



Strategy and Policy-1965

WWW.NARA.GOV

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM



P
H
O
T
O
B
Y
S
F
C
J
A
M
E
S
K
·
F
·
D
U
N
G
·
D
A
S
P
O

E
N
H
A
N
C
E
D
B
Y
D
R
·
E
R
I
K
V
I
L
L
A
R
D
·
C
M
H

LT GEN. THROCKMORTON, DEPUTY CG MACV, AND GENERAL WESTMORELAND, CG MACV, WATCH 1ST CAV DIV TROOPS ARRIVE AT QUI NHON, 14 SEP 65



THE YEAR OF DECISION

INTRODUCTION

For the Free World counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam, 1964 had represented a year of change. In contrast, 1965 was the Year of Decision. While no panaceas were produced for the problems of communist insurgency, South Vietnamese internal instability, or American public confusion about Southeast Asia (SEASIA), 1965 was nonetheless a decisive year.

The deterioration in the military situation was halted by the US buildup, and the unmistakable message for the enemy was that victory was now denied him. The Viet Cong/North Vietnam Army (VC/NVA) threat could no longer shelter behind the facade of "an expression of the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people." Although not all Americans chose to recognize this, the doubting minority dwindled numerically, if not vocally. And at the end of the year the American people clearly and overwhelmingly demonstrated their feelings in "Operation Christmas Star," one of the most impressive displays of support ever shown for the US fighting man.

In-country, the South Vietnamese began to display traces of impatience with their nation's political, social and ethnic divisions, with personal avarice among their leaders, and with the apathetic conduct of the war. However, coups, rumors of coups and other manifestations of governmental instability continued.

The year closed with an uneasy suspension of air attacks in North Vietnam (NVN), in line with a concerted political effort to crack the enemy's rigidity. On the ground, the storm was weathered; the path of military action was chosen; defeat, or any military resolution favoring the enemy, was rejected.

The 1965 Command History portrays this dramatic turn of events from the point of view of General W.C. Westmoreland, the Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV).

THE SITUATION

As 1965 began, the VC were winning the war. Throughout the country, the military and political initiative was with the enemy.

The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) casualty rate in December 1964 was the highest of any month in that year. VC recruitment in South Vietnam (SVN) and NVA infiltration from NVN were on the rise. The Government of Vietnam (GVN) pacification program had been brought to a virtual standstill, with the great majority of rural areas either under VC control or "contested" in the VC's favor. The enemy radio claimed at the end of 1964 that three-fourths of SVN had been "liberated," and forecast "new and greater victories." VC terrorism, harassment, intimidation and sabotage were at a high level; friendly lines of communication (LOC's) were frequently closed. By the beginning of 1965, VC manpower had increased to between 93,000 and 113,000. It was apparent that the enemy was now seeking to standardize weapons in VC main force units and was also beginning to supplement these units with regular NVA elements. With the alarming buildup, it appeared that the VC intended to create a strategic base from which to isolate principal GVN centers. The enemy's psychological campaign to weaken the will of GVN supporters and uncommitted citizens was intensified. The VC strategy evidently was based on the assumption that the US would not increase its involvement and that as a result of the turmoil within the GVN a political vacuum would be created which only the VC could fill.

() In January 1965, the GVN was unstable and ineffective. There had been no letup in political maneuvering by various religious groups, military cliques and fragmented political parties since the fall of the Diem regime. Government ministries and provincial leaders were operating without direction, guidance or support from the central government. This near-paralysis in government affected the war effort. The morale of the populace was ebbing because of the lack of confidence in the ability of the national leadership to prosecute the war and also because of the uncertainty of the continuation and extent of U.S. support.

() In the field, Army of Vietnam (ARVN) units were adopting an increasingly defensive role. The number of ARVN-initiated offensives fell off drastically and soon ARVN was merely reacting to VC attacks. At the same time, GVN pacification and psychological warfare activities were stalled, and both programs needed overhauling.

() In the face of the rising VC threat, it was apparent that RVNAF strength was insufficient for both offensive operations and support of the pacification program. Strengths at the beginning of the year stood at approximately 246,000 regular forces, 96,000 Regional Forces (RF), 168,000 Popular Forces (PF) and 31,500 National Police (NP). ARVN, with a strength of 220,000, formed the bulk of the regular forces. The Vietnamese Marine Corps (VMMC), employed in a general reserve role, had a stable strength of about 7,000 men. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN), with about 8,000 men, was not contributing much to the war effort and its leadership was probably the poorest of

MACV Command History 1965



the armed forces. The approximately 11,000 Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) personnel were flying and supporting a total of 280 non-jet aircraft comprising 15 squadrons. VNAF fighter and helicopter squadrons were heavily engaged in direct support of ARVN. RVNAF force increases, primarily in ground combat troops, had been recognized as necessary and were requested in November 1964 following a joint US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV)/RVNAF survey of RVNAF structure. The smaller of two alternative buildup plans appeared more realistic considering the GVN's available manpower base, its limited training facilities and a shortage of trained leaders. RVNAF was equipped with Military Assistance Program (MAP) supported weapons. Little sophistication had been introduced. The VNAF was undergoing modernization, but jet aircraft were yet to be used in combat. The armed helicopter was playing an important support role. RVNAF Joint General Staff (JGS) Directive AB 139, dated December 1964, was the basic campaign plan for the war and called for increased efforts to thwart the VC and to exert GVN control over vital population and agricultural areas.

1. The US military commitment, as the year began, consisted of a large advisory element with teams deployed to tactical units at battalion/squadron level. All sectors (43) had an advisory team assigned, and 103 subsector teams had been deployed. The Army advisory elements, Marine advisory unit (MARADVU), the Air Force Advisory Group (AFAG), the Naval Advisory Group (NAVGP), and the USMACV staff and staff advisory elements were included in a single Joint Table of Distribution (JTD) dated 1 September 1964. Approximately 400 Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) troops from six nations were also in-country. These forces, oriented toward advisory or civic action tasks, came from Australia, China, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand.

2. US Army (USA) personnel totaled nearly 15,000. About one third were acting in advisory roles or as staff support for the advisory effort. The other two thirds were providing combat support and combat service support to RVNAF and US advisors.

3. The small US advisory teams scattered throughout the country with multi-service concentrations in Saigon and other large centers were serviced by a fragmented logistical system involving 16 different agencies. There was no logistic base in-country to provide combat service support for major US troop units. But, as plans for large scale US involvement developed, logistic planning in-country became increasingly oriented to the needs of basic combat elements. At the same time, Okinawa was being considered as the site of an off-shore logistics base for Vietnam. The approval late in 1964 of additional airfield construction at Da Nang and Chu Lai signaled the start of an immense construction effort which accompanied the establishment of a combat service support base during 1965.

MACV Command History 1965





WWW.NARA.GOV

"AFTER THE HOLLOWAY ATTACK"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM



P
H
O
T
O
B
Y
S
P
S
A
L
L
A
N
K
·
H
O
L
M
,
D
A
S
P
O

E
N
H
A
N
C
E
D
B
Y
D
R
·
E
R
I
K
V
I
L
L
A
R
D
,
C
M
H

US COMMANDERS SURVEY THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY VC SAPPERS AT CAMP HOLLOWAY, PLEIKU, 7 FEB 65



Command Relationships

US Army Vietnam

() At the beginning of 1965, USA advisory units were under the command and control of COMUSMACV. USA combat support and combat service support units were largely under the CO, US Army Support Command, Vietnam (USASCV). These arrangements were adequate for the number of personnel involved and the tasks assigned.

() In March, after the decision to build up US forces in SVN, the subject of reorganization of USMACV arose. The CofSA, proposed the formation of an Army Component Command (ACC) with Lt Gen Throckmorton, DEPCOMUSMACV, as its commander. This component would relieve COMUSMACV of as many of his non-tactical and non-combat functions as possible. COMUSMACV replied, in March, that such functions were not onerous and could be coordinated with the Vietnamese much better at the USMACV level. He emphasized that he foresaw only problems, with no attendant gains, by reorganizing his HQ at that critical juncture.⁴²³ However, he did see a need for establishing a field command, to coordinate combined forces operations in a particular part of the country, with Lt Gen Throckmorton in command. As DEPCOMUSMACV, he would be in a position to serve in this role. As ACC, Lt Gen Throckmorton could not do so, as he would have no authority over other service's forces placed under the field command, because such services were represented by component commanders of equal stature. Thus, COMUSMACV preferred that he (COMUSMACV) should also be the US ACC in RVN.⁴²⁴

() In March, the JCS proposed that the advisory organizations be placed under the ACC.⁴²⁵ COMUSMACV was opposed, because it would reestablish a relationship which existed prior to the dissolution of the MAAG, a relationship which was so unsatisfactory as to form the basis for MAAG's inactivation.⁴²⁶

() In April, COMUSMACV refined his concept of command arrangements. He proposed that a tailored corps HQ be deployed if three divisions were moved to Vietnam. Lt Gen Throckmorton would command this corps, but would be returned to Saigon when a qualified senior officer could succeed him. COMUSMACV

opposed any change in the concept of the USASCV, stating that he did not want to exercise tactical command through this headquarters.⁴²⁷ Maj Gen Stilwell, his CofS, expressed the opinion that a new headquarters, USARV, acting as the ACC, could provide considerable assistance as coordinator between USMACV, USARPAC, and USASCV.⁴²⁸

() In June, COMUSMACV re-emphasized his opposition to the establishment of an ACC, because it would result in two large headquarters, established in Saigon, dealing with the RVNAF JGS, which functions as joint staff and also as the ARVN HQ.⁴²⁹ COMUSMACV felt that the US organizational structure should be tailored to the situation and mission in SVN rather than rigid adherence to US joint service doctrine.

On 20 July, USASCV was redesignated USARV with General Westmoreland as its commander and Brig Gen J. Norton, his deputy. The mission of USARV, in accordance with COMUSMACV's views, was to conduct US Army combat service support operations in SVN, including ACC support planning for COMUSMACV. Additionally, it was to exercise command, less operational control of USA combat units deployed to RVN.⁴³⁰ Thus, it was not an ACC in the standard sense since it did not exercise operational control over USA combat units.

In November, COMUSMACV proposed that the general officer positions on the USARV staff be increased and that an Army-level headquarters be established to support the Phase II buildup with a lieutenant general in command.⁴³¹ On 27 December, it was announced that Lt Gen J. E. Engler would become Deputy CG, USARV, in early 1966, and Brig Gen Norton, the incumbent, would become his assistant.⁴³²

US Army Field Force and Advisory HQ

() In June, JCS had proposed that the field force HQ (see discussion in the previous section regarding tailored corps HQ and field command) become a joint organization. COMUSMACV objected, stating it would control only USA and ROK ground forces. If III MAF subsequently were placed under its control, the staff would then, of course, be augmented with Marines. COMUSMACV visualized that the HQ would evolve from a provisional Task Force Alpha HQ under Brig Gen P. F. Smith commanding the two separate USA brigades, to a USA division level HQ, and then to a tailored corps (field force) HQ to command the USA and ROK divisions and the separate abn bde in II CTZ.⁴³³

() In response to a CJCS inquiry, COMUSMACV stated that the possibility of III MAF passing to the operational control of field forces HQ could not be forecast as it was contingent upon escalation

MACV Command History 1965



of the war. In June, III MAF's operations were confined to the I CTZ and there was no advantage in placing it under field force HQ. However, if the conflict were to escalate to Korean conflict proportions, it might then be desirable to place III MAF under field force HQ and augment the HQ with Marines. He urged that the HQ be a stripped-down TOE corps HQ rather than a Table of Distribution (TD) organization, asserting that this was in full consonance with the Hawaiian agreements of April.⁴³⁴

() On 1 August, HQ USA Task Force Alpha, (USATFA) the field force HQ, was activated and assigned to USARV as a TD organization. A nucleus of experienced USMACV officers was assigned to aid in the establishment of the HQ.⁴³⁵ Maj Gen S. R. Larsen was appointed CG on 4 August.

() On 7 August, the I Corps Advisory Group was placed under the operational control of CG, III MAF, who was designated Senior Advisor, I Corps. This placed the advisory effort in I CTZ under the senior US ground commander in the CTZ, thus improving the total influence of US advice on ARVN.⁴³⁶ The former Senior Advisor was designated Deputy Senior Advisor. No restrictions were placed upon the scope of this operational control, but further integration of the Advisory Group into the III MAF structure was deferred pending additional study.⁴³⁷

() In August, COMUSMACV modified the initial scope of operational control for the field force HQ by excluding the 1st Inf Div. This modification was due to considerations of the seniority of the incumbent commanders, and the need to retain flexibility for future developments. He reiterated that Lt Gen Throckmorton would only temporarily command the organization, giving way to Maj Gen Larsen because of the need for Lt Gen Throckmorton as DEFCOMUSMACV.⁴³⁸ (As a matter of fact, Lt Gen Throckmorton was never appointed commander on orders; Maj Gen Larsen continued to command the organization for the remainder of the year and into 1966.) Subsequently, in Phase II planning, this was further clarified by providing for a US Marine Amphibious corps (MAC) in I Corps and three separate USA corps in the three remaining CTZ's.⁴³⁹

() On 25 September, USATFA was redesignated HQ, Field Force, Vietnam (FFORCEV) with operational control over USA units in II CTZ and the II Corps Advisory Group.⁴⁴⁰ Initially, the Senior Advisor retained his title, but because ARVN II CTZ commander, then sub-Brig Gen Vinh Loc, felt that he had lost prestige in that he was no longer advised by the senior US officer in the area, the CG, FFORCEV, on 21 October was

designated Senior Advisor and the former Senior Advisor was designated Deputy Senior Advisor.^{441,442} The precedent established in I Corps obviously had considerable bearing on this modification. Also, this change in II Corps ended consideration, then pending, to modify the position in I Corps to conform to that initially adopted in II Corps. COMUSMACV was quite willing to encourage this effort on the part of the Vietnamese to enhance their prestige, feeling that such measures were essential to the eventual attainment of their ability to stand on their own feet.⁴⁴³

() On 1 November, CG, 1st Inf Div, assumed operational control of USA and FwMAF elements in III CTZ, but similar control over III Corps Advisory Group was delayed to allow CG, 1st Inf Div, to become thoroughly familiar with his many responsibilities.⁴⁴⁴ On 1 December, COMUSMACV designated CG, 1st Inf Div, as Senior Advisor to CG, III ARVN Corps, and the incumbent as Deputy Senior Advisor. The III Corps Advisory Group was concurrently placed under the operational control of the CG, 1st Inf Div.⁴⁴⁵ Thus, by the end of 1965, all of the corps advisory groups, except IV CTZ where no US tactical units were deployed, had been placed under the respective senior US tactical ground commander.

() In late November, COMUSMACV initiated action for the organization of a second field force HQ in the III CTZ in the event a second division was to be deployed to the area.⁴⁴⁶ This HQ was scheduled to become operational on 31 March 1966.⁴⁴⁷ The advance party was due to arrive in early January with the first deployed units of the 25th Inf Div. It was scheduled to operate under a modified TOE, and its commander would assume control over USA tactical and advisory units in the III CTZ.⁴⁴⁸

() 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.

() 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 FwMAF.

MACV Command History 1965



WWW.NARA.GOV

"LT GEN THROCKMORTON AT CAM RANH BAY"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM



LT. GEN. THROCKMORTON SPEAKS WITH MR. SANG CHUL SHIN, ROK AMB. TO SVN, AND MG TRAN NGOC TAM AT CAM RANH BAY, 9 OCT 65



THE STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

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

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

RVNAF PLAN AB 139⁵

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

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

- 1) Determining the routes to be protected and assigning priorities,
- 2) providing protective measures to include: collection of route intelligence, ambushes along feeder routes, disruptive operations into nearby VC bases, defoliation along routes, establishment of New Life hamlets at population centers along the routes, defense of bridges and check points, and
- 3) providing convoy protection to include: air cover, quick reaction troops, irregular march tables, fire support and communications and control.

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

- 1) determine bases to be protected and assign priorities,
- 2) establish security zones 4,000 meters wide (81-mm mortar range) around the area; within this zone conduct continuous patrols and ambushes to thwart VC attacks,
- 3) establish strong points within the security zone,
- 4) exercise population control to destroy the VC infrastructure,
- 5) conduct offensive operations against VC forces and bases,
- 6) establish ground intelligence nets, and
- 7) develop detailed defense plans.

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

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

MACV Command History 1965



MACV Command History 1965

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

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

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

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

1) determine bases to be protected and assign priorities,

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

3) establish strong points within the security zone,

4) exercise population control to destroy the VC infrastructure,

5) conduct offensive operations against VC forces and bases,

6) establish ground intelligence nets, and

7) develop detailed defense plans.

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

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

and direct artillery and close air support onto targets.

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

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

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

1) locate infiltration routes leading into SVN and VC LOC's within SVN,

2) establish border control bases to block each main route along the frontier; the CIDG-manned bases were to be interconnected so as to minimize VC alterations of their routes,

3) conduct continuous combat patrols and reconnaissance operations between bases,

4) conduct continuous air reconnaissance of the border,

5) conduct raids along the VC LOC's leading into the interior, and

6) provide heliborne reaction forces to reinforce CIDG camps.

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

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



WWW.ARCHIVES.GOV

"M-60 TEAM AT BIEN HOA"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM

PHOTO BY SP5 JOSE C. RIVERA DASP



ENHANCED BY DR. ERIK VILLARD, CMH

AN M-60 TEAM FROM THE 173D ABN BDE ON THE PERIMETER OF BIEN HOA AIRBASE, 10 JUNE 1965



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

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

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

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

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

MACV Command History 1965

COMUSMACV CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS⁶

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

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

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

() The concept visualized a three-phase operation:

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

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

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

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



maintain internal order and secure its borders.

() The overall concept was based on three assumptions:

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

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

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

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

Phase I:

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

2) Defend major political and population centers.

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

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

5) Preserve and strengthen the RVNAF.

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

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

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

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

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

Phase II:

1) All Phase I measures.

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

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

Phase III:

1) All Phase I and II measures.

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

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

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

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

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

MACV Command History 1965



WWW.NARA.GOV

"WESTMORELAND PRESENTS CITATION TO THE ARVN 44TH RANGER BATTALION"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM



PHOTO BY SP5 JOSE C. RIVERA, DASSPO

ENHANCED BY DR. ERIK VILLARD, CMH

GENERAL WESTMORELAND PINS THE US PRESIDENTIAL CITATION RIBBON TO THE COLORS OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE 44TH RANGER BATTALION, 1 JUNE 1965



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

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

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

Phase I

I Corps Concepts and Tasks ()

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II Corps Concepts and Tasks (^)

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

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

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

III Corps Concepts and Tasks (\)

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

MACV Command History 1965



2) Conduct offensive operations to destroy VC bases and forces thereby relieving pressure on the Hop Tac area.

3) Assist RVNAF in defending province capitals and key district towns by conducting reaction operations.

IV Corps Concepts and Tasks ()

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

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

Phase II

I Corps Concepts and Tasks ()

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

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

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

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

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

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

II Corps Concepts and Tasks ()

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

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

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

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

III Corps Concepts and Tasks (..)

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

2) Protect the critical base of Bien Hoa.

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

IV Corps Concepts and Tasks (:)

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

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

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

MACV Command History 1965



WWW.NARA.GOV

"MP HQ IN SAIGON"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM

P
H
O
T
O
B
Y
S
S
G
L
Y
L
E
V
·
B
O
G
G
E
S
S
·
D
A
S
P
O



E
N
H
A
N
C
E
D
B
Y
D
R
·
E
R
I
K
V
I
L
L
A
R
·
C
M
H

US MACV MILITARY POLICE HEADQUARTERS, SAIGON, 22 JULY 1965



Phase III

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

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

Special Forces Concepts

() Detachments would be committed to:

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

Reconnaissance Requirements ()

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

Rural Construction/Pacification

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

Concepts and Tasks ()

Phase I

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

MACV Command History 1965



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

Phase II

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

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

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

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

MACV Command History 1965

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



WWW.NARA.GOV

"AIRMOBILE ASSAULT IN WAR ZONE D"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM



P
H
O
T
O
B
Y
S
G
L
Y
L
E
V
·
B
O
G
G
E
S
S
·
D
A
S
P
O

E
N
H
A
N
C
E
D
B
Y
D
R
·
E
R
I
K
V
I
L
L
A
R
D
·
C
M
H

HUEY HELICOPTERS FLY OVER MEMBERS OF CO. B, 2D BN, 503D INF, 173D ABN BDE, DURING A MISSION IN WAR ZONE D, 28 JUNE 1965



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

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

RVNAF PLAN AB 140/US-RVNAF PLAN AB 141

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

RVNAF JGS Directive AB 140

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

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

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

RVNAF - MACV Campaign Plan AB 141

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

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

CONTINGENCY PLANS

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

MACV Command History 1965



MACV Command History 1965

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

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

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

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

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

Phase III - Overt NVN intervention.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



WWW.NARA.GOV

"FREE WORLD MILITARY FORCES"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM

PHOTO BY SGT LEROY MASSIE, DASP



WASHED SANDSTONE REMIX BY DR. ERIK VILLARD, CMH

COLOR GUARD OF THE ALLIED NATIONS AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE OFFICE, SAIGON, 8 APR 65



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

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

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

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

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

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

Phase II - All measures short of direct US intervention.

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

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

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

- (1) An increase of two ARVN divisions to a total of 12 in FY 67.
- (2) Increase of RF/PF units.
- (3) Modernizing VNAF and VNN.
- (4) Providing an air defense capability by FY 70.
- (5) Establishment of a reserve similar to the US National Guard by FY 71.²⁸

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

MACV Command History 1965



Military Assistance Command, Vietnam



WWW.NARA.GOV

"327TH INF ON THE MOVE"

WWW.HISTORY.ARMY.MIL/VIETNAM

P
H
O
T
O
B
Y
S
P
4
P
H
I
L
L
I
P
G
I
B
B
S
,
D
A
S
P
O



N
A
T
U
R
E
G
L
A
S
S
R
E
M
I
X
B
Y
D
R
·
E
R
I
K
V
I
L
L
A
R
D
,
C
M
H

SOLDIERS FROM Co. A, 2D BN, 327TH INF, 1ST BDE, 101ST ABN DIV, MOVE ALONG A TRAIL DURING A PATROL, 1965