager's house in Dau Tieng with a 57-mm RR causing the owners and managers to flee to Saigon. In response to their pleas, the loss of revenue, and the workers' plight, the GVN decided to reestablish control over the plantation. XAY DUNG 10 and 11, the first two phases of the

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allowed for defeat in detail. The area chosen for the bivouac was choked with undergrowth, permitting the VC to approach the defensive positions undetected. The absence of the M113 troop and artillery support, which had saved the day in the 22 November attack, proved disastrous. Friendly losses were 249 KIA, 213 WIA, and 140 MIA. Sixty VC bodies were recovered.<sup>264</sup>

(S) The ambush continued to be a favorite VC technique despite a thorough knowledge of this tactic by GVN troops. The three ambushes described here are similar to many which occurred in each CTZ throughout the year.

(S) At 1130 on 8 July a small outpost less than two kilometers from the district HQ in Dau Tieng, Binh Duong Province, was attacked by an estimated platoon of VC. Responding to the outpost's frantic calls for help, a relief force consisting of the 2d Bn, 9th Inf, 5th Division, was hurriedly assembled and dispatched to the scene. This force took no forward observers and did not request observation aircraft. At 1210 it was ambushed just outside of its compound resulting in 157 KIA (4 US), 33 WIA, and 199 MIA (of whom 120 returned).<sup>265</sup>

(S) On 6 December the 2d Bn, 49th Inf, 25th Division, minus one rifle company, was ambushed near Cu Chi, Hau Nghia Province, while on an approach march. There was no air cover and flank security was inadequate. The unit lost 22 KIA (including the battalion commander), 25 WIA (3 US) and 2 MIA plus 20 weapons and two radios.<sup>266</sup>

(S) This same unit ten days later, while on a road clearing mission from Cu Chi to Phuoc Hiep, was again ambushed. Again there was no air cover, the flank security was in too close, and there was no forward observer. Automatic weapons fire was received from a distance of only 50 meters. The new battalion commander and 49 of his men were killed. There were 22 WIA, 31 MIA and 85 individual and two crew-served weapons lost. US advisors did not accompany the unit.<sup>267</sup> This example illustrated that knowledge of counter-ambush measures, without follow-through by leaders at all echelons of command, was worthless.

(U) At the end of 1965 the ARVN soldier could look back on a number of successes and failures, acts of heroism and examples of timidity, well-planned operations and incredible blunders. In the broad view, though, he had ceased to be tied to passive defense of key installations and LOC's and had begun to seek out the VC. Although he

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was often rebuffed, sometimes disastrously, he was never subdued. The employment of US airpower and the arrival of US ground combat troops in SVN gave him a tremendous morale boost. His performance improved and gave every reason to believe that ARVN would continue to bear the brunt of the war and would eschew an attitude of "let the Americans do it."

#### VNMC OPERATIONS

(C) The mission of the VNMC was to execute amphibious assault operations and other operations as directed. The VNMC was assigned to CJGS, RVNAF, as a part of the general reserve. The five battalions of the VNMC Brigade were generally committed on individual battalion missions, rarely on a brigade-size operation.<sup>268</sup>

(C) Although the general mission of the VNMC involved commitments to amphibious operations, only one battalion-size amphibious operation was conducted during the year. This was due to the lack of shipping, requirements for commitment as general reserve throughout the country and increased VC activity during the summer. Coupled with the brigade commander's desire to operate separately from the VNN, these factors prohibited any productive use of VNMC's amphibious assault capability.<sup>269</sup>

(C) In January the VNMC was ordered to conduct Operation NGUYEN VAN NHO, a multi-battalion search and destroy operation, spread out over a large area in the Vung Tau special area, Phuoc Tuy Province, Long Than district of Bien Hoa Province and Xuan Loc district of Long Khanh Province. The significance of this operation was not in the results achieved but the fact several battalions were employed under a single command. In the past the VNMC had carried out battalion-size general reserve roles or had been deployed as individual battalions under tactical control of various ARVN corps commanders. The reason for separating VNMC battalions in general reserve missions was due partially to the suspicions of the JGS since the VNMC brigade had played a significant role in previous government coups.<sup>270</sup>

(C) Although organized prior to 1965, the 5th Marine Bn did not receive its first mission until June 1965 when it was deployed to II CTZ to operate as part of a task force with the 22d ARVN Div as II Corps reserve. The battalion operated between Kontum and Pleiku throughout the month but made only light contact with the VC and suffered only minor casualties.<sup>271</sup>

(C) Before June 1965, the various corps commanders had

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used battalions of the general reserve committed to their support in a piecemeal fashion. As a result, general reserve units suffered a number of severe defeats by superior VC units. On 18 June, the Minister of Defense issued an order forbidding commitment of the general reserve in less than two-battalion strength except for local operations within three kilometers of their bases. This concept had been repeatedly stressed by the senior advisor to the VNMC. This new order, backed by COMUSMACV's stern policy regarding ambushes, had a stimulating effect on the advisor-counterpart relationship.<sup>272</sup> During June the Commandant, VNMC, assumed an additional duty as Commander, CMR. No adverse effects on brigade operations were noticed.<sup>273</sup>

(C) The first joint III MAF/VNMC amphibious operation was conducted during November under the code name BLUE MARLIN and is discussed in detail in this chapter. This was the first opportunity for the VNMC to conduct a battalion size amphibious assault during the year. This first exposure of the VNMC to their US counterparts was very beneficial. Response to predeployment training was excellent and the reaction of the battalion indicated VNMC's potential ability to successfully operate in any type of amphibious environment.<sup>274</sup>

#### OTHER OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

(U) Annex H contains a discussion of the problems connected with the security of US personnel and installations in SVN and the steps taken in an attempt to improve the situation.

(U) Annex I contains a discussion of US efforts to insure NVN and GVN adherence to the 1949 Geneva Convention on treatment of prisoners of war.

(U) Annex J contains a discussion of the highlights of the morale and welfare program for US forces in SVN.

(U) Annex K contains a discussion of some of the more significant weapons, tactics and techniques tested during 1965 in operations against the VC and North Vietnamese.

(U) Annex L contains a discussion of political-psychological warfare matters.

(U) Annex M contains a discussion of the expanded intelligence program accompanying the introduction of US

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forces into SVN.

(U) Annex N, published separately, contains a discussion of special operations.

#### PACIFICATION PROGRESS

(TS) At a US/GVN meeting on Rural Construction Affairs on 5 November 1965, Rural Construction Minister Sub-Brig Gen Nguyen Duc Thang noted in his opening remarks that the ministry was becoming active after "two wasteful years."<sup>275</sup> A few weeks later, the US SECDEF also expressed a similar view:

I wasn't at all reassured about what I heard yesterday regarding pacification. I have been concerned about this every time I have been here in the last two years, I don't think we have done a ...thing we can point to that's been effective in five years. I ask you to show me one area in this country, in the five years that I have been associated with it, that we have pacified.<sup>276</sup>

(S) Although the RVNAF JGS had accepted all US suggestions as to how the RVNAF could be employed to improve the pacification program, and had issued its implementing Directive AB-139 on 25 December 1964, the outlook for progress in the pacification program in early 1965 was not favorable.

(U) It was evident that the situation was static; plans were announced and then not implemented. Political jockeying diverted the attention of officials and military commanders, and the instability was compounded by riots and demonstrations of religious groups and students.<sup>277</sup> Even the Hop Tac (Working Together) Program, the special pacification program for the areas around Saigon-Cholon in the III CTZ, was at a stand still. When a stopgap allocation of three million piasters per province was made, pending release of regular funds, province chiefs were reluctant to spend the funds. They wanted specific authorization and direction from higher authorities.<sup>278</sup> These trends were not at all surprising to US authorities in SVN. As early as November 1964, COMUSMACV had agreed with the US Ambassador that the pacification program was not progressing "at all well under the present form of organizational and conceptual direction."<sup>279</sup>

(S) COMUSMACV felt there was an urgent need to consider major changes that could "drastically stiffen the GVN and give forward momentum to pacification" since he was seeking the best means of making a dramatic improvement in concept, organization and discipline of the pacification effort.<sup>280</sup>

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(S) Any plan to encourage the GVN in its efforts, COMUSMACV recognized, should include measures for developing US-approved plans as well as means for controlling money and people during execution of the plans.<sup>281</sup> He envisaged an arrangement in which the pertinent GVN agencies would be provided complete guidance in planning pacification projects. However, COMUSMACV also saw the dangers of exerting influence over the GVN, which might be interpreted as excessive, and which might boomerang on US interests. He suggested: "As a less drastic alternative, the Hop Tac idea might be extended to each of the other three corps tactical zones."<sup>282</sup> By this he meant that pacification efforts should be emphasized in certain priority areas in the three CTZ's as was done in the Hop Tac Program in III CTZ.

(S) At a special US Mission Council meeting on 20 January 1965, discussion on the concept of pacification revealed that the various representatives had differing viewpoints on the subject.<sup>283</sup> They succeeded in clarifying their differences and in drafting basic definitions acceptable to all. They revised and issued six criteria which defined the characteristics of a secured hamlet. However, in early March, they were still "trying to develop a meaningful doctrine for village/hamlet security".<sup>284</sup> An analysis of RVNAF J3's paper "The Organization and Operations of the Pacification System" by members of the US Mission Council, revealed that the GVN's views were at variance with US views in the following subjects: 1) The role of the corps commander in the pacification program; 2) the relationship of provinces with the proposed Bureau for Pacification Affairs; and 3) the position of the Minister of Interior in the pacification program.<sup>285</sup>

(C) At the 2 April Joint US Mission Council/GVN Internal Security Council meeting, changes in the GVN pacification organization were approved. The prime minister issued GVN Decree Nr. 64 on 5 April, which dissolved both the Central Pacification Committee and the Internal Security Council and established the Central Rural Reconstruction Council (CRRC). The term "pacification" was changed to "rural reconstruction" and the New Rural Life Directorate was redesignated the Directorate General for Rural Reconstruction (DORR), as the operating arm of the CRRC. GVN authorities thought that "rural reconstruction" more accurately portrayed the intent of the program: to gain popular support through positive social and economic projects while providing the necessary security to insure project completion. The reorganization provided for better coordination and direction at the national level and defined the responsibilities

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of corps and division tactical commanders in support of provincial reconstruction activities. The Joint Mission Directive, Subj: The Concept of Rural Reconstruction and Certain Definitions and Procedures, of 10 April, reflected these changes; it was essentially a revision of the basic document prepared jointly by USAID, USIS and USMACV on 1 February.<sup>286</sup> On 30 July, Prime Minister Ky further decreed that the term "rural reconstruction" be replaced by "rural construction." (See Figure IV-2, Organization for Rural Construction.)

(C) On 12 May, the US Mission Council directed the testing of a plan in which a province team chief would be designated to coordinate all US activities in a province and would provide the SVN province chief with one US point of contact. Three provinces were selected for the 90-day test that started on 1 June. (See Annex D.)

(C) The US Mission Liaison Group was established on 14 May to provide closer coordination with the DGRR. It was headed by the secretary of the US Mission Council, with membership consisting of representatives from USAID, JUSPAO, CAS, and USMACV.

#### Extension of Hop Tac Concept

(S) A subject of persistent interest to agencies involved in the rural construction program during 1965 was the idea of establishing a Hop Tac program in the other three corps areas. The Hop Tac program, which was based on a COM-USMACV idea developed in 1964, was considered to be moderately successful in that it did blunt VC pressures in the strategically important area around Saigon. Hop Tac called for a consolidation of government resources to insure the security of the capital complex, Saigon/Cholon, by winning the war in the six provinces (Gia Dinh, Long An, Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa, and portions of Binh Duong and Phuoc Tuy) surrounding that area. By using the "oil spot" concept, government control was to be extended outward from the capital until government influence was extended to these six provinces. The Hop Tac area was divided into four roughly concentric zones (A, B, C, and D) with Saigon/Cholon being the hub. Operations were to be conducted in these areas to eliminate the VC forces and political organizations, neutralizing their productive, economic, and financial activities and to provide control and security for the population in order to give them a standard of living perceptibly better than that offered under VC control.

(S) The objective of the first phase of the plan was to

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conduct clearing operations in Zone B and secure Zone A, and at the same time, conduct search and destroy operations in Zone C and D. This phase was planned to be completed by 1 January 1965. By achieving these goals, GVN officials could travel and work freely during the day developing Zone A through civic action projects and remain overnight without unusual protective measures. The national police would be responsible for all normal security functions except for special missions requiring regular ARVN forces. The VC in the area could not make a public show of force except for isolated terrorist acts. In Zone B, all VC forces, company size and larger, would be eliminated, permitting RF/PF units to assume responsibility for security. RF/PF units would have the capability of defending against VC platoon-size attacks. Securing and clearing Zones A and B respectively would allow regular ARVN forces to continue clearing operations in Zone C and search and destroy operations in Zones D thus sealing avenues of approach into Zone B. On 1 October 1964, the GVN exercised some degree of control over 38 percent of the land mass in the Hop Tac area as compared to 37 percent under VC control, the remaining 25 percent being in dispute. By the end of 1965 government influence was extended to 43 percent of the land area while the VC increased its control to 44 percent. Gains to both sides came from the areas in dispute. Although the gain in land area was small, greater gains were made in bringing the population under some degree of GVN control. At the beginning of the program, approximately 1,925,500 people resided in the Hop Tac area, excluding the Saigon/Cholon complex. In October 1964, GVN exercised control over 75 percent of the population while the VC was considered to control nearly 25 percent. By the end of 1965, GVN influence had been extended to 85 percent while those controlled by the VC had been reduced to less than 15 percent. Substantial progress was made in those areas classified as secured. On 1 October 1964, 603,100 people (31 percent) were residing in secured areas. At the end of 1965, the total population in Hop Tac had increased to 2,097,188 of which 1,257,418 (60 percent) were residing in secured areas. On 27 February 1965, COMUSMACV had requested that the I and IV Corps senior advisors review their current programs and develop conceptual Hop Tac type programs as a basis for discussion with their GVN counterparts. COMUSMACV expected that evaluation of efforts and the application of Hop Tac principles would demonstrate the desirability of coordinating and focusing resources in the critical area in each CTZ. 287

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(S) At the first tactical conference attended by corps commanders on 3 April 1965, Minister of Armed Forces Maj Gen Tran Van Minh directed the I, II and IV Corps commanders to develop Hop Tac type plans for each of their CTZ's. The Secretariat which directed the Hop Tac Program was charged with organizing a two-day seminar for passing the Hop Tac experience to civilian and military planners from the corps. These corps commanders presented Hop Tac type plans for their respective areas on 3 May. The CG, I Corps, originally considered Hue and Da Nang as areas which could be expanded in Hop Tac-like plans. He revised his thinking, in light of resources available and planned to concentrate his efforts on expanding the Da Nang area. CG, II Corps, selected the area around Qui Nhon as his Hop Tac base and CG, IV Corps, developed plans to expand from the Can Tho area.

(S) COMUSMACV recognized that the problems in these CTZ's differed from those in the original Hop Tac area. Special organizational arrangements did not have such great importance as had been the case in the original Hop Tac area. Under the new organization for rural reconstruction, the corps commanders had the requisite authority to follow through and correct any matter that might be obstructing progress. The corps commanders even considered using the CTZ Rural Reconstruction Council, which had the appropriate GVN membership, to guide the effort. COMUSMACV hoped that the USAID, USIS, [redacted] regional representatives would join the corps senior advisors in developing effective and cooperative support arrangements on the US side. It was critically important that the US advice and support be consistent, and attuned to the corps civilian-police-military plan.

(S) COMUSMACV thought that ministerial support in the CTZ programs would probably be more tenuous than in the original Hop Tac Program. The GVN civilian deputy on the Hop Tac council had ready access to high-level ministry officials in Saigon and was in a fairly good position to coordinate ministerial support. In the I, II, and IV Corps, the ministries were for the most part represented by low-level inspectors.

(S) For 1965, he envisaged that the scope of the Hop Tac type operations would be more restricted. Because of fewer resources and smaller secure areas, other CTZ efforts would be much smaller than in III CTZ.

(S) COMUSMACV maintained that for success in any of the corps Hop Tac operations:

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- 1) There must be full integration of the civilian-military-police efforts under unified direction.
- 2) Ministerial support must be timely, adequate and in accordance with local plans and requirements, not Saigon-developed programs and desires.
- 3) Military support for clearing and support operations must be committed on a long term basis.
- 4) Expansion could not be pushed ahead on arbitrary schedules, but would have to parallel the development of lasting security as provided by RF/PF.
- 5) District and province must retain their usual authority, since they were the key echelons in rural reconstruction, but their efforts must be coordinated by the local Hop Tac councils.

(S) In May 1965, the Prime Minister indicated to the US Ambassador his dissatisfaction with the organization of the Hop Tac program. He had requested that the pertinent GVN officials consider making Region A of the Hop Tac area part of the CMR and the remaining regions part of the III Corps commander's area of responsibility. COMUSMACV's views on this subject were expressed at a Mission Council meeting as follows: the Hop Tac organizational framework should be retained for the foreseeable future; the designation of CG, III Corps, as Chairman, Hop Tac Council, would have merit since nearly all of Zones B, C and D were in the III Corps area. Because of its accessibility to the civilian ministries, the Hop Tac Secretariat should remain in its then present location, and CG, III Corps, should have a special assistant to perform his Hop Tac duties.

(C) COMUSMACV felt that the Hop Tac organization had been unique in providing a forum for the military and civilian officials to address common problems. He also felt that the program had received good publicity, stressing that, irrespective of loss elsewhere, programs had continued in the original Hop Tac area.

(C) In late May 1965, GVN officials suggested that the CG, III Corps, be designated Chairman, Hop Tac Council, and that a general officer be appointed his deputy to aid him in the direction of the Hop Tac Secretariat. A recommended clarification was that the Hop Tac Secretariat should function as a coordinating body to facilitate and

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monitor actions, but that it not be a separate command.<sup>288</sup>  
(See Figure IV-3, 1965 Hop Tac Goals.)

(C) The return of executive power to armed forces leaders in June 1965 resulted in the placement of the DGRR under the Commissioner for Rural Affairs, a civilian appointee, and one of five commissioners reporting to the Commissioner General for War.

(S) A June 1965 US Joint MACV/USAID Team Study of US-MACV subsector advisory teams revealed that about one-third of their efforts were devoted to civilian matters; that the teams supported and complemented the efforts of other US agencies very well; and that they did recognize and resist the tendency to take charge, and were striving to make the GVN system function. In response to March 1965 requests for hard skills for subsector teams, a pilot program for limited augmentation of each corps and the CMR by medical, engineers, and MP advisors was initiated.<sup>289</sup>

(C) During the SECDEF's visit to SVN in July 1965, he was briefed on the trend in population and area control. Statistics from USMACV, USAID, and GVN sources were used to describe important factors indicating success or failure of the counterinsurgency effort.

(C) Data on population control during 25 June 1964 - 25 June 1965, as maintained by USMACV based on monthly reports from the sector advisors, indicated that:

1) GVN lost control over an additional 6.2 percent of the total estimated population of 14.6 million people.

2) GVN controlled 45.9 percent or 5.9 million people as of 25 June 1965.

3) During the period, there was no net change in the percentage of population in the cleared and uncontested areas. Until 25 May 1965, the percentage of population in the cleared areas gradually increased from 24.3 to 27.0 percent, but this was abruptly offset in June as a result of VC successes in I and II CTZ's and in the northern provinces of III CTZ. By 25 June 1965, there were 24.3 percent or 3.6 million people in the cleared and uncontested areas.

4) During the period, the VC increased their control over an additional 6.2 percent of the total population with a peak increase of 2.8 percent occurring in June 1965. Toward the end of June the VC controlled 25.5 percent of the

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total population or 3.4 million people.<sup>290</sup>

(C) During the period under discussion, the GVN lost significant areas in I and II CTZ's and in the northern and eastern regions of III CTZ. Area losses occurred in Quang Nam, Quang Tin and Quang Ngai in I CTZ; all II CTZ provinces except Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Tuyen Duc; and Phuoc Long, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy in III CTZ.

(C) In the IV CTZ, GVN control increased, particularly in the heavily populated belt running diagonally across the central part of the Delta from Go Cong to An Giang Province. The VC continued to occupy and operate their traditional bases in the U Minh forest and along the southern coast.<sup>291</sup>

(C) On 22 July, USAID and COMUSMACV issued Confidential Joint Directive 1-65, Subject: Provincial Rural Reconstruction Reports, which outlined procedures and assigned responsibilities for the preparation, submission and distribution of Joint USAID/USMACV Province Rural Construction Reports. The directive discussed selected official GVN reports and clarified US counterpart responsibilities in assisting in the preparation, transmission and utilization of the GVN reports: Monthly Report of the General Situation in the Province, and Monthly Report of General Status of New Life Hamlets. Two inclosures of this joint directive provided specific guidance for the preparation of the USMACV/USAID Provincial Team Report, and the Monthly Evaluation of Provincial Situation and GVN Statistics. These reports provided the US Mission Council and its agencies with data required to assess the progress of rural construction, and with information on the status of the US and GVN counterinsurgency programs.

(C) At a joint GVN/US council meeting on 28 August, the GVN representatives made some proposals concerning the pacification program. Although COMUSMACV disagreed with some of the "facts" presented,<sup>292</sup> some of the proposals presented were actually suggestions made earlier by US agencies to the GVN. In addition, some of the proposals were already on the GVN statute books. He felt that difficulties in the program were not due to a lack of policy, but largely to poor execution. This was attributable to government instability, and either the incapacity or unwillingness of responsible officials to implement existing policies. Other difficulties included: the lack of understanding, or acceptance, of the concepts and techniques of pacification by some ranking GVN officials; failure to act

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according to designated priorities; the establishment of unrealistic goals, and the warping of facts to meet these goals; and the defensive position forced upon government forces by increased VC strength.

(C) Despite general concurrence in the GVN proposals, COMUSMACV took specific exception to the following points in the GVN discussion:<sup>293</sup>

1) The implication that military security should receive equal or less emphasis than the other aspects of the pacification program ignored experience which had shown that without security, economic and social progress would not go forward. The problem was one of timing. Initially, adequate security was paramount vis-a-vis the economic and social programs. In later stages of pacification, the latter programs would receive the bulk of the emphasis.

2) Moreover, COMUSMACV did not subscribe to the charge of poor liaison between the GVN and the US Mission, or the lack of coordination and cooperation among the Mission Council agencies. Liaison existed, and was generally effective at all levels as evidenced by US support of the following activities: a) the Joint US Mission Council/CRCC meetings, b) the Hop Tac organization with its Joint Council and Secretariat, c) the Provincial Rural Construction Committees, and, d) the Subsector Advisory Program.

3) COMUSMACV was opposed to the proposal to establish a new armed organization, subordinate to the Ministry of Rural Construction, and designed to protect the cadres. This was a completely unsatisfactory and inadequate approach to a major problem of security. No "new armed organization" would solve the problem of security, although improvements were always possible. COMUSMACV felt a more realistic approach in this regard was to develop, together with the JGS, a military campaign plan designed to accomplish, with both US and ARVN troops, the immediate policy objective, which was to convince the VC and NVN that they could not win. In order to do this US/GVN must halt the VC offensive and then, in selected areas, make visible progress in pacification plans, designed to take advantage of the increased security afforded by US troops. Such a campaign plan was being drawn up at year's end.

4) Finally, COMUSMACV was not in favor of the formation of coordination committees at the national, regional and provincial levels. Rural construction councils were already in existence at these levels, to carry out required coordination. Additional committees formed for coordination

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purposes would hinder rather than improve coordination.

(C) In view of the observations cited above, COMUSMACV recommended:<sup>294</sup>

1) That a review be made with the GVN, of the conceptual approach to pacification, in order to isolate the problem areas that had been associated with its execution and the taking of corrective actions as required.

2) That a military campaign plan be developed which would be in consonance with pacification doctrine, plans and priorities. USMACV and JGS had this underway.

3) That there be insistence upon the proper implementation of the campaign plan under development and adherence to the pacification principles set forth in previous pacification plans.

4) That the Mission Council oppose the establishment of a new armed organization to provide security for cadres.

5) That the Mission Council discourage the formation of pacification coordinating committees by requiring existing rural construction councils at the national, regional and provincial levels to carry out their assigned functions.<sup>295</sup>

(C) At the joint GVN-Mission Council meeting on 11 September, it was brought out that Hop Tac, during 1965, had not progressed as rapidly as anticipated, and if the then present rate continued, it appeared dubious that the 30 June 1965 goals would be met before the end of the year.

(C) COMUSMACV prepared a detailed analysis for the Ambassador, showing the fundamental problems that beset Hop Tac. From a preliminary survey, it appeared that many of the problems were rooted in areas outside the competence of the Hop Tac Council. Some of the more important were:

1) Political. The many changes of government caused changes in personnel and organization of ministries with ensuing delays in decisions. Serious turbulence in province and district chief assignments slowed pacification programs. The new GVN leaders generally were unfamiliar with the Hop Tac concept and, until the 11 September briefing, had received no progress report since

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11 June-a three-month hiatus.

2) Military. As a result of the deteriorating security situation, many ARVN units on securing missions pulled into defensive positions with the resultant lack of aggressiveness in saturation patrolling and the limiting of night activities to manning fixed positions. Effective clearing and securing operations were few with the most prominent deficiencies noted in the 25th Division area. The major VC strongholds in the northern, northwestern and western Hop Tac areas continued to preoccupy RVNAF leaders, diverting attention and effort from Hop Tac operations in Zones B and C. At the same time, the major effort of the general reserve had to be shifted to other corps areas.

3) Personnel. Within the Hop Tac organization, personnel turnover resulted from political changes. The former chairman of the Hop Tac Council, a senior RVNAF major general, was replaced in June by the CG, III Corps, who rarely attended meetings and who assigned his deputy, a sub-brigadier general, as the de facto chairman. As a result, the other principals did not attend. The former resident deputy chairman and the chief of the Secretariat, a sub-brigadier general, was relieved, leaving a lieutenant colonel as the senior staff member.

4) Collateral Programs.

a) The mobile action cadre program, which involved cadre teams moving among villages to help them consolidate their security and administrative organizations, continued to deteriorate. Cadres had never become fully effective as a result of inadequate training, a pay scale too low to attract competent personnel, and accelerating depletion by the military draft.

b) Continuing personnel shortages in the RF/PF contributed to the retention of ARVN units in Zone B securing operations, at the expense of the latter's commitment in Zone C. The prohibition against recruiting PF in the under 20 age bracket had a deleterious affect which would require some time to overcome.

5) Evaluation Criteria. Failure to match the rate of progress as projected in January 1965 was in part the result of some areas being declared secured or cleared, but not meeting the criteria as later defined, so that the program, in fact, had farther to go than was realized at the time. Also, a more stringent application of the criteria led to

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more realistic evaluations.

(C) COMUSMACV felt that, while rural construction in the Hop Tac area had not progressed as rapidly as predicted, the primary objective, to secure the national complex, had been partially achieved. The problems which beset the program were to a large degree national in scope and outside the control of the Hop Tac organization. The Hop Tac organization was a coordinating body dealing with problems which cut across political and military boundaries and which, by its very nature, generally interacted on two or more ministries. However, such a body was essential if problems of rural construction in the capital complex were to be expeditiously isolated and solved. Had it not existed, something similar would have had to be invented. The organization of Hop Tac was in being and COMUSMACV believed the Hop Tac concept remained sound. It provided a channel of communication from province to national level, which given top-level attention, could expedite the solution of problems which otherwise would be lost in the administrative maze. It was not a question as to whether the Hop Tac council was needed. What was required was a revitalization of the program and top-level governmental attention.<sup>296</sup>

(S) On 22 September, the US Mission Council was briefed on COMUSMACV's recommendations to revitalize the Hop Tac program. In the ensuing discussion, COMUSMACV stated that while Hop Tac could be said only to have been about 50 percent successful, it had undoubtedly averted a VC siege of Saigon. The Ambassador reviewed the original reasons for the emphasis placed on the area surrounding Saigon and maintained that they were still valid, primarily because of the heavy density of population. He noted, however, the lack of a clear commitment to Hop Tac on the part of the GVN possibly owing to the fact that the VN considered the program a US scheme. The view was also expressed that the trouble might also lie in US/GVN differences over some fundamental concepts of Hop Tac. It was concluded that all interested US agencies should agree upon concepts and tactics before approaching the GVN. To this end, a committee was formed to discuss the Hop Tac program.<sup>297</sup>

(C) Sub-Brig Gen Nguyen Duc Thang succeeded Nguyen Tat Ung as Minister of Rural Construction when the latter died in a plane crash at Quang Ngai on 16 September. A four-month test of a Revolving Rural Construction Fund was implemented on 1 October. It provided subsector advisors with readily available funds to support high impact rural construction projects and civic action activities when normal GVN financial support was not immediately available.

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Each subsector advisor had access to 50,000 piasters which could be replenished as necessary. The fund provided immediate responsiveness and flexibility to the rural construction effort, and was intended to complement existing GVN programs and to enhance the prestige of local government officials. Toward the end of 1965, it became obvious that this method was highly successful. Consideration was given in late December to propose permanent establishment of the revolving fund.

(TS) In September, US authorities clearly recognized "the imperative need for a pacification program which would capitalize upon successes achieved by US/ARVN troops against main force VC units."<sup>298</sup> They saw that a realistic program would "require a buildup of ARVN forces commensurate with the buildup and capabilities of US forces because ARVN forces, of all categories, are critical to the success or failure in the pacification effort and the long term outcome of the war."<sup>299</sup> CINCPAC felt that the US should be more aggressive and set the lead, as ARVN did not have the capability. The US also appeared to have certain advantages over ARVN: inherent understanding of this type of undertaking, interest in the people and technical qualifications and special equipment. Nevertheless, there was a clear need for an "adequate number of RF/PF and police."<sup>300</sup> COMUSMACV expressed appreciation for recognition of the importance of the pacification program, but he also indicated that he had learned that US concepts and anxiety could not be forcibly imposed on GVN leaders. He recommended quiet persuasion as the most efficient method.<sup>301</sup>

(TS) This view was entirely congruent with the purpose of US military operations in SVN: "To allow the Vietnamese to continue with their pacification program within the shield established by US and Free World Military Assistance forces. Again, this must be done by the Vietnamese, it cannot be done by us."<sup>302</sup>

(S) In early October, there were indications that GVN leaders also recognized that emphasis and acceleration in the pacification program were necessary. GVN leaders revealed that plans were being considered to assign, for an extended period, specially-trained teams of 200 men at the district level, to ensure the development of lasting security and stability. They envisaged Minister of Rural Construction General Thang as directing the initial thrust in this effort (6-12 months) to be succeeded by a civilian director. Apart from the soundness of this concept,

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US officials found GVN enthusiasm for this program most refreshing. By the end of October, after considering US suggestions, the GVN had prepared a proposed pacification policy which defined phases and objectives, established criteria for each phase and described the roles and missions of the rural construction cadre group. 303

(S) At a Commanders' Conference at Nha Trang on 24 October, COMUSMACV reiterated the following guidelines concerning the pacification program:

We must get involved in pacification around our base areas to enhance base security. However, when we are working with the people, it must be in the name of and in close coordination with the Vietnamese officials. The GVN is very concerned lest we take over the police function or in other ways over-shadow the GVN. We are not in competition with the GVN. We must be alert to their fears and handle them with finesse. Sub-Sector Advisors should be present in all districts where US troops are based.

While the term Rural Construction or Pacification is meaningful to most of us, it is not fully understood by many NCO's and Junior Officers. It is very important that US troops understand what is meant . . . There are many facets to Rural Construction. Security is probably the most important . . . The end result sought is to get a favorable image of the government to the people and to bring them to the government side.

The most critical problem in the Rural Construction effort is to recruit and train Popular Forces Units. The PF are local people. They have a vested interest in their local security. . . We must be alert and work with GVN officials to recruit for the PF . . . If there are US troops in the area, we should provide a few selected NCO's to work with the PF on a long term basis. If we can succeed in producing effective PF units we will be relieved of a great part of our security problem. We want to develop the PF into a force that can take over local security. However, we must not shove our assistance down the throat of the GVN. We can get them to ask for our help if we approach the matter with finesse.

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eastern portion of Hau Nghia Sector, southern portion of Binh Duong Sector, western portion of Bien Hoa Sector, northern and central portions of Long An Sector and the northwestern portion of Rung Sat Special Zone. (III Corps), and An Giang Province (IV Corps). Province chiefs presented their plans to division and corps commanders and to the Minister of Rural Construction for approval during the period 6-29 December. USMACV and USAID representatives from all levels participated in the review of these plans and related actions. Upon approval of the plans, the Minister of Rural Construction required RVNAF corps and division commanders and province chiefs to sign statements that at least 75 percent of the planned programs would be accomplished in 1966. Signatures of US advisors were also required, to signify mutual understanding of minimum goals of the 1966 program. The plans were finalized and funds were released so that the 1966 program could begin on 1 January 1966.

(C) The GVN military plan in support of the 1966 Rural Construction Plan was given in JGS Directive AB 140 dated 15 December 1965. It was developed in coordination with the Ministry of Rural Construction and USMACV and included eight annexes. The annexes delineated the roles and missions of the RVNAF and other GVN forces; the basic tasks of the FVMAF; and described the programs for resources control, civil affairs and psywar. They also showed the relationships among the forces in the three phases of rural construction. RVNAF/USMACV Directive AB 141 dated 31 December 1965 was the combined RVNAF/USMACV campaign plan. It established the basic missions of RVNAF and US/FVMAF, and outlined immediate goals to accomplish those missions during 1966. The campaign plan tasked the military commands to gain the objectives established in the 1966 Rural Construction Plan and AB 140. On 11 December 1965, the GVN published CRCC Directive 1535-UBHP-CT-M. It was an all-encompassing summation of rural construction policy and superseded Directive 2-64, which was dated 8 October 1964.

(S) In late November 1965, the special assistant to the U. S. Ambassador, Maj Gen E. Lansdale, (Ret) identified a problem occasioned by the appointment of a Director of Cadre in the Ministry of Rural Construction, and expressed in the question: "Who on the US side will have the executive role in dealing with the Rural Construction Cadre, their organization, their recruitment, their training and their employment?" He informed the Ambassador that:

USAID desire establishing a joint office with the Rural Construction Ministry, to have daily working liaison with the GVN on these cadre matters. MACV desires a working subcommittee of Mission Liaison Group, in which MACV

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would have a strong role and perform this daily working liaison function on GVN cadre. The [redacted] USAID project envisages MACV and JUSPAO as "observers" only . . . There is a need for a single US voice to reconcile policy differences and one focal point for US dealings on RC cadre. 308

(S) COMUSMACV believed that USMACV's role should not be limited to the degree envisaged by [redacted] USAID because it had a direct and substantial interest in the cadre program. USMACV was the only structure for advising the GVN at all levels of its governmental operations and administrative organizations. At district level and below, the USMACV subsector advisory team was the sole US advisory element. Because of this, COMUSMACV shared the responsibility for failure if the cadre policies and programs developed in Saigon were ineffective in the provinces. The manpower required for the cadre teams would impact directly and seriously on COMUSMACV's efforts to maintain RVNAF strength levels. The supplying of arms, ammunition and other standard military items for the cadre and the maintenance and repair of such material would inevitably become the responsibility of RVNAF and hence of COMUSMACV. The Minister of Rural Construction, Major General Thang, was also the Director of Operations, JGS, and looked to USMACV for advice and assistance on the whole spectrum of pacification activities to include cadre problems. 309

(C) In a memorandum to Special Assistant Lansdale on 15 December, the Ambassador clarified the roles and missions of US agencies in SVN in these words:

I consider the government of Vietnam's effort in this domain (apart from the military clearing phase) to be primarily civilian, economic, social and political in nature and in its aims. Consequently, on the American side, it is preferable that

[redacted] i.e., USAID, be the operating support upon which you should rely for the implementation of the necessary programs as they develop. Other sections of the Mission, including MACV, JUSPAO . . . should consider themselves associated with . . . USAID, but not as agencies directly responsible for operations.

The foregoing is intended to insure that the number of persons and agencies contacting the GVN and particularly the Ministry of Rural Construction, on the subject of pacification and development

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is reduced, and in fact is limited to yourself or your representative, plus the representatives of the two operating agencies, USAID and CAS. 310

(TS) At year's end, COMUSMACV held these views on the pacification effort:

From an administrative and a management viewpoint, I think we are getting pretty well organized to subsequently pursue a military campaign and to project a meaningful rural construction program. The only missing element now is a cadre concept and plan which should become an annex to a decree by the Prime Minister setting up a broad policy and the organization for rural construction. This is a matter to be worked out between General Thang and Mr. Lansdale. The biggest problem now in this whole complex is Lansdale's function, to include his relationship with other elements of the US Mission and agencies of the GVN. 311

(S) In evaluating the progress of pacification during 1965, many factors must be considered. In September 1963, there were 79 indicators which USMACV staff members had devised to measure developments in the then 27 objectives defined in the pacification program. By March 1964, the number of indicators accepted by J3, USMACV, had increased to 101. Although these indicators were formulated on reasonable bases, their large number made analysis and presentation cumbersome.

Pacification reports from the beginning were in a constant state of flux, because of a continual search for a meaningful basis of comparison between past and present. Uncertainty as to what data were significant created a demand for more and more information, with the resultant introduction of statistical methods into pacification reporting. As the search for significant indicators for pacification progress continued throughout 1964, reports became more numerous and unwieldy. 312

(C) Thus when COMUSMACV proposed that a few basic yardsticks be used as primary indicators to measure pacification progress, they were readily accepted by the agencies involved, i.e., DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), OSD, USAID. These yardsticks were: 1) population control, 2) area control, 3) communication control, 4) resources control, 5) VC strength and viability, 6) RVN strength and viability. Three reports which evolved during 1964 and served as the basic pacification progress report requirements during 1965 were: 1) USMACV Directive 335-10, Subject: Monthly Reporting of Pacification Progress and Population and Area Control, 15 July 1964 (revised

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6 October 1965), (C); 2) Joint Directive 2-64, Subject: Criteria to Evaluate New Life Hamlets, 8 October 1964, (C), (superseded by GVN CRCC Directive 1535-UBHP-CT-M, 11 December 1965); and 3) Joint Directive 3-64, Subject: Province Pacification Reports, 26 October 1964, (C), (superseded by Joint Directive 1-65 dated 22 July 1965).

(S) Statistical data on gains and losses during 1965 can thus be calculated by analyzing the pertinent data of these reports. For example, the population in the secured areas increased from 4,278,600 to 7,724,200, for a gain of 3,445,600 during the period 25 January-25 December 1965. 313 A true appreciation of this gain should, however, be qualified by factors to include: 1) normal population growth, 2) continuing reevaluation of methods by which these figures are compiled, 3) periodic discovery of inaccurate data submitted by lower echelons, 4) movements of refugees, 5) deliberate VC infiltrations, etc., as well as GVN control over additional areas. The hazardous nature of statistical formulation in RVN can be summarized by unconfirmed report from the office of the Mayor of Saigon that "approximately 500,000 unregistered people were in the Saigon/Cholon area." 314

(S) The qualified nature of statistical data can be illustrated by the analysis of selected data for December 1965. According to GVN Memorandum No. 0657, dated September 1964, an area can be considered secured only if it met the "six-point criteria." One of the conditions needed for fulfillment of Criterion No. 1 is the recognition of the ineffectiveness of VC harassment on the population. One of the indications by which this condition can be recognized is when the people "voluntarily provide effective intelligence to GVN, which will identify and neutralize the remaining VC infrastructures." In December, Gia Dinh Province, the province which had the second greatest percentage of its population in areas considered secured, had 97.7 percent of its population in this category. 315 During the first 11 months of 1965, an affirmative answer was given to the basic question posed in the Provincial Team Report: Is the population willingly giving intelligence to the government concerning the VC? Yet, in December, the answer was: "No. Information provided in only one district where there is security." 316 The change in attitude of the people, despite this statistic, can probably be attributed to the assassination of six government officials by the VC in Gia Dinh Province from September to November 1965 and the confirmed increase of six VC battalions 317 in the areas bordering the province. 318

(C) The expectations for progress in terms of land area and population control were natural. But they were based on

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assumptions which were not necessarily valid during 1965: that there were effective and coordinated pacification plans and an efficient organization to pursue these goals. Some of the obstructions and inadequacies which hindered the program during 1965 were: 1) lack of local administrative capability to assimilate rural construction programs, 2) inadequate formation of RF/PF units to follow up military clearing operations, 3) administrative confusion associated with the attempted coup of 15 February 1965, 4) increased VC activity, particularly in the first half of the year, 5) uncertainties resulting from delays at the national level in approving the 1965 Pacification Program, 6) delays in the disbursement of funds budgeted for rural construction activities, 7) continued use of low-quality civilian cadres, 8) relatively low efficiency in search and destroy operations, 9) the drafting of many capable cadres, teachers and survey team members into the military service, and 10) the appointment of some incapable and obstinate officials at the district and province levels.

(C) In a larger sense it would be more appropriate to evaluate pacification progress during 1965 in terms of the changes and refinements in pacification concepts, planning and organization. If this is considered a valid criterion, the following developments would indicate that significant progress was made: 1) greater GVN initiative and better planning, 2) timely handling of the 1966 pacification budget, 3) clearer definitions, 4) more definitive policies, 5) better coordination of plans and views, 6) more accurate statistics, 7) a refinement in the methods of evaluation, 8) greater efficiency and flexibility at the lower levels, 9) recognition of the need for a better trained cadre, 10) more aggressive attitudes (such as the return of refugees to their own villages); and 11) greater appreciation of the nuances of pacification techniques.

(U) The process of pacification was usually slow and involved as much a change in attitude as it did the accomplishment of physical tasks. By an awareness of the political and psychological factors involved, by an attitude of helpfulness and understanding, coupled with firm and fair application of the necessary controls, and by conduct of an imaginative and aggressive civic action program, military forces could make the difference between success and failure in the pacification program. 319

#### ECONOMIC WARFARE

(S) In 1965 the US mission established an economic warfare program as an integral part of the joint US/GVN effort to defeat the VC/NVN forces. With the sharp increase of NVN military forces

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infiltrating into SVN, and their corresponding increasing requirements for food and medicines, an economic warfare program was essential to deny them these logistic resources and thus reduce their effectiveness. Such a program would force them to expand more effort just to subsist, leaving them less time and capability to fight. Emphasis was given to immediate action which would deny the enemy money, foodstuffs, salt and medicines, particularly in the critical areas of the II CTZ, where most of the VC buildup was taking place. 320

(S) The US Mission Council's Economic Warfare Committee, formed in August 1965, was chaired by the US Counselor for Economic Affairs. It consisted of representatives from J2, USMACV, USAID, CAS, and the US Embassy's Special Liaison Office. The committee considered the suggestions of various agencies, intelligence reports, and investigation results, to ensure that all possible measures would be employed to weaken the enemy. Specific programs were arranged with the appropriate implementing agencies and recommendations were submitted to the US Ambassador and Washington. The committee members also monitored various programs to determine their effectiveness and to assure proper execution. Close liaison was established, especially with the director of USAID, the Embassy political section and CAS. 321

(S) Initially, the committee focused its attention on two activities: 1) to deny the VC access to needed resources, and 2) to counter the VC program of economic warfare. Toward the last few months of the year the committee concentrated its efforts in programs to deny resources to the VC. 322

(S) Although there was a variety of commodities which the VC needed to maintain a satisfactory capability, the committee felt that programs should be formulated in terms of denying the enemy specific selected items which when limited would hurt the enemy most effectively. 323 The committee determined these items to be money, food, salt and medicines, in a descending order of priority. Money was of primary importance because of its negotiable nature both in-country and abroad. An appropriate program to deny the VC money would thus consist of measures which could counter their taxation, hijacking, blackmailing and strongarm activities. 324 During 1964, the VC reportedly collected more than two billion piasters in taxes. However, the committee believed that the VC were still operating with a considerable deficit. A reported CHICOM purchase of 300 million piasters in Hong Kong was apparently a measure to balance the VC budget. The VC's financial system was sophisticated and businesslike. Even low-level functionaries reportedly complained of the paper work involved. The magnitude of VC

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taxation can be illustrated in terms of the fact that two billion piasters in taxes is tantamount to an annual levy of 1,000 piasters from each family in the RVN. 325

(S) The VC had numerous ways of obtaining money while the GVN/US measures to counter their efforts were limited. The simplest immediate countermeasure was to neutralize VC tax and revenue collectors on the highways and riverways. The expansion of areas under GVN control would also shield an increasing number of people from VC taxation. 326 USAID pressed GVN authorities to establish a number of strong and efficient checkpoints on the major national highways leading into Saigon and those leading from the central lowlands into the highlands. Permanently manned by the NP, but to include RVNAF and US MP's, all vehicles could thus be stopped and searched. The committee believed that this measure would prevent the VC from using certain highways. 327

(S) A Resources Control Program, which was developed by the USAID Public Safety Division and implemented by the NP, concentrated on checking the flow of resources from the Delta to the highlands and to the central lowlands. It was difficult, if not impossible, to check VC efforts to obtain food within the food-producing Delta region but the VC in the highlands had only very limited food resources. 328

(S) To deny drugs to the VC, USAID and the Ministry of Health developed a plan which increased control over retail distribution of pharmaceuticals. Previously, any person with an ID card could purchase drugs freely. 329 The program required retail drug distributors to register all buyers of drugs. Hospital personnel were urged to strictly monitor their medical supplies to minimize leakage into the black market. COMUSMACV instructed all US and RVNAF medical teams to administer only daily dosages and not dosages for complete treatment. This would prevent the VC from collecting medicines from villages visited by Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) teams. 330

(S) The program to deny salt to the VC, who required about one pound per month per man, consisted largely in controlling the movement of salt cargoes in the salt-producing areas along the coastal plains of SVN. Salt was transported largely by small junks and sampans. If successfully executed, this program would cut the VC's access to 85 percent of the salt produced in SVN. Plans were also made to institute checkpoints in the highlands to control the shipping of salt into that region. 331,332

(S) US and ARVN forces conducted a series of operations to secure the rice-producing areas, particularly in I CTZ and in the Delta region, to insure that the rice harvest would not fall into

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VC hands. Evacuation of rice supplies found in VC hideouts and supply points also contributed toward denial of this valuable commodity to the VC. When such supplies could not be evacuated, they were destroyed.

(S) Programs carried out strictly by the GVN were generally ineffective. This was due largely to shortage of trained supervisory personnel and a deterioration of the security situation. The Economic Warfare Committee recommended that USAID direct a concentration of effort into a few, properly staffed and supervised transportation route checkpoints, with the main effort in the II CTZ and the Saigon-Cholon complex. 334

(S) In response to the US Ambassador's request, the USMACV staff developed an economic warfare directive in December 1965, which was subsequently published and distributed by 14 January 1966. 335 The directive included data on previous USMACV studies on this subject and pointed out the two objectives of economic warfare: to deny to the VC/NVA those commodities which they must have to carry on insurgency, and to counter the VC economic warfare measures against the RVN. US/FWMA forces and/or RVNAF, through advisory channels, were thus required to:

1) deny rice harvests to the VC on a planned basis within manpower capabilities by securing the area concerned or by destroying rice fields in regions which could not be secured and by providing limited amounts of rice to the people in fringe areas through the cooperation of local provincial authorities.

2) secure the salt producing areas (solely an RVNAF mission) and cooperate with the NP who were to inspect and control commercial shipments of salt from these areas. 336

3) neutralize VC attempts to collect money by attacking VC tax collection points and personnel on roads and waterways and to provide sufficient security to the local population so that they would be encouraged to ignore VC tax and bond-selling efforts.

4) identify and neutralize local VC sources of medicine and to report all captured medicine stocks.

5) control all traffic on selected key roads and waterways by imposing a night curfew, by protecting all convoys which must move during the day and by inspecting each vehicle or watercraft traversing these areas.

6) cooperate with the NP in the operation of resources control checkpoints. 337

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(C) COMUSMACV's overall guidance in this new directive provided for US/FWMAF to assist and monitor RVNAF security efforts and furnish appropriate assistance to other US agencies engaged in this program. It was hoped that this fresh approach would lend new stimulus to this vital program as the new year began.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

(U) The most significant development of USMACV psyops during 1965 was the introduction of USA psyops units as part of and in support of the buildup of US combat forces. There was a general consolidation and integration of US-GVN efforts, a corresponding clarification of functions among members of the psyops community in the RVN, and a marked interest throughout the US Mission in full exploitation of all psychological opportunities.

(U) The keystone of USMACV psyops policy relative to the support of combat operations was contained in USMACV Directive 525-3, Minimizing Non-Combatant Battle Casualties, 7 September 1965. This directive, which emphasized discrimination in the application of firepower and the use of all available psyops resources during each operation, also noted that the circumstances of the war in SVN called for the exercise of restraint not normally required of soldiers on the battlefield. These circumstances were described as follows:

The Government of Vietnam (GVN) is engaged in a fight for its survival against the communist Viet Cong (VC) supported and reinforced by the forces of the DRV. It is the objective of the VC to seize control of the hamlets, villages and towns by a combination of military action, terrorism, political action and subversion. It is the objective of the GVN to resist this process and where it has occurred, to reverse it. This means that the battle for Vietnam flows backward and forward across the homes and fields of the hapless rice farmer and the small town inhabitant. Whether, at any one time, he lives in a VC or a GVN controlled hamlet depends to a large extent upon factors and forces beyond his control. Eventually, of course, the GVN plans to regain control over all of the hamlets and all of the people.

The use of unnecessary force leading to non-combatant casualties in areas temporarily controlled by the VC will embitter the population, drive them into the arms of the VC, and make the long range goal of pacification more difficult and more costly.

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## Integration of US Psyops Activities

(U) Following his March 1965 SVN visit, USIA Director Carl Rowan recommended to the President that US psyops in the RVN be expanded and realigned. The President approved the recommended program, which called for the immediate creation of a Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) through the combination of USIS, USMACV and USAID elements. 338

(U) The creation of JUSPAO was formally announced by US Embassy Instruction VN 186, of 14 May. A joint USMACV/JUSPAO message dated 18 May, Subject: Direction and Supervision of US Psychological Operations in Vietnam, clarified the relationship among USMACV, JUSPAO and GVN personnel and agencies. The Director, USIS in SVN, was designated Director, JUSPAO. (See Figure IV-4 for the organization of JUSPAO.)

(U) The Director, JUSPAO, as US Mission Coordinator for Psychological Operations, developed psyops guidance applicable to all US elements in SVN. The more significant elements of this guidance, such as the National Psychological Operations Plan, were submitted to the US Mission PsyOps Committee, on which the USMACV J3 was a member, and subsequently to the Mission Council for approval prior to dissemination to field agencies. JUSPAO field representatives accomplished at the local level, i.e., region and province, the same mission of coordination of the psyops activities of all agencies.

(U) The Political Warfare Advisory Directorate (POLWAR) was established by USMACV GO Nr. 931, dated 5 May 1965, to advise and support the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD) of the RVMAF, to advise COMUSMACV and the USMACV staff on and exercise staff supervision over psyops and civic action and the psychological implications of military operations, and to monitor and supervise the efforts of USMACV psywar and civic action field advisors and psywar units. 339 The Director functioned under the staff supervision of the ACofS, J3, with direct access to the CofS when required.

(U) The Director, POLWAR, sat as a member of the JUSPAO Executive Board, representing the ACofS, J3 (and USMACV) in the routine coordination of Mission psyops. Military members of the JUSPAO staff, and JUSPAO military field representatives were carried in the POLWAR portion of the USMACV JTD but were not under the operational control of the Director, POLWAR.

(U) In its advisory role, POLWAR was concerned not only with psyops and civic action but with the other activities charged to the GPWD as well. Because of the significance of

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the GFWD's missions of motivation, propaganda, security and welfare of the RVNAF in support of RVNAF commander's primary missions, a separate treatment of this organization is provided in Annex I. To support the programmed expansion of the RVNAF political warfare structure and activities, an increase in the USMACV JTD was recommended in August 1965 to provide for an additional 57 psyops trained officer advisors, to be assigned primarily at schools and training centers but also including separate command, VNAF, VNN and VNMC elements not already staffed with psyops advisors.<sup>340</sup>

(U) In mid-December the JCS approved the deployment of the 6th USA Tactical PsyOps Battalion to the RVN.<sup>341</sup> This deployment was designed to culminate the gradual buildup of USA psyops detachments which had been introduced concurrently with US combat forces and to provide command, control, and support headquarters for all USA psyops units in the RVN. The introduction of USA psyops units was designed to provide a major stimulus to the whole US/GVN psyops program and to insure that US tactical units were provided adequate and timely psyops support.<sup>342</sup>

(U) The 5th Air Commando Squadron (PsyOps) was deployed to the RVN during the last quarter of 1965 and became operational in late December. The squadron, equipped with four C-47 aircraft mounting ALTEC speaker systems and 17 U-10's with an improved, LINC-TEMPCO-VAUGHT university speaker system, was exclusively committed to the support of psyops and functioned under the operational control of the Cdr, 2d AD.

(U) With the arrival of the remaining elements of the 6th PsyOps Bn, and including psyops advisors, staff personnel in combat units, and USA and USAF psyops units it was estimated that the total US military commitment to psyops in the RVN approached 500 full time personnel.

(U) Within the CTZ's, the US military psyops program was closely integrated with the RVNAF psyops effort. The USA detachments were placed under the operational control of senior CTZ advisors, who were engaged in advising and assisting ARVN units, with the hope of raising the level of commitment and professional competence of ARVN psyops units and to overcome the shortage of VN language qualification and area specialization in the US units. To maximize on the capabilities of ARVN and US units, propaganda support centers were established at locations within CTZ's where US and ARVN psyops units were collocated. The propaganda support centers were conceived as being jointly manned and supporting all US/RVNAF/FVNAF operations within the CTZ according to priorities mutually agreed to by the ARVN corps commanders and the Senior US Corps Advisor. By the end of 1965 US psyops units had assisted

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materially with psyops support to the Flei Me-La Drang campaign in II CTZ, to Operation "New Life" in III CTZ, and to many other less publicized operations.

USMACV Troop Indoctrination in Civic Action

(G) The point of departure for the USMACV civic action operational concept was the attitude of courtesy and helpfulness displayed by the individual US/FWMAF soldier in his daily contacts with the VN people. Emphasis was placed on making personal friends among the VN soldiers and common people and helping them individually; using phrases from their language; honoring their customs and laws; making no special demands; and treating women with politeness and respect. Loud, rude or unusual behavior, and open display of wealth were discouraged, because they alienated the soldier from the people. COMUSMACV's guidance, summarized in terms of nine specific points of conduct, was printed on 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 inch cards and distributed to all US military personnel in SVN. Unit civic action complemented individual actions. Combined US and GVN civic actions were encouraged in situations where they were collocated or engaged in combined operations. Initiative for Civic Action was to originate at the lowest practicable echelon.<sup>343</sup> Civic action projects were considered successful if they encouraged a local VN attitude of self-help, and if the arrival or continued stationing of US units in an area was welcome for the positive and tangible benefits that would accrue to the common people.

(U) US military commanders were encouraged to participate in civic action to the extent that military operations permitted. Instructions called for the use of managerial and technical skills of the military as well as the equipment available to assist the people to accomplish their own improvement, rather than employ troop units to accomplish the improvement for the people as a primary mission.<sup>344</sup>

USMACV Civic Action Program

(U) The key to civic action in the provinces was the province chief. He had the administrative staff for determining requirements, establishing priorities, developing programs and projects, allocating resources of money, materials, managerial and technical skills, equipment and labor, in the furtherance of and coordination with reconstruction activities. After coordination with province/sector staffs, through US Advisory Teams, US commanders were urged to obtain the province chief's approval prior to implementing planned civic action projects. On 31 October 1965, USMACV Command Letter, Subject: Supplies

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for US/FWMAF Military Civic Action, Serial No. 4678, was issued, providing detailed information on the availability of supplies for this program.

(C) CINCPAC's guidance to COMUSMACV in November 1965 stipulated that the degree of implementation of civic action programs was dependent on various factors including: the imminence and nature of the insurgency threat, the magnitude of the in-country effort, the importance attached to this effort by the local government and senior military officials, the degree of internal coordination and centralization of civil affairs, functions within US military/host country military staff, and the degree of coordination and programming among all cognizant team agencies. 345

(U) From October to December 1965, USMACV Civic Action staff officers visited all major US/FWMAF units and USMACV groups in order to improve directing, monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the nationwide civic action program. The visits resulted in the publication and distribution of several letters of guidance including: 1) USMACV Letter, Subject: Sector PsyOps/CA Advisor Duties (U), Serial Nr. 4964, 8 November, (duty readjustments to enable sector advisors to concentrate on their primary responsibilities), 2) USMACV Letter, Subject: Disposition of Captured Rice Stocks (U), Serial Nr. 01536, 24 November.

(U) During 1965, US military personnel assisted in the distribution to the VN people of over 106,000 tons of foodstuffs and other commodities valued at more than \$100,000 donated by International Voluntary Agencies, CARE and the Catholic Relief Services. Civic action construction projects numbered more than 2,400 and ranged from drainage control and road repair to school construction and bridge building. Monetary contributions by US units in support of orphanages, schools and dispensaries were often unreported and are not included in the above figures.

(U) See Annex L for the GVN Polwar Program, Chieu Hoi Program, Rand Corporation Research Projects, Leaflet Operations, and MEDCAP.

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CHAPTER V

THE OUTCOME

(U) The Year of Decision brought remarkable changes to the military situation in Vietnam, the most significant of which was the deployment of almost 200,000 US combat troops and the commencement of one of the largest construction programs ever undertaken by the US Armed Forces. It was a year in which the US faced challenges it had never before encountered. The degree of success with which these challenges were met could not always be measured—a perplexing and frustrating situation. The highest order of perseverance and judgment on the part of each serviceman was required. But his problems were recognized—the entire world became painfully aware of the vexing situation and the importance of events in Vietnam. This recognition was symbolized by Time magazine's choice of General Westmoreland as the "Man of the Year" for 1965.

BUILDUP

(U) The first US tactical units arrived in SVN early in the year. USMC air defense units arrived in Da Nang in February, followed by USMC infantry units at the same location on 8 March. The USA 173d Abn Bde arrived in the Saigon-Bien Hoa area on 5 May. By the end of the year there were 12 USMC battalions, two Army divisions, two separate USA airborne brigades and numerous USMC and USA aviation and support units deployed. Deployment of elements of the 25th Inf Div began toward the end of the year (see chronology).

(U) The purpose of the initial USMC buildup was to provide a security force for the Da Nang air base. This emphasis on security forces continued throughout the year. NP units were deployed to areas of high troop concentrations and, in May, USMACV corps advisory detachments were augmented to provide security for the various advisory elements.

(S) The year also saw the first overt employment of US air power in the war. Concentrated bombing of NVN began on 7 February with a raid by USN and VNAF aircraft in retaliation for the VC attacks on Pleiku on the same date. The first USAF strike of 1965 in NVN was conducted on 11 February when 150 USAF and USN aircraft struck in retaliation for the bombing of a BEQ in Qui Nhon. <sup>1</sup> (NVN had been bombed once on 5 August 1964 following an attack by NVN PT boats on two US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin.) US tactical jet aircraft commenced operations

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in SVN on 19 February and the first tactical employment of B-52 bombers occurred on 18 June. Aerial reconnaissance of Laos and the infiltration routes had been underway since May 1964 under the code name YANKEE TEAM. Some strikes had been made against air defense positions in Laos but the first US air strikes against VC/NVA infiltration routes occurred on 12 December 1964 under the code name BARREL ROLL (air strikes into the northern Laotian Panhandle).<sup>2</sup> BARREL ROLL, ARC LIGHT (B-52 strikes in RVN), STEEL TIGER (air strikes in the southern Laotian Panhandle), and ROLLING THUNDER (air strikes in NVN) operations were conducted throughout the year from bases in RVN, Thailand, Guam, and from 7th Flt carriers. Strikes in Laos and RVN continued throughout the year but there were two cessations of bombings in NVN (13-18 May; 25 December-unresumed in 1965) to provide opportunities for peace negotiations.

(C) There was a great increase in the USN role in the war. Aside from its support of the VNN through the NAVGP and its support of air operations from several CVA's, it provided extensive gunfire support and conducted MARKET TIME operations to maintain coastal surveillance against VC infiltration. Before May 1965 only five NGF ships supported counterinsurgency operations. At the end of the year 18 destroyers were providing this support. Occasionally as many as 25 ships participated in this role.<sup>3</sup> In addition, USCG elements arrived in RVN during the summer to participate in MARKET TIME.

(C) Changes in USA advisory effort included an increase of advisory teams at subsector level and a POLWAR Directorate on the USMACV staff as well as an expansion in the intelligence field. More naval advisors were assigned to RAG and to the Coastal Force. Additional USAF advisors were assigned to newly-activated VNAF squadrons. However, there were no significant changes in the USMC advisory role during 1965.

(S) The year saw the first tactical commitment of FVMAF with the arrival of the 1st Bn, RAR, on 8 June. It was followed by a battery of New Zealand artillery, the ROK Capital Infantry Division and a ROK Marine brigade (see chronology). About 22,400 FVMAF troops were deployed by 31 December and plans were being made for deployment of another ROK RCT and another ROK division.<sup>4</sup>

(C) Given the long lines of communication across the Pacific, the inadequate terminal facilities in the RVN and the dispersion of field elements coupled with the hazardous nature of inland routes, it was clearly imperative that a logistics base should be developed. Initially, Saigon was the only major port; it was considered inadequate because of its limited space, the vulnerability of ships to VC attacks on the river and its

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location as a transshipment point. A dual logistics support system was developed in which the NAVSUPACT, Da Nang, would service the northern regions while the 1st USA Log Comd in Saigon would cover the southern area. This system called for the establishment of a major supply and support complex at Cam Ranh Bay and additional bases at Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa and Vung Tau. The development of these facilities was particularly necessary if US/FWMAF elements were expected to mount sustained military operations.

(C) By the end of 1965, except for some logistics units and four USAF squadrons, the US personnel buildup under Phase I was completed. Of the 184,314 US military personnel in-country, 116,755 were USA; 8,749, USN and USCG; 38,190, USMC; and 20,600, USAF.<sup>5</sup> Although Phase II buildup had begun, it required augmentation (Phase IIA) to cope with the increased VC/NVA buildup.

(C) Except for the PF, RVNAF and other GVN forces managed to attain their respective MAP strength ceilings. However, RVNAF suffered from an extremely high desertion rate and heavy combat losses. These developments substantially decreased the RVN manpower resources to the degree that COMUSMACV was obliged to reduce the 1966 MAP supported force increases from a desired 326,725 for ARVN to 286,007.<sup>6</sup> Approximate year-end strengths attained by GVN forces were: ARVN, 267,900; VNN, 14,500; VNAF, 12,700; VMC, 7,400; RF 132,200; PF, 136,400; NP 52,200; and CIDG, 28,400.<sup>7</sup>

#### REACTIONS

(C) The campaign of terrorist attacks against both US and GVN installations increased greatly in 1965. Undoubtedly many of the incidents may be attributed to the VC's reaction to the increasing signs of US determination in fulfilling its commitment to the RVN. In preparation for the anticipated step-up in VC hostile action the evacuation of dependents of US military personnel and other US government employees was ordered on 8 February. VC-initiated incidents continued to rise throughout the year; the highest weekly record of incidents was for the week ending 1 December, when it reached 1,038.<sup>8</sup>

(C) In early 1965 it was apparent that infiltration of supplies from the north was increasing. There were also indications that NVA regulars were being introduced into the RVN. Intelligence reports tended to show that the VC would launch a big campaign in the II CTZ during the summer monsoons with one goal of splitting the RVN in half. The enemy demonstrated his ability to coordinate the actions of multi-battalion forces

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effectively and displayed a willingness to engage the US/FWMAF elements in large conventional warfare battles. It appeared as though the insurgent activity was developing into Mao's third stage of revolution--that of open warfare.

(U) The first public confirmation of the presence of NVA units in the RVN was made by a USMACV announcement of 15 July which identified the 101st NVA Regiment as being in-country. <sup>9</sup> Late in the year the enemy infiltration rate was estimated to have increased to a monthly rate of 4,500. It was concluded that VC/NVA strength in RVN doubled during the year, with a strength of 229,759 <sup>10</sup> at the year's end (see Table I-2).

(U) The year also saw a wide diversity of US public and international reaction to the US involvement in the war. In the US there were student protest marches, teach-ins and a few attempts to halt or delay shipments to Vietnam. However, these actions appeared to be protests of small albeit, highly vocal, groups. The vast majority of the US public appeared to support the policy of the US Government. Private citizens and civic organizations indicated their support by sending tons of Christmas mail and gifts to US servicemen in SVN. A massive airlift of Christmas mail, nicknamed "Operation Christmas Star," was initiated. Incoming mail handled by USMACV postal facilities in November and December totaled 6,429,216 lbs. In all, more than 1,500,000 letters and 100,000 packages were received by US personnel in SVN. COMUSMACV said that although it posed "an additional burden on our internal logistics system, . . . it was exceptionally worthwhile." <sup>11</sup>

(C) The number of official visitors to RVN created a serious problem in 1965. This was first evident when 407 military and 45 civilian officials visited RVN between 1 February and 15 March. <sup>12</sup> COMUSMACV expressed his concern over the problem, pointing out that these visits caused a heavy drain on air transportation and billeting; required a great deal of support from USMACV personnel, and created a security problem. <sup>13</sup> He recognized that "visits by senior individuals play a constructive role in that they see the situation at first hand and can thus speak from experience upon their return to the states. Secondly, they can acquire expertise that can be brought to bear in helping us solve some of our problems". <sup>14</sup> He suggested to CINCPAC that visits be reduced to an absolute minimum. <sup>15</sup> CINCPAC and CJCS approved the following COMUSMACV-proposed criteria in alleviating the problems: Will the trip: Aid in eliminating a USMACV problem area? Aid in acquiring needed resources? Aid future operations of USMACV? Impart to USMACV significant information not otherwise available? Or involve personnel whose responsibilities require them to maintain periodic contact with field activities in the national interest? <sup>16</sup> In spite of these

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actions to discourage nonessential visits, the total for October reached an all-time high of 892. The CG, FFORCEV, noted in October that the volume of visitors to his HQ had begun to affect adversely his operational activities.<sup>17</sup> This same concern was expressed by the CG, 1st Cav Div (AM), in December.<sup>18</sup> (See Table V-1 for 1965 visitor statistics.)

(C) Concerned with the safety of VIP's who might desire to visit units engaged in combat, the Ambassador and COMUSMACV agreed that the decision as to whether such visits should be arranged or not should be made by the commanders (or if delegated, their immediate subordinates) of the respective major subordinate commands affected. In the IV CTZ, the Senior Advisor was to decide. The criterion governing these decisions was: to prevent unnecessary exposure to hostile action of key US/Free World officials whose injury or death would result in grave loss to the nation.<sup>19</sup>

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROBLEMS

(S) The Phase I buildup was a particularly noteworthy accomplishment considering its rapidity and the lack of a logistical base and adequate communications in-country. Great progress was made in both logistical and communications areas but much improvement was still needed at the end of the year. While there were critical supply shortages during the year, no combat operations were delayed by lack of adequate logistics support. However, the capability for sustained combat was hampered. The major problem that remained unsolved at the end of the year was that of port congestion and cargo through-put. Land LOC's were also largely interdicted forcing heavy reliance on coastal shipping and airlift. At year's end negotiation for additional LST's, barges and other forms of lighterage were underway. The cost of all this effort, though, was high. In November the SECDEF stated that the war was costing the US approximately ten billion dollars annually.<sup>20</sup>

(S) In the field of communications, significant progress was made in planning and establishing systems to provide COMUSMACV with resources necessary for the exercise of responsive command and control. A secure voice net linking Saigon and Washington was completed. An in-country secure voice net was partially completed. Advisory communications were improved. A serious shortcoming of the year was the failure to complete construction of the IWCS to permit overall upgrading of the SEASIA long lines system. A serious message backlog developed causing COMUSMACV to place stringent controls on message traffic within his HQ. At the end of the year plans were underway for an expansion of the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS)

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and for the introduction of TV into RVN both as a morale booster and for use in the GVN psywar program.

(C) Early in the year COMUSMACV stressed the need for an improved command and control system for tactical air operations. After COMUSMACV approved a 2d AD plan on 24 March, releasing US tactical aircraft from previous restraints, a Joint Tactical Air Control Center (JTACC) was established at TSN air base. 21 On 1 December a COC was established to control ground force operations and coordinate this control with the JTACC.

(C) Significant military achievements by US forces during the year were the blunting of the monsoon offensive and the engagement of the VC within his traditional sanctuaries. The US forces took a tremendous toll of VC lives and acquitted themselves creditably on the battlefield. Many US units were, like RVNAF, tied to a local security role but at year's end, with the buildup continuing, an expansion of operations was planned.

(C) The III MAF encountered a greater problem than other US units owing to the lack of RF/PF elements for securing hamlets within their TAOR. As a result, III MAF was not able to conduct operations outside their TAOR to the extent desired because of the need to use their own units in the securing phase of pacification.

(U) RVNAF forces recorded some significant victories and some costly defeats. When VC units were forced to stand and fight they were soundly defeated but they were often victorious in battles of their own choosing. During the first half of the year the VC held the initiative in many areas, attacking under favorable conditions and avoiding or breaking contact when conditions were unfavorable. Many RVNAF units were committed to the defense of key installations which left large areas where the VC could move freely. The introduction of US units and increased air strikes tended to deprive the VC of these traditional sanctuaries and as the year progressed RVNAF gained strength and confidence. An improvement in the RVNAF ability to use new equipment effectively was noted. Some ARVN commanders, especially in IV Corps, demonstrated an excellent ability to conduct successful military operations. 22

(C) The cost in lives, equipment and aircraft was higher than previous years but it was less than COMUSMACV's estimates. Personnel losses for US forces were 1,378 KIA; 6,148 WIA; 126 MIA and 17 known detained or captured. 23 RVNAF lost nearly 14,000 KIA 24 while the VC lost approximately 35,000 KIA and 6,000 captured. 25 On 20 January 1966 the Secretary of Defense announced that the US had lost 351 aircraft in SVN and NVN in 1965.

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Included were 76 helicopters and 275 fixed wing aircraft. Of these, approximately 160 (95 USAF; USN exact losses unknown) were tactical strike aircraft brought down over NVN. 27

(S) Significant developments of material and techniques were noted during the year, particularly in the field of target acquisition. SLAR was used to locate river and road traffic at night; IR devices were used to locate hidden campsites; the heliborne illumination system called "Lightning Bug" was developed for use with a SLAR aircraft to provide target illumination for armed helicopters at night. A tactic known as "Snipe Hunt" was developed in which targets were located by a SLAR aircraft working with a FAC, a flare aircraft and tactical strike aircraft. Delta teams were organized and used as long range reconnaissance teams. New techniques in night photography were employed. By year's end antipersonnel radars were in use in the Command.

(S) Significant advances were made in the field of psywar. JUSPAO was organized and the USMACV POLWAR Directorate was established. Each sector was provided two specially equipped Tri-Lambretta vehicles for use in the psywar effort. U-10 aircraft and UH-1 loudspeaker and leaflet drop aircraft were used extensively. US units took full advantage of the psywar effects of MEDCAP and construction projects. One of the more successful psywar efforts appeared to be the leaflet drop program over NVN which reached a wide audience and seemingly affected the morale among some segments of the NVN citizenry. The number of returnees in the Chieu Hoi program doubled in 1965 (11,000) over that of 1964. But a true evaluation of this program should not be based on plain statistics.

(C) Achievements in the pacification effort fell short of the established goals but some progress was made. The Hop Tac program was accepted in the GVN national pacification plan for 1966. A pilot program was initiated to provide subsector advisors with a revolving fund to assist in rural construction. A trial program was initiated in three provinces to bring the US effort in the rural construction field under one US coordinator, known as the Province Team Chief. This effort met with some success as the program was continued in two provinces after the trial period ended. Progress in the 1965 pacification program was hindered by political instability during the first half of the year; inadequate initial planning and coordination at the national level; slow clarification of policies, and insufficient personnel resources to expand into the cleared areas. At year's end, the VC controlled about 56 percent of the land area and 23 percent of the population<sup>28</sup> but new directives and plans, AB 140 and AB 141, developed at that time offered promise for 1966.

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(U) After 20 months of political instability, the Thieu/Ky government gave promise of halting this debilitating situation. At the end of 1965 this government had been in office more than six months and had begun to consider a formula for future political development of the country. This included a proposal to form a national advisory council to take up the task of drafting a constitution and laws governing elections and political parties.<sup>29</sup>

(S) The year was marred by conflict between the Montagnard tribes and GVN. There were a series of incidents, the largest of which was the FULRO rebellion in Phu Bon in December. The rebellion was suppressed and four FULRO leaders were executed on 29 December.<sup>30</sup> At the end of 1965, as in 1964, the aspirations of the Montagnards were still largely unfulfilled and it appeared that 1966 would see the same tension which characterized GVN/Montagnard relationships up to that time.

(C) Both US and GVN authorities agreed that the inflation caused by increased US and GVN spending and the security of goods had to be checked. Inflation was one of the factors that prompted the US currency conversion to Military Payment Certificates in August. However, this and other measures were only temporarily effective and the situation appeared even more aggravated at the end of the year.

#### THE FUTURE

(C) The prospects for USMACV in 1966 were not entirely clear. The cessation of the bombing of NVN, already a week long, would probably continue for an extended period, to allow the President's peace efforts time for fruition. However, the enemy did not appear to be responsive or interested. In spite of the massive strength the US had assembled in SVN and the enemy's heavy personnel losses, VC/NVN leaders did not appear to be impressed. Increased enemy infiltration provided definite indications that the US/FWMA/RVN forces could only look forward to many battles ahead.

(C) The year 1965 was thus a year of decision, marked by the US buildup and the establishment of a huge logistics base in SVN. The firmness of the US position in SVN was amply demonstrated to the enemy and to the world. Phase I goals had been substantially achieved and Phase II and IIA deployment were assured of execution, thus providing adequate resources for the accomplishment of Phase II objectives. The one billion dollar base development program and the additional commitment of other resources were certainly formidable assets in support of the long and difficult process of regaining GVN control over the country. Unless the peace efforts were to succeed, it

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appeared inevitable that there would be increased fighting. The US goals continued to be: to defeat the enemy on the battlefield; to destroy his safe havens; to stop his infiltration; to neutralize his war-making capabilities in NVN, and to assist in creating those conditions conducive to the development of effective GVN control over the entire nation.

(C) In an address to the USMACV staff on the last day of the year, COMUSMACV envisaged 1966 as the Year of Opportunity. The enemy had lost the initiative; the GVN had stopped losing the war. Some progress had begun to show in the development of a mature and stable government which would, hopefully, begin to win the allegiance of the people. The opportunity was at hand for the US/FWMAF and RVNAF to begin the difficult march to victory and win for the Vietnamese people the peace they so long had sought. In all, 1966, the "Year of the Horse," held forth promise of being a "galloping" year. 31

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