



CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE
Washington DC 20505



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
The Vietnam Center

Intelligence in the Vietnam War

A Conference hosted by the CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence
and the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University

October 20-21, 2006
Holiday Inn Park Plaza, Lubbock, Texas

Previously Classified CIA Study to be released at joint CIA/Vietnam Center at Texas Tech Conference on Intelligence in the Vietnam War

The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Center for the Study of Intelligence and the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University are pleased to announce the release of a historical study, *CIA and Rural Pacification in South Vietnam* by Thomas Ahern, a retired Agency employee and contract historian at the Center for the Study of Intelligence (CSI). This release coincides with a conference co-hosted by the aforementioned organizations on *Intelligence in the Vietnam War*, which will take place on October 20-21, 2006, at the Holiday Inn Park Plaza in Lubbock, Texas.

Tom Ahern's important contribution describes the CIA's role in rural pacification and counterinsurgency and the programs it devised and implemented to win the "hearts and minds" of the South Vietnamese peasantry. Using the original files of the Agency and numerous interviews, Ahern tells of the CIA's efforts to generate popular support for the Saigon government and to undermine Vietcong authority at the "rice roots" level.

Mr. Ahern shows how – despite many local successes – the programs were never, for a variety of reasons, implemented effectively at the national level in South Vietnam. Ahern's conclusion is sobering: "Of all the US government organs associated with rural pacification in South Vietnam, only CIA played a continuous part from the effort's inception in 1954 to its demise in 1972. [Its] programs were economically and pragmatically run, and the assessments honestly if sometimes naively drawn. Both were flawed by misunderstanding the nature of the challenge, and by the prevailing, if ultimately fading, confidence in the superiority of American material resources and managerial techniques. It is clear now, although then obscured by American ideological preconceptions, local GVN [South Vietnamese government] successes, and the Communists' own weaknesses, that the Viet Cong exploited irremediable weaknesses in South Vietnamese society. Only a collapse of Communist will to win could have altered the outcome, and that will never falter.

The Center for the Study of Intelligence is the CIA's internal "think tank," documenting lessons learned from past activities, exploring the needs and expectations of intelligence consumers, and stimulating serious debate about current and future intelligence challenges. To support these activities, CSI publishes the journal *Studies in Intelligence*, as well as numerous books and monographs addressing historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of the intelligence profession. It also administers the CIA Museum



and the CIA History Staff, which is the component charged with writing the official history of the Agency. The CIA History Staff's studies are typically classified, but they may be released to the public after undergoing appropriate declassification review. The Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech is dedicated to promoting the study of the American Vietnam experience and to collecting and preserving historical materials related to America's involvement in Southeast Asia.

This is an important contribution to the history of the Vietnam War and will, undoubtedly, provide important insights as students and scholars continue to examine these historical events. The conference on *Intelligence in the Vietnam War* is open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.intelligence.vietnam.ttu.edu or call 806-742-3742.

Ahern, Thomas L., Jr.: (CIA-Retired) Covert operations officer in CIA for 35 years, including six years in Indochina between 1960 and 1972. Author of one of the pacification programs (Counter-Terror Teams, later Provincial Reconnaissance Teams) that became the core of the GVN's national pacification program in 1967. Other assignments as chief of base or station in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Post-retirement work as historian at the Center for the Study of Intelligence has focused on Indochina, with three volumes on South Vietnam and one each on Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. Most recent piece is a critique of Intelligence Community analysis of the "yellow rain" issue of the early 1980s. Academic background: BA from Notre Dame; graduate of the National War College.