The General Logistics Directorate, formerly known as the Rear Services Directorate, is charged with the supervision of procurement, supply, transportation, and operation of the medical services. The functions of the General Training Directorate include the conduct of both individual and unit training. In addition, it is responsible for physical education programs within both regular and paramilitary units.

Various offices in the High Command are concerned with the naval forces, the air forces, mobilization, and Militia matters, with the operational coordination of the Armed Public Security Forces, and with the administration of the military regions. The activities of these offices are coordinated and supervised by the Directorates and the General Staff, each within its special field.

For military administrative purposes, the country is divided into military regions, each of which comprises one or more provinces. The Tay Bac and the Viet Bac Autonomous Regions (comprising the highlands northwest and north of Hanoi), for example, are called the northwest and the Viet Bac Military Regions, respectively. Two other military regions, III and IV, are located to the south of Hanoi between the Red River and the Demarcation Line. Information regarding other military regions is lacking, but presumably at least one more exists north of the Red River and includes the area around Haiphong. The headquarters of a military region apparently functions as an administrative rather than as an operational center, somewhat in the manner of certain major army headquarters in the United States. Information regarding the distribution of the major combat units of the Army is not available. Army units seem to be under the direct operational control of the commander in chief of the Army, whereas the militia forces, which are organized on a provincial basis, apparently are under the operational control of their respective military region commanders.

MILITARY AND CIVIL AUTHORITY

Political Controls

The military is completely subordinate to the authority of the Lao Dong Party. Even General Giap, as a deputy premier and minister of national defense, is subject to Party controls which are maintained through the General Political Directorate and the Military Affairs Committee, which report directly to high Party echelons. In addition, he is a member of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party and its Politburo and a vice chairman to Chairman Ho Chi Minh in the National Defense Council. He is,
therefore, responsible both militarily and politically to the Party and Ho Chi Minh. Moreover, since 7 of the 10 members of the National Defense Council are also members of the Politburo, conformity of the Council’s decisions with Party directives is assured.

The intensification of the war against South Vietnam and the retaliatory action, particularly from United States air and ground forces supporting the South Vietnamese Government, virtually turned the country into an armed camp in mid-1966. Under these conditions the people were compelled to accept military-type obligations and to identify themselves with organizations and activities supporting the armed forces. The action on the part of the government in extending political control over these activities was prompt and effective. In addition to intensified propaganda reiterating the supremacy of the Party in providing normal “revolutionary” military leadership and direction to these auxiliary organizations, the regime installed Party committee members as political commissars in many of the rural self-defense groups throughout the country.

Indoctrination

Political indoctrination is a major feature in the training program and is conducted concurrently with the regular military instruction of troop units. It is supervised and directed by the General Political Directorate of the High Command. Specially trained servicemen are assigned to units down to and including battalions; sometimes they are assigned to lower echelons, where they work closely with platoons and squads. Provided with pamphlets prepared by the Directorate, they hold study sessions and give lectures in accordance with a programmed course of political instruction which is incorporated in the training schedule. Junior officers apparently attend routine classes with their units. Special conferences, to be attended by all officers and men, may be conducted to explain a new Party or government policy which has military implications.

Indoctrination emphasizes such things as the necessity for “protecting the achievements of the revolution,” the armed forces contribution to “the Socialist state,” vigilance against “reactionary elements,” basic revolutionary theory and Party policies and government programs. Party leaders usually set the tone for political indoctrination efforts by making public pronouncements at various high level meetings or at selected “congresses” sponsored by the multitudinous military mass organizations. These same themes become the subjects of editorials and feature articles in the leading
newspapers, including the Army newspaper *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (People's Army). At the same time, these political policies emanate as "resolutions," "decisions," "instructions" or "congratulatory messages" from various official Party organs dealing with the military to subordinate groups which are charged with supervising their broad dissemination and ensuring their observance within the armed forces.

**FOREIGN INFLUENCE**

The strongest long-term influence on the armed forces has been that of Communist China. Chinese advice and assistance are apparent in organization, training, tactics and weapons. Since the early formation of North Vietnamese guerrilla forces, appreciable numbers of Chinese instructors have worked with Ho Chi Minh's troops. During this same long period considerable numbers of North Vietnamese troops have received training in Communist Chinese training centers and schools.

The minister of national defense and commander in chief of the Army, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, has repeatedly referred to the military lessons learned from the experience of Chinese Communist Forces in their conflict with the Chinese Nationalists and in their subsequent role in economic development. The concepts contained in General Giap's treatises, including his *People's War, People's Army*, on the evolution of irregular forces into a conventional army closely resembled those developed earlier by Mao Tse-tung. Training manuals, organizational patterns and operational procedures all bear the Chinese imprint. In late 1966 the Chinese had an estimated 50,000 men in North Vietnam, including railroad, construction and antiaircraft specialists. These troops, reportedly in organized units, were generally assisting in air defense and in repair of bomb damage to supply lines from Chinese bases to Hanoi.

The Soviet Union's military influence has been of shorter term, but along more advanced lines. Since the intensification, in 1968 and later, of the war against South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese have turned to the Soviets for more sophisticated military material. Soviet technicians have accompanied much of this equipment to North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union has admitted that Soviet technical advisers have given on-site assistance to North Vietnamese air defense crews during United States retaliatory bombing attacks. The training offered to the North Vietnamese Army by the Soviet Union also has been along specialized technical lines, including pilot training and radio and radar repair.
Soviet influence has been increasingly enhanced by this assistance, and the respect accorded the Soviet Union and its representatives in North Vietnam is fairly high.

MANPOWER

Of the total population of 18,250,000 it is estimated that about 4 million men are between the ages of 15 and 49 and that about 2 million of these are fit for military service. Each year approximately 175,000 males reach military conscription age (18), but only about 100,000 of these are considered fit for military service. This is more than a sufficient manpower base to keep units up to their authorized strength.

The government's expansion of the war effort in South Vietnam and the retaliatory United States air attacks against North Vietnam created a shortage of manpower for both military and economic tasks. On July 17, 1966, a partial mobilization was announced by Hanoi which had the effect of further organizing civilian labor to increase the general war-support effort and to impose direct control over it. Great stress was placed on the "reserve" character of the mobilization, and apparently most of the newly formed groups were organized as part of the Militia and Self-Defense Forces, Youth Volunteer Brigades and Labor Youth Units. There is no indication that any actual increase in the uniformed forces resulted from this partial mobilization.

Conscription

The manpower needs of the armed forces are met through voluntary enlistments and conscription. The compulsory military service program for all able-bodied males from 18 to 25 years of age in peacetime, and from 16 to 45 years of age in wartime, was put into effect in 1959. This system replaced the indiscriminate and arbitrary levying of conscription quotas on villages which had been practiced during and shortly after the Indochina War. It was also part of the program adapted by the Hanoi government to modernize and convert the predominant guerrilla-type force of that period into a more conventional national army.

All males must register during the first 5 days of January of the year in which they reach 18. After registration they receive a physical examination and then are released to return home and await induction. Induction takes place beginning the following December for all those who have not been granted an exemption or a deferment. In addition to the physically disabled, exemptions
are granted to sole remaining sons and to those youths who are the principal support of a family. Deferments are granted to selected Party functionaries, to certain students and to technicians with special industrial skills. Usually, those found to be physically unqualified are deferred for 1 year, at the end of which time they are reexamined and inducted or further deferred.

The mandatory period which a conscriptee must serve has varied from time to time. With the adoption of compulsory military service, the obligated term was made the same for all branches of the armed forces. Some time early in the 1960's the service term was changed to 2 years for the army, 3 years for the air force and 4 years for the navy. Some increase in these obligated terms probably took place before April 1965 when the service period was indefinitely extended as a consequence of the increasing demands of the war against South Vietnam.

Reserves

A growing trained reserve is provided by the conscription process. According to the national service decrees of 1959, the reserve is divided into Class 1 and Class 2 categories. Class 1 is composed of combat-experienced soldiers who have been released from the Army on the expiration of their enlistment period and replaced by conscripts. These veterans form the core of the local Militia and Self-Defense Forces. Also in Class 1 are former members of guerrilla groups and the young politically reliable conscripts who have not actually been called to active military duty. Class 2 consists of all others who are liable for military service.

Men in the Army are released from their military obligations at the age of 45, but those who physically fit are encouraged to join their local Militia or Self-Defense Forces as volunteers. The 1959 decrees also stipulated that women with special skills—nurses, laboratory technicians, telephone operators, typists, motor vehicle drivers, and others—would be registered for the reserves and encouraged to volunteer for the Militia or Self-Defense Forces.

The Militia and Self-Defense Forces are organized into sections, platoons, companies, battalions or larger formations, depending on local circumstances and on the availability of personnel and security requirements. None of these forces are considered capable of conducting independent, sustained military operations, but collectively they constitute a significant rear reserve force because of their ability to hastily reinforce the regular armed forces in a relatively short period of time.
North Vietnam is heavily dependent upon foreign aid, both for economic improvements and for military equipment. Since 1955 the bulk of this aid has come from Communist China, with the Soviet Union and the East European Communist countries supplying the remainder. After World War II considerable quantities of older Japanese, German, French, and United States armament were on hand, but modernization programs have rendered these stocks obsolescent. The escalation of the war in South Vietnam has forced the North Vietnamese to turn to more advanced weapon systems, for both offensive and defensive purposes.

Communist China has provided small arms, such as grenades, pistols, 7.62-mm. rifles, automatic rifles and some heavier weapons such as 60-mm. and 82-mm. mortars and 57-mm. and 75-mm. recoilless rifles. The Chinese also have provided some trucks, ammunition, spare parts and general logistic support in the form of rice, oil and cotton goods for uniforms.

The Soviet Union's military aid has augmented much of the type of materiel received from China, but it has also included more advanced and sophisticated weapons. It has consisted of considerable quantities of up-to-date antiaircraft artillery in calibers ranging from 37 mm. to 100 mm., as well as ammunition (including radio-controlled proximity fuses), radars and other supporting air defense equipment. In addition, the Soviets have made available SA-2 (surface-to-air) and heat-seeking, air-to-air missile systems and ground supporting equipment, including launchers, vans and generators, required for mobile emplacement of the SA-2's.

Naval vessels and equipment, augmented by limited acquisitions from Communist China and the Soviet Union, include small gunboats, motor torpedo boats and armed junks. The small air force has expanded as part of the development of a modern air defense system. By late 1966, aided principally by the Soviet Union, the air element was believed to have about 100 Soviet fighter aircraft in its inventory. Most of these were MIG-15's and MIG-17's, with a few later models, supersonic MIG-21's. The Soviet Union had also made available a limited number of IL-28 light bombers. Although information is lacking as to the extent of air support received from Communist China, one or more squadrons of Chinese fighter aircraft reportedly were rotating between North Vietnamese airfields and nearby airfields in China.
The regime has awarded a large variety of medals and decorations to military personnel for conspicuous combat service and for the exemplary performance of noncombat duties. During the Indochina War the Army awarded only two types of decorations: the War Medal to civilians and military men for conspicuous service to the war and the Meritorious Military Service Medal to combatants for campaign exploits. In 1958 four decorations were added for noncombat achievements: the Vietnamese Liberation Army Decoration, awarded for distinguished military service before the war; the Victory Decoration for outstanding military service during the war; the Dien Bien Phu Medal for outstanding service after the war; and the Military Honor Medal for lesser exploits after the war.

Since 1958 at least six different medals have been authorized for various types of combat achievements. In order of merit these are: the Gold Star Medal, the Ho Chi Minh Medal, the Independence Medal, the Resistance Medal, the Military Exploit Medal and the Combat Medal. Later, two more medals appeared, the Army Hero Medal and the Patriotic Soldier's Contest Medal. In 1962 a new award, called the Illustrious Soldier Decoration, was evolved for all three components of the armed forces, to be given for outstanding emulation and organization efforts. In addition to the medal awards to individuals, citations are given to units for outstanding achievements in combat, in training and on labor projects.

In November 1964 the North Vietnamese ambassador to the Soviet Union awarded the Gold Star Hero of Labor to the Soviet cosmonauts in Moscow at the forty-seventh anniversary celebration of the Russian Revolution. No information is available to indicate whether this was a special medal, a new order of medals or simply a variant of the Army Hero Medal.

RANKS AND INSIGNIA

Regulations prescribing army ranks and their corresponding insignia were published in a governmental decree on June 20, 1958. The ranks of officers and noncommissioned officers are denoted by epaulets worn on the dress uniform and by collar-tab insignia worn on the field uniform (see fig. 13). Privates wear collar tabs bearing silver stars, two for private first class and one for private second class. Privates also wear the insignia of
their respective arms which consists of a metal disc about 1.3 inches in diameter embossed with a gold star superimposed on a device representative of the arm. On the army insignia the star surmounts a gearwheel segment; the background is red, and the disc is bordered by rice stalks. On the naval insignia the background is sea blue, and the star is superimposed on an anchor. On the insignia for the air contingent, the star is superimposed on two wings on a sky-blue background. Technical branches, such as artillery, engineers, and signal communications, are indicated by metal devices representative of their respective branch functions. The devices are worn on the collar tab alongside the rank insignia.
**Figure 13. Ranks and Insignia of the North Vietnamese Armed Forces, 1966.**
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