How adequate is our information, and what is it based upon, concerning:

a. Attitudes of Vietnamese elites not now closely aligned with the Government of Vietnam (e.g., religious leaders, professors, youth leaders, professionals, union leaders, village notables) towards Participation - if offered - in the Government of Vietnam; the current legitimacy and acceptability of the Government of Vietnam; likewise (given "peace"), for the National Liberation Front or various "neutralist" coalitions; towards US intent, as they interpret it (e.g., US plans for ending the war, perceived US alignments with particular individuals and forces within Vietnam, US concern for various Vietnamese interests).

b. Patterns of existent political alignments within Government of Vietnam/Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and outside it -- reflecting family ties, corruption, officers' class, secret organizations and parties, religious and regional background -- as those bear upon behavior with respect to the war, the National Liberation Front, reform, and broadening of the Government of Vietnam, and responses to US influence and intervention.
QUESTION 22a

How adequate is our information, and what is it based upon concerning:

Attitudes of Vietnamese elites not now closely aligned with the Government of Vietnam (e.g., religious leaders, professors, youth leaders, professionals, union leaders, village notables) towards:
- Participation - if offered - in the Government of Vietnam;
- the current legitimacy and acceptability of the Government of Vietnam;
- likewise (given "peace" for the National Liberation Front or various "neutralist" coalitions; towards US intent, as they interpret it (e.g., US plans for ending the war, perceived US alignments with particular individuals and forces within Vietnam, US concern for various interests.)

The JCS, CINCPAC and MACV report:

Attitudes of Vietnamese Elite.

--- Information on the attitudes of groups not now closely aligned with the Government is based in large part on: (a) their public utterances and actions; (b) public opinion polls; (c) the soundings of Embassy political officers, including the four regional political advisors; and (d) views of informed American officials with close contact and good understanding of various groups of Vietnamese. This information available to the US Mission has probably accurately identified and labeled the main groups insofar as they themselves developed a firm ideological posture.


--- Participation may be defined as positions in cabinet, and sub-cabinet levels, positions of authority in various government departments (military forces, police, agriculture, refugee, provincial administration), and a role in special advisory groups on government programs and policy.

Religious Leaders. Relatively few religious leaders would be willing to serve directly in governmental positions. All are ready to support their lay candidates for office, and to play a role in advising the Government on its policies. Most religious groups tend of course to be interested primarily in programs of direct concern to them, such as education, refugee, and social welfare, although others, for example, the An Quang Buddhists, tend to actively oppose the GVN. In this regard, Catholics tend to be well organized and to participate effectively in such programs. The Buddhists are not well organized and their participation and involvement suffers by comparison.

Youth Leaders. Youth leaders, on balance, are rarely supporters of the GVN programs or policies or considered ready to serve as officials in the Government. Youth leaders are prepared to advise and consult with the Government on matters of concern to them (education, youth programs) but in general avoid direct participation in or identification with the Government of Vietnam.
Attitudes of Elites on Currently Legitimacy and Acceptability of the Government

--- Nonaligned elite groups have generally supported the process of establishing representational, constitutional government. They seem to accept the system laid down by the constitution. Many groups would undoubtedly like more representation in the Huong government and more of a voice in forming government policy. Many would like to see the National Assembly exercise more legislative control over the government. Some would like early province chief elections and more rapid civilizational of government (as is taking place in the national police). By and large, the constitutional system beginning with the province council elections in 1965, the constituent assembly in 1966, the local elections in early 1967, and the national assembly and presidential election in 1967, are considered by them as legitimate and acceptable.

Attitudes of Elite on the National Liberation Front or Various Neutralist Coalitions.

--- Elite groups, not closely aligned with the government, reject the notion of coalition government as violently as the military and the government itself. They feel that this would be tantamount to giving the country to the Viet Cong (VC). The tremendously popular response to President Thieu’s initial decision not to go to Paris reflects this strong prevailing view.

a. Some Buddhist groups, village leaders, village notables, union leaders, professors, and professionals (while not accepting the ideas of “coalition”) are prepared to consider some sort of legitimation of the National Liberation Front as a political party provided they cast off, at least openly, their communist affiliations. However, most groups, particularly the Northern Catholics, prefer a harder line rejecting both “coalition” and legitimation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) as a political party.

b. The attitudes of village notables and villagers generally is of particular interest because of the importance of popular support for the government in the coming political contest. Generally speaking, the Vietnamese villager would prefer to be left alone in peace by both the VC and the government. Forced to choose, as a pragmatist, he usually will go along with the side which controls his area. He recognizes, nevertheless, that he will probably lead a less troubled existence under the GVN than the VC. Evidence of this is the fact that the average GVN hamlet has a much larger population than the average VC hamlet. When the GVN security and authority is reestablished in a hamlet, there is a clear tendency for its population to increase markedly. VC control brings high taxes, austerity, authoritarianism, and drafting of all youth for VC military service. GVN control brings some assistance for local development, at least a portion of local taxes are locally spent, and duty in Regional Force/Popular Force (RF/PF) or South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) is somewhat less onerous than service for the VC. Similarly, refugees flock not to the VC for succor, but to the GVN.
c. In certain areas, the peasant follows organized groups. The Hoa Hao reached an accommodation with the government some years ago and this group (1.5 million) provides strong resistance to any communist rule, as do the Catholics (1.25 million). Following Tet there has been clear indication that the Cao Daiists (750,000 minimum) are moving to a more pro-GVN stance. Although some small groups of isolated communities among the highlanders are strongly pro-VC, due to long exposure to the Viet Minh and later the VC; many of the 750,000 (or so) highlanders follow the United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (FULRO) which has so far taken an anti-VC stance. Recently the GVN has concluded negotiations with the FULRO leading to the return of most of the group, which had been in Cambodia, and to support of the GVN by this segment of the population.

Attitudes of Elites Concerning US Intentions and Plans.

a. Most Vietnamese expect US military withdrawal, but hope and expect that it will be gradual. Most welcome the prospect, provided it is not abrupt. Few would expect the United States to return troops once withdrawn in the event of renewed attack from the north. Most Vietnamese expect extensive US economic assistance and political support in any post-war period. The Paris talks have shaken the belief of many Vietnamese that the United States will remain committed here and has alarmed some over the prospect of an American sell-out.

b. There does not appear to be significant concern by the non-aligned elite groups over "perceived US alignments with particular individuals or forces within Vietnam" at this time. This represents a significant, if perhaps temporary, change from the past.

OSD views the information on the attitudes of Vietnamese elites as follows:

General—Concerning Information about Attitudes.

— There is a cornucopia of data flowing in from the various reporting agencies of the U.S. Government and news media but there is a paucity of hard evaluated documentation which alone can provide a basis for equally hard policy choices. Generally, the greater the distance between the GVN and its non-Communist opponents, the less is known about the basic attitudes of the Vietnamese elite. Moreover, each of the elite strata referred to (e.g. religious leaders, professors, youth leaders, professionals, union leaders, village notables) do not constitute homogenous entities with shared attitudes but are themselves split up in many ways. The reporting on each of these categories varies considerable in detail. Thus we have more information about religious leaders, union leaders and professionals than we do about professors, youth leaders and village notables.

— The foregoing is further complicated, from an analytical approach, given the over-all evolution of the political situation in South Vietnam. We are not dealing with an established political system but rather an emerging constitutional order whose legitimacy is barely accepted even by the elite who emerged victorious in its first elections. Many of the GVN leaders tend to regard the election process itself not as a competitive means for providing alternative leaders but rather as a manipulatory process designed to confirm the existing minority group of power leaders in their leadership role.
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Moreover, the fractionated character of Vietnamese political organizations, the lack of a mandate provided by an election process which because of plurality voting saw minority candidates for the most part succeed to office, and the instability within the armed forces leadership, all combine to place a premium on opposition to the GVN as a means of rapidly achieving a leadership role. Essential cohesiveness within the nationalist camp is provided by the common threat posed by communist takeover. Otherwise, energies are focussed upon a perpetual competitive struggle to gain status and dominance in Vietnamese political life without regard to the damage done to the nascent constitutional structure. In this regard, the consolidation of the Thieu presidency can be seen as a favorable offsetting stabilizing trend, as can the development of the legislature (Upper and Lower House) as a deliberative body with real powers to influence governmental action.

While we have some data about organizational activity and even strategies adopted by the oppositional elite groups, we do not have a clear picture of their attitudes toward many aspects of the GVN. Observations usually take the form of reports of clique or personality conflict without clear definition of the basic underlying attitudes toward maintenance of the existing governmental structures, nor the conceptual scheme for creating alternative organization for structuring Vietnamese political life. Some of the information seems designed to influence U.S. officials as to infighting in Vietnamese political circles.

Attitudes toward participation if offered in the GVN.

There is a general willingness of most of the non-communist non-aligned Vietnamese elite to share in the perquisites and power provided by participation in the GVN. The weakness of political groupings and their perennial need for finances make access to the budgetary resources of the GVN a highly preferred objective. Even the militant Buddhist faction was pleased to have its most prominent lay leaders participate as ministers in the Nguyen Khanh government despite its general opposition to military rule. The very newness of the governmental structure makes it a tempting base for infiltration and Vietnamese of varying political persuasions are not averse to exploiting that structure either covertly or overtly for the particular needs of their political groupings or private well-being.

Attitudes toward the current legitimacy and acceptability of the GVN.

As indicated earlier, the GVN is a transitional political system in its infancy whose legitimacy is barely acceptable. Principal opposition toward it is manifest most dangerously from members of the armed forces who are unhappy about its present organizational form i.e., the supremacy of President Thieu, and the sharing of power with civilian elements. It is these quarters that account for coup rumors that continue to plague political life in Saigon.

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The An Quang Buddhists are also a principal source of disaffection. Having been roughly handled and defeated in their confrontation with the GVN, they continue to be a troublesome faction in opposition. They have ample reason to contest the legitimacy of the elections and existing government. They undoubtedly find support or can be expected to make common cause with oppositional elements such as the followers of Truong Dinh Dzu, a defeated presidential candidate who languishes in jail. They may also be joined, as in the past, by oppositional youth leaders and youth groupings who remain most resistant to the GVN leadership. The "Peace Campaign" of these Buddhists can also be expected to strike a responsive chord among some of the organized union elements who perceive the GVN leadership as unfriendly to their economic as well as political demands. It is not surprising in this regard that all of the foregoing elements are clearly seen as high priority targets for communist infiltration and manipulation in anti-GVN struggle activities.

There is also a political gulf between the GVN and religious and ethnic groupings such as the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Highlanders and Khmer minorities. In the case of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai whose followers constitute organized peasant communities, the desire to constitute a religious state and monopoly of their leadership exists as a basic attitude. Even though both of these religions constitute hardened principled opposition to the VC, locally, these communities of co-religionists have, in the view of experienced observers, worked out some forms of accommodation with the VC. The GVN, for its part, has found it necessary to make equally considerable political adjustments in their areas of control.

In the case of the Highlanders and the Khmer minorities, the existence of the FULRO; its stormy relationship with the GVN and its links with the Cambodian government show the tenuousness of their acceptance and recognition of legitimacy of the GVN.

It is at the village level among the rural elite that the greatest problem exists for the GVN's acceptance. Ever since the Ngo Dinh Diem regime struck a blow at the autonomy of the village and extended the Saigon government administration's control of village life, there has been a marked gap between rural and urban elites. The success of the VC in the rural areas is in part traceable to this situation. There is considerable evidence that a good part of the GVN leadership still fears the outcome of village and hamlet elections (which have been partially re instituted) unless they are manipulated by Saigon authorities because of the prospect of success therein for VC and/or oppositional elements. Indeed, this situation has led many observers to regard the rural situation in South Vietnam as one in which the villagers are being fought over and subject to pressure by two outside forces: the GVN and the Viet Cong as alternative governmental structures!

Attitudes toward the acceptability of the NLF or various "neutralist" Coalitions.

Broadly speaking, we can say that there has been a noticeable shift in the non-communist camp to the acceptance of a political settlement that involves some form of co-existence with communist southern forces. In general,
the non-GVN, non-Communist elites share with the GVN leadership a desire to reach a settlement which minimizes actual communist influence in the SVN government structure, whatever the form that is agreed upon. However, it is not clear how much "adaptation" to the communists many non-communists will make, as a means of achieving leadership, and in their belief that they can control the communists and thereby better manage the fortunes of a non-communist South Vietnam. In short, considerable opportunism will characterize many Vietnamese leaders and they will be highly vulnerable to manipulation by the NLF in terms of its organizational strength and political skills in a condition of political competition. Northern Catholics and other refugee elements will be less prone to this tendency toward adaptation because of their previous experiences with the communists in North Vietnam.

In this connection, the belated "discovery" by some of the non-communist Southern Vietnamese elite that a sizeable portion of the National Liberation Front now consists of "nationalists" is a sign of current adjustment to some form of coalitionism should this prove necessary as an outcome of negotiations. It should be remembered that the Viet Cong has always sought to promote the "broad coalition" character of the NLF as a cosmetic device despite the actual monolithic communist organizational structure and control that characterizes their "liberation struggle".

Attitudes toward United States Intent.

Elite groups not aligned with the GVN share with other Vietnamese generally a deep-seated ambivalence with respect to the United States. They recognize that insofar as their past, present, and to a degree their future existence in a viable non-communist South Vietnam is dependent upon the United States, our presence and/or support is required. Nonetheless, the United States intervention is perceived as a necessary evil. This perception arises from a deep seated feeling of shame that they cannot handle the problem posed by the Vietnamese communists without recourse to the presence of foreigners whose impact is considerable upon Vietnamese society and whose presence lends evidence to the charge of "puppetry" sedulously propagated by the Viet Cong.

Moreover, many Vietnamese (as do many Americans) do not understand why the United States has been willing to make so great an effort in Vietnam. As a consequence, because it is perceived that our interests and Vietnamese interests do not necessarily coincide, there is considerable doubt as to our intentions with respect to the struggle in Vietnam. Based on past experiences with the French, the non-communist nationalist elite is particularly sensitive to the prospect that at the outer limits the national interest of the United States may lead to U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam even if a communist victory were to be a likely outcome of such withdrawal. Willingness to negotiate in Paris was and is seen as partial confirmation of this view. Given this sensitivity, the non-communist Vietnamese, who wish to survive in South Vietnam, wish to minimize the negative consequences of U.S. troop withdrawal while maximizing their own ability to deal militarily and politically with the NLF. They also desire
maximum United States support in the Paris negotiations to insure the most favorable military and political settlement for the non-communists.

-- Thus even the most critical opponents of the GVN (barring those who favor a victory for the NLF) do not wish to lose the benefit that continuing American pressures and presence confer for maintaining a viable non-communist South Vietnam. Even the disaffected militant Buddhist faction has always stressed the need for U.S. support. What they have objected to, and what they continue to oppose, is what they perceive as United States alignment with particular individuals and forces within Vietnam detrimental to their interests. With few exceptions of minor consequence, there is no political grouping, favorably or unfavorably disposed to the GVN, which has not sought United States support and intervention in their own behalf despite their basic desire for "the right of Vietnamese self-determination."
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QUESTION 22b

How adequate is our information, and what is it based upon, concerning:

Patterns of existent political alignments within GVN/RVNAF and outside it -- reflecting family ties, corruption, officers' class, secret organization and parties, religious and regional background -- as these bear upon behavior with respect to the war, the NLF, reform and broadening of the GVN, and responses to U.S. influence and intervention.

The JCS, CINCPAC and MACV report:

-- Information on these matters is based in great part upon counterpart contacts, supported by the informal local relationships of advisory teams and other officers. Part-time political reporting officers have been appointed in each province and full-time political officers are present at each corps, in addition to the Saigon level. Available information is adequate with respect to overall political positions of the standard political, religious, and regional groups, but is only partial with respect to the fractional and individual positions of the members thereof.

-- Since there is a strong conspiratorial tradition in Vietnamese politics, it is not surprising that much political activity is undertaken in conspiratorial ways, nor that simple Government or private activities are frequently misinterpreted as being the result of some dark conspiracy. However, the gradual development of political activity in Vietnam, at the national level through the Senate and National Assembly, and even at local levels, has tended towards more organized and more overt political activity. Similarly, the Tet offensive had a positive shock effect on many elite elements, leading them to adopt somewhat more constructive and loyal, rather than parochial and selfish, attitudes.

-- Factionalism within the Armed Forces similarly seems to be declining from its origins in the French-dominated Army as a factor of the growing maturity of RVNAF, the growing size and complexity of the RVNAF, and the increased professionalism of many of its officers. The conscious effort by the Government to reduce the power of corps warlords has had perceptible effects, although it must be recognized that the tendency toward direct transmission of the Presidential and national power, rather than through the Joint General Staff, is still prevalent.

OSD views the information concerning the patterns and attitudes of the existent political alignments in South Vietnam as follows:

-- There is a considerable body of data available from reporting agencies of the U.S. Government and news media about the organization
and activities of the principal political fronts and parties on the Vietnamese political scene. This information varies in detail and utility depending upon the overt or covert character of the political grouping involved. The highly personalized and clique character of much of the "political elite" activity and the frequent shifts in political alignments as the power structure is altered complicates our ability to keep track of the situation and our understanding thereof.

It must be remembered that the Vietnamese political elites have been formed in an environment of colonialism, war and revolutionary upheaval in which survival itself was often dependent upon maintaining secret and conspiratorial organization. The Ngo Dinh Diem government's repressive policies also contributed to the development of clandestine political activity.

These long-time political habits are not easily dispensed with in the relatively short period of a freer environment since the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem dictatorship. The tentative character of political arrangements since November, 1963, and the manifest instability of leadership circles in both the civilian and military spheres have further contributed to reinforce the behavioral need for covert organization.

The development of a parliamentary system coupled with elections has perforce brought out into the open a considerable number of the political actors. But the process of surfacing is necessarily incomplete and the oldest and most well-known political parties (e.g., the Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang and Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang and the various factions thereof) still maintain what is essentially secret membership and networks of infiltration not subject to public scrutiny. The same approach is characteristic of lesser known political groups.

Proponents of political views prescribed by the GVN also have resorted to secrecy in their activities. Political exiles who have lost out in previous leadership struggles also maintain some clandestine links and organization in the hope that they can return and resume activity in South Vietnam. The real extent of the influence and power of such individuals is often difficult to gauge. It has not been uncommon for such exiles to return and receive ministerial posts which does testify to some residual base in Vietnamese political life.

In general, data relating to patterns of existent political alignments reflecting officers' class and religious and regional background is adequate. It is with regard to family ties, corruption and secret organizations and parties that our information becomes spotty or nonexistent.

Nonetheless, despite our lack of detailed information, we can estimate what the impact of such factors as family ties, corruption and secret organization are with respect to the climate of political opinion and to political loyalties in South Vietnam.
Family Ties

-- The basic institutional tie of the Vietnamese is to his family and there are few other loyalties that transcend the family relationship for most Vietnamese. Wherever such extra-family loyalties are created, they are generally directed toward other individuals who are perceived in familial terms of respect, i.e., grandfather, elder brother, younger brother, etc., rather than to organization or ideology per se.

-- Political alignments and political participation of Vietnamese will often reflect family decisions and family needs. This accounts for a high degree of nepotism manifest throughout the society. Such family ties often transcend the ideological divisions that are part of the civil strife rending Vietnam today. Members of the same family can often be found on both sides of the nationalist-Communist split in Vietnam and there is considerable communication between families so divided. This is less true for the Northerners who come South (communication with people in the Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam is highly controlled), than is the case for Central and Southern Vietnamese who are separated by the fluid lines that are characteristic of the demarcation between GVN and NLF controlled territory.

Family decisions will often be a kind of indicator as to the course of the war and degree of commitment to either the GVN or the NLF or neither. Thus families living in GVN territory may affect the return of soldiers in the VC ranks if they develop strong views about the justness of the GVN struggle and its capacity to win the war. Family concerns may well account for some of the high desertion rates of young men drafted into ARVN, etc. Responses to political organization and political loyalties will also be affected by the fortunes of individuals within the particular family group as they react to opportunities and events in the churnings of the war.

Corruption

-- Patterns of existent political alignments are greatly affected by corruption because of its endemic character in GVN and RVNAF functioning. Even though it is difficult to document and uproot through legal proceedings, its existence is widely known and does influence the whole context of the war situation in Vietnam.

-- The principal effect of corruption has to do with the Vietnamese concept of the Just Cause wherein righteous behavior on the part of individuals either validates or discredits the government or political movement they serve. It is a prime objective of the NLF to depict the GVN and the RVNAF as corrupt and venal. Unfortunately, too many of the GVN's leadership - military and civilian - validate that image by their behavior and thereby undermine their own authority in a society where Confucian values of rectitude have considerable meaning for the people.
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The perception the Prime Minister Tran van Huong is an honest man and that he is trying to uproot corruption is a factor offsetting some of the negative aspects of the GVN image. The administrative weakness and lack of adequate personnel for the inspectorate headed by Mai Tho Truyen, a respected Southern lay Buddhist political figure, limits his ability to deal more effectively with corruption.

The magnitude of the problem can be seen in part in the widespread acceptance of the view by Vietnamese that the Education Minister was killed recently because he was too vigorous in his effort to eliminate corruption within his ministry, one of the most sensitive because of the importance that education plays in Vietnamese life. This dampens the enthusiasm for other GVN officials to be too active in this regard.

Differential punishment for corrupt activities is also a negative factor in GVN reform and broadening of its appeal. Shooting a Chinese - with its negative political consequences in the Chinese community - or severely punishing low-ranking soldiers is a subject for much cynicism and discredit of the GVN in Vietnamese political circles when there are Corps Commanders or high ranking Generals who are notoriously corrupt and go unpunished. Indeed the endemic system of corruption that has not proved too amenable to correction to date in the RVNAF remains a serious political disability.

Corruption is an important source of revenue with which to build political organization in Vietnam. In the absence of wealthy patrons or businessmen who can provide donations from business income, political organizations and political leaders are hard put to finance their activities from lack of an adequate financial base provided by adherents. Engaging in corrupt and illicit dealings for the benefit of one's political organization and not personal gain has a certain legitimacy.

The high input of American aid and the disorganization inherent in a country at war provide many opportunities for corrupt practices. These activities do influence in turn the political arrangements in Vietnam. Moreover, it is natural that many Vietnamese will hold the United States responsible for not controlling its aid so that corruption will not flourish.

Officer's Class

The most significant feature of the RVNAF is the relative homogeneity of its officer class drawn almost exclusively from those with at least a high school diploma. Without a high school diploma entrance to officer candidate status is limited to recommended non-coms. Only 7% of all RVNAF officers have received commissions from the ranks and this proportion actually declines to only 4.8% in the 1967-1968 class of officer candidates. Without a high school diploma, officers cannot be promoted beyond the rank of captain.
Since high school education is primarily available to the city-bred and wealthier classes, the officer class in Vietnam is hardly attuned to the life style of the rural conscripts and ordinary soldiers of the RVNAF. Indeed, this has led many observers to comment unfavorably on the "mandarin" character of RVNAF officers.

This acceptance of a "mandarin style" and inadequate other motivation produced many officers who were more interested in the perquisites and privileges of rank than in effective military leadership. This gap between officers and soldiers has resulted to a degree in poor combat efficiency. Similarly, the lack of empathy shown by the officer ranks to the rural population has resulted to some extent in the perception by the peasantry that the RVNAF is not "our army" because of its poor discipline and behavior. Correspondingly, the armed forces of the NLF are often perceived more favorably since their leadership has more officers of peasant origin and its soldiers are made more conscious of and disciplined to the rural population's needs.

Although some improvement has been made in recruiting non-coms for officer ranks in recent years, it is clear that the numbers will have to be greatly augmented if RVNAF needs for officers are to be met.

This relative homogeneity of the officer class also has seen the RVNAF quite resistant to integrating into its ranks soldiers and officers of the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Highlanders. This clear discrimination inhibits the ability of the GVN to overcome the "autonomous" drive of these communities and develop a "national" outlook in its political leadership. The GVN has dealt with the problem in the past by attempted suppression of dissident armed forces and then integrating some into the RVNAF. In time even these officers were eliminated from the RVNAF. Cao Dai and Hoa Hao officers do not play any important role in the RVNAF today. The Highlanders have gone through the ritual of revolt and return several times. Most recently FULRO has again been "dissolved" with the promise of integration of its armed forces still to be realized.

There is considerable factionalism within the officer class that reflects and shapes the divisions inherent in all GVN political life. In fact, it is the emergence of the military as a powerful force in Vietnamese political life that has realigned existing political groups and created new patterns of political organization. The conflict between the military officers supporting President Nguyen van Thieu and the Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky still plagues the RVNAF and realigns political groups in the GVN.

In general, it seems clear that the position of President Thieu has been strengthened and that of Vice President Ky has been weakened considerably. A shift in power has taken place that permeates the entire structure of the officer class and is reflected in the GVN political and administrative structure wherever the military plays a role. What sometimes
goes under the rubric of replacement for efficiency and competency is a thinly disguised factional consolidation of political forces willing to accept President Thieu's leadership for the present. That politics still predominates over professionalism is still the guiding rule in RVNAF. Thus, political tensions between Northerners and Southerners for command will still affect the RVNAF as will the conflict between a large number of low ranking combat officers and the basically French-trained high ranking officers who have achieved their positions due to politics rather than performance in the field.

The recruitment of officers drawn from the same class strata represented by the GVN officials has also contributed greatly to the elite character of political parties and the failure of any of the pro-GVN parties to achieve a mass base in Vietnamese society.

The RVNAF officer class can be and is subject to a considerable degree of influence by the United States intervention in Vietnam. The process by which acceptance of professional standards becomes the mode of operation of the RVNAF has been greatly enhanced by the behavior and presence of our large military forces. The RVNAF is particularly dependent upon the United States presence and support. This influence accounts in part for discernible improvements in RVNAF performance and has had a corresponding impact of a basic character in shaping the long-term evolution of Vietnamese politics.

Secret Organizations and Parties

The full extent of war weariness and the desire for peace is not known in any exact manner for the people of South Vietnam. Indications are that such feelings are widespread and deeply desired by a significant number of the population. This was manifest in the Presidential election of 1967 when despite the desire of the ruling governmental elite, the peace issue surfaced as a principal point for discussion in the campaign. The relative success of Truong Dinh Dzu in garnering some 17% of the vote attested to considerable organizational activity in his behalf throughout GVN areas of control. The role of the Tan Dai Viet and some Cao Dai elements in this organizational effort has not been adequately analyzed.

The participation of the GVN in the Paris Peace Negotiations has opened the door for further discussion of alternatives to continuing the war. The GVN's difficulties, despite overall success in managing the transition to open consideration of what were forbidden topics of conversation, and its current irritation with the "peace campaign" of the An Quang Buddhists, student and youth groups, and some trade-unionists, indicates how explosive an issue is involved. The militant Buddhist decision to exploit this issue is apparently a consequence of their belief that they can achieve significant political mileage in this regard. It would not
be surprising that considerable clandestine organizational activities around this issue and corresponding change takes place in patterns of existent political alignments.

-- It is at this level that the NLF can be expected to develop their own contacts and new organization. The situation is roughly parallel to the condition that existed in the course of the "struggle movement" of the Buddhists in 1966 which lent itself to some Communist infiltration and exploitation.

-- Efforts to reform and broaden the GVN and develop the new constitutional structure are the only ways to get at the problem posed by secret organizations and parties. When leadership and acceptance of political views are made part of an open political process, the need for and efficacy of clandestine organization diminishes.

-- Because of the covert nature of such political activity, there is little that the United States knows or can do directly about this matter. Rooting out the NLF "infrastructure" is difficult enough without further complicating our intervention in Vietnamese political life by efforts in this area. Indirectly, we have influenced this area by our efforts to help create representative government in Vietnam and thereby contributed to an open political process.

Religious and Regional Background

-- The patterns of existent political alignments within GVN/RVNAF and outside it reflecting religious and regional background as these bear upon the situation in Vietnam areas follows:

Catholics

-- The Catholics of South Vietnam remain one of the most intransigent groupings committed to victory in the war against the Viet Cong. For the Northern Catholics who fled to South Vietnam in the 1954 period, there is no disposition on religious and political grounds to come to terms with what they regard as their implacable enemies.

-- This view is shared for the most part by the Southern Catholic leadership except insofar as it is partially responsive to Papal enjoiners for peace in Vietnam and some greater willingness out of regional experience and shared feelings with other Southerners to seek some solution to the war short of total extermination of the Viet Cong cadres.

-- There are some miniscule Catholic groups of intellectuals and students who are advocates of a peace program but their influence is quite limited. The bulk of the Catholic population is quite resistant to any soft appeals in regard to the ending of the war and considerable numbers have been mobilized in the past by Catholic leaders against
the GVN when it was deemed necessary to offset weakness in prosecuting the war because of the alleged soft nature of the then GVN leadership.

--- Catholicism is the best organized of all political groups in Vietnam and are over-represented in the GVN and RVNAF at all levels. Not only did they benefit during the regime of President Diem but their adoption of Christianity has opened them up to "modernizing tendencies" and Western education to a far greater extent than most in the more traditional Vietnamese society.

--- In the recent period, increasingly conscious of their need to survive possible US withdrawal and some form of political accommodation with the NLF, Senate Catholics have sought to create a broader base for their political views by seeking to build legislative blocs in both the Upper and Lower Houses and extending such political activities beyond the legislature to the population generally by way of participating in the creation of nation-wide "Fronts."

--- Generally, the Catholic political leadership is most sensitive to and responsive to US influence and intervention. They have benefited, most from exchange programs in education, from working with Americans in Vietnam, and are most perceptive of the role that the United States has played in maintaining South Vietnam as a non-Communist state.

Buddhists

--- As far as their behavior with respect to the war is concerned, the Buddhist political groups are quite split. Regional factors play an important role in influencing the divisions among the Buddhist leadership. There is a further split between the clergy and lay leadership. The lay politicians generally are more inclined to support military activity directed against the Viet Cong. The Northern Buddhists in the Thich Tam Chau tendency are likewise less inclined toward "peace activity." The Central and some Southern clerics of the militant An Quang tendency have been principally concerned with exploiting a cease-fire and peace program. A large part of the Southern wing of the Buddhist clergy confines itself to religious activities and is not overtly political with respect to the war issue.

--- It is among the rural Buddhist masses that the Viet Cong has its principal strength. The NLF has also seen the Buddhist leaders as competitors who can affect their own base and has placed great stress on infiltrating Buddhist political organization.

--- Politically, the Buddhists have experienced great fluctuation in strength as far as the GVN/RVNAF is concerned. Their high points were their role in the events that resulted in the overthrow of the Diem government and the militant Buddhist alliance with General Nguyen Chanh Thi in the struggle movement of 1966 and its impact on constitutional development.
Buddhist leaders have always sought to influence the patterns of political alignments within the GVN/RVNAF and have moved from participation to opposition depending upon the benefits and interests to be served thereby. They share with the Catholics great sensitivity and responsiveness to United States influence and intervention which they regard as necessary to their survival and for some an obstacle to their political supremacy in Vietnam.

Hoa Hao

The Hoa Hao religionists are quite split at the leadership level though recent efforts to provide a facade of unity and a unified religious organization have met with some degree of success. Apart from a small armed band believed to still function as an adjunct to the Viet Cong in the struggle against the GVN, the Hoa Hao are dedicated anti-Communists because of their past experiences and treatment at the hands of the Communists.

Whatever their degree of participation in the GVN structure at various levels, the Hoa Hao are fundamentally a state-within-a-state as yet in South Vietnam. Their accommodation to the GVN is considerable because of the desire to survive and continue to proselytize under the most favorable auspices, and it has proved profitable in terms of subsidies and political pay-offs. The GVN has equally made considerable adjustments to the Hoa Hao - as distinct from the relationship during the Diem period - but there is great sensitivity of the particularity of the Hoa Hao structured communities in South Vietnam and their autonomous character vis-a-vis a "national" concept. This often leads to contradictory GVN policies, i.e., the drive to accommodate vs. the drive to establish direct control.

There is some ambiguity about local accommodation by the Hoa Hao with the Viet Cong since some of the Hoa Hao areas are the most peaceful in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong forces avoid attacking these areas but some of the VC supply routes are known to go through these same areas.

The Hoa Hao leadership groups are aware that the United States play a decisive role in Vietnamese affairs but some of them feel neglected in terms of their own efforts to build up their religion's influence and in benefits received for Hoa Hao areas from the American presence.

The Cao-Dai

The Cao Dai religionists are similar to all Vietnamese groupings - also split at the leadership level and have a range of response toward the war which includes some collaboration with the Viet Cong.
Basically, they are predominantly anti-Communist in orientation. Here again - like the Hoa Hao - the peasant Cao Dai communities collectively constitute what is more like a state-within-a-state than adherence to the concept of citizenship within the GVN framework.

Regional Background

Regionalism is still an important political factor in Vietnamese political life. As far as the war is concerned, the Northerners remain the most intransigent in their desire for military victory. The Central Vietnamese who have borne the brunt of the war and experienced the greatest dislocation and suffering are probably the most "war-weary" and desirous of peaceful settlement. Nonetheless, political leadership groups that are most virulently anti-Communist have considerable support in Central Vietnam, and a desire for peace should not be confused with a willingness to compromise with the Communists.

The Southerners are the most ambiguous in their political responses to the war and the problem posed by the NLF. While most all leadership groups wish to maintain South Vietnam as a non-Communist state and limit NLF influence, the greatest "accommodation" has taken place with the NLF in many delta areas. In part, Southern dissatisfaction with Northern influence in the GVN/RVNAF has tempered their militancy against the NLF by focusing attention on the internal politics of the GVN. This regionalism is a great contributor to disruptive tension in the GVN, and expresses itself in the desire for greater Southern influence throughout the GVN political and administrative structure.

Awareness of the importance of the US role is high among Southern elite leadership, but it is tempered in part by some hostility engendered by what is perceived as US collaboration with and dependence upon Northern and Central dominated GVN leadership. This has been attenuated in part by the Prime Minister being a Southerner.
What is the evidence on the prospects - and on what changes in conditions and US policies would increase or decrease them - for changes in the Government of Vietnam toward: (a) broadening of the government to include participation of all significant noncommunist regional and local decision-makers (at province and district levels, and well as cabinet); (b) stronger emphasis, in selection and promotion of officers and officials, on competence and performance (as in the communist Vietnamese system) as distinct from considerations of family, corruption, and social (e.g., educational) background; and (c) political mobilization of noncommunist elements and energies in support of the GVN, as evidenced, e.g., by reduced desertion, by willing alignment of religious, provincial, and other leaders with the GVN, by wide cooperation with anticorruption and pro-efficiency drives.

The views of the JCS, CINCPAC and MACV are:

There is a gradual expansion of the political arena to include additional elements and to give more power to legitimately elected representatives of the people. Further steps are contemplated and it can be anticipated that this gradual process will continue. The removal of incompetent officials in favor of specially trained and selected replacements occurred during 1968 in a substantial number of cases and testifies to a stronger emphasis on competence and performance. Experience in 1968 also highlighted the feasibility of combining legal pressure and political incentive to encourage political mobilization. However, in all areas, continued US assistance and pressure are required.

Broadening of the Government

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On occasion, President Thieu makes a verbal slip by referring to some government institution by its name during the Diem period. He has been quoted as to his belief that Diem ran an efficient administration. However, President Thieu has also given indications of his resolution to avoid the political Achilles heel of the Diem regime, its refusal to share power, and develop a political base. Thus, he has been meticulous in giving the Prime Minister an important role, and the Prime Minister and the government have been substantially responsive to National Assembly interrogations and opinion. The National Assembly plays a substantial part in political review of the government's actions, even though it does not yet fully share in the decision stage. The government's authorization of processions and meetings by a variety of political and religious groupings fits into this gradual process of accepting the function of other centers of political power. This has not included, of course, elements about whose reliability with respect to communism or neutralism the government held any doubts, such as Truong Dinh Dzu. In June 1968, the government postponed elections to province councils, with US concurrence at the
time, but has lately directed holding of village council elections in all villages wherein appointed councils exist. It has also moved substantially to increase the authority of the village chief and council, and at least one senior minister is actively contemplating a move toward election of certain province chiefs. In summary, there is a gradual expansion of the political arena to include additional elements and to give more power to legitimately elected representatives of the people. Further steps are contemplated and it can be anticipated that this gradual process will continue as the government gains confidence in itself and in the dictates of its constitution. A primary factor in this is, of course, the delicate balance between enough US support to avoid collapse and a shortage to stimulate Vietnamese action to handle problems alone.

Stronger Emphasis on Competence and Performance

As with so many other questions, the pace at which this occurs is breathtaking in the eye of one beholder, snail-like in the eye of another. The facts are about 25 province chiefs and 162 district chiefs were changed during 1968, the majority because of malfeasance or inefficiency. Their replacements were the product of a special course of officers chosen for these jobs and given a choice of assignment according to their standing in the course. There is, at the same time, at least some live-and-let-live tendency among the members of the establishment. There are also political factors requiring something less than a vigorous application of objective standards of performance, as in the case of the three unsatisfactory Chieu Hoi Service Chiefs in three Hoa Hao-dominated provinces, who were each rotated to an adjacent province, so that the three individuals remained in equal jobs, the Hoa Hao balance was undisturbed, and yet a step was taken to demonstrate a refusal to accept their inefficiency of the job they had done. With respect to military officers, the failure to meet the quotas of promotion for 1968 reflects the severity of the promotion process, with its emphasis on review panels and all the paraphernalia of modern personnel management. Recent graduates of the National Institute of Administration have been assigned to rural areas to exploit their expertise and reports of their performance speak of satisfaction with their selection and training. While some of these actions are, in fact, substantial, the critical importance of leadership to a successful outcome of the struggle in Vietnam requires the closest US attention to this matter and vigorous projection of detailed American comments on Vietnamese officials to those levels capable of taking corrective action. This form of case-by-case removal of incompetents and trial of new candidates is most apt to accelerate the process of replacement of inadequate officials by those of greater capability.

Although the goal of objective promotion and retention of RVNAF personnel has not been achieved fully, promotion procedures have been developed which apply to all RVNAF personnel and are designed to improve objectivity in the promotion system as well as enhance the quality of leadership through recognition of qualified and deserving persons. Specific features of the system are:
a. Establishment of selection boards and full disclosure of their findings to the field.

b. Establishment of selection criteria for annual promotions based on efficiency reports, time in grade, positions held, military schools attended, awards, time in combat, civilian education, and punishments (negative factor).

c. Provision for special promotions which can be awarded for battlefield performance and for individuals serving in positions for which higher grades are authorized.

--- MACV continues to emphasize to the Vietnamese Joint General Staff the necessity for achieving a professionally competent officer corps. Military effectiveness can be enhanced greatly by strenuously enforcing the improved promotion system now available.

Political Mobilization

--- The experience of political mobilization during 1968 points out the feasibility and the technique of combining legal pressure and political incentive to secure such mobilization. The general mobilization law provided the spur to bring a substantial increase of recruitments into the Armed Forces and, combined with a vigorous expansion of the people’s self-defense program, has engaged a substantial bloc of over 1,000,000 citizens in the national effort. There is, of course, no question but that the shock of the Tet offensive was contributory, as well as the clear indication that the Americans would not bear the burden of Vietnam indefinitely. During the coming year, all these pressures can and should be maintained. Legal pressure on all to participate in an effective desertion reduction program (including a central fingerprint file of all citizens), a clear indication of government desire for participation with the citizenry in the national effort rather than regimentation, and a continued pressure from the United States on public and official Vietnamese to assume a greater portion of the burden of effort, scheduling of village elections, granting power to village authorities over local forces, and the possible election of provincial councils and even some provincial chiefs should continue the spirit of mobilization launched during 1968.

OSD Views are as follows:

Broadening of the Government

--- In considering the prospects for changes in the GVN and American leverage thereon it would be well to consider the proposition that the record of American experience in Viet Nam is one that indicates a signal failure to direct the evolution of Vietnamese political life into desired channels. It is only at the nether limits, i.e. getting rid of President Ngo Dinh Diem or, since 31 March 1968, raising serious doubts about American willingness to
continue the war, that sufficient leverage has apparently been exerted to markedly influence but not direct the course of political events internally.

-- Baldly stated, it is more accurate to see the evolution of political life in South Vietnam as reacting to Vietnamese imperatives, in response to which the United States has had to adjust its policy because its policy-makers only saw dimly the internal political dynamics of Vietnam. The instability characteristic of Vietnamese political life, from the fall of Diem through to the election process that installed General Nguyen van Thieu as President of the GVN, was not foreseen, planned or directed in any meaningful sense by the United States although we unwittingly contributed to it on numerous occasions. Our role has been to try and stabilize and support whomever emerged as the power holders of the day which was a Vietnamese decision not our own.

-- Indeed, the record shows that the consolidation of the Nguyen van Thieu presidency is itself not primarily due to any American effort but rather his perception of the Vietnamese political process in terms of political strategy and timing of actions to be taken. To be sure we have influenced events considerably because the GVN has had to be mindful of some of our wishes but the number of frustrated American advisors who functioned at every level in Vietnam is legion and speaks eloquently to the weight of American opinion in shaping events in Vietnam.

-- The general rule that obtains with respect to US policies is that by withholding or allocating resources broad shifts can be caused in Vietnamese political alignments but that lesser Vietnamese policy changes can be effected only where the advice "fits" the requirements of the Vietnamese political process and strengthens the hand of the power-holders as they perceive their situation and can carry their constituencies.

-- The principal tendency in recent Vietnamese politics has been the emergence of and increasingly dominant position of President Nguyen van Thieu as the national leader of the GVN. The strong control position of the President in institutional terms as provided by the new constitutional structure and the legitimacy provided by an election process has allowed President Thieu, starting with his base in the military, the opportunity to consolidate his power and reduce the influence of his chief rival Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky and the generals who oppose him. President Thieu has found it expedient to fashion a political bloc of civilian support of Southerners and Catholics under the leadership of a Presidential rival Tran van Huong as Prime Minister. He has skillfully permitted the Legislature (Upper and Lower Houses) to play a significant role in the formulation of GVN policies and has created the broadest coalition of rule in South Vietnam's checkered existence as a sovereign state.
Evidence of the newly-found stability of the GVN is signaled by the granting of permission to General Duong van Minh to return to South Vietnam and the release of the principal leaders of the Buddhist Struggle movement from jail. In addition, the liberalization process that permits greater freedom for political organization is part of the same tendency.

Thus the prospects for broadening of the government to include participation of all significant non-Communist regional and religious groupings (at province and district levels, as well as cabinet) is thereby enhanced.

Offsetting this prospect for broadening change is the postponement of the provincial elections and some of the responses of cabinet members to the holding of village elections. The desire for administrative management of elections to assure their outcome and the unwillingness of GVN administration to share power with elected officials are stubborn realities that stand in the way of the broadening process. In this instance, sympathetic U.S. advice and pressure may induce President Thieu and Prime Minister Huong to intervene and push the election process along.

There may also be prospects for broadening change through providing participation for some of the political groups not currently represented at the cabinet level. It is still primarily a cabinet of technicians and could well be changed to incorporate some prominent political figures who might contribute to GVN's prestige.

United States pressure in this regard might be effective if President Thieu could be convinced that such action might not only improve the GVN image abroad in the course of the Paris negotiations but that American public opinion would be more willing to continue the sacrifices demanded by the war in Vietnam if such were the case.

At province or district levels it is more a matter of providing competent administrators (with the emphasis on appointing qualified civilians and releasing RVNAF officers to military assignments) that will have the greatest impact. The shortage of officers in an expanded RVNAF responding to US withdrawal can serve as inducement for this change. In the absence of elections, some form of appointment to advisory councils that involve local and religious leaders at province or district level might prove useful. Perhaps some means of involving defeated local candidates for the Senate and Lower House in the governmental structure might prove advantageous to broadening GVN at Province and District levels. Some US funding of such arrangements might be a salutary step to bring this about.

Selection and Promotion of Officers and Officials

There is some slight indication that the GVN is prepared to rely on competence and performance as criteria for selection and promotion. Evidence usually cited is that about 25 province chiefs and 162 district chiefs were
changed during 1968, the majority because of malfeasance or inefficiency, and their replacements came from among specially trained officers.

It is more likely that the initial choice of these officers to be trained was itself a product of the established system in Vietnam. Certainly these officers for the most part did have educational backgrounds that made them acceptable. Moreover, they were probably chosen within the requirement of a highly personalized system of providing personnel where considerations of family also played a role. What is more important is that political considerations emanating from the office of the Presidency undoubtedly had a good deal to do with the relief of many of the incumbents rather than the criteria of competence and performance.

The foregoing is not designed to argue that we are dealing with an intractable situation. Indeed, within the Vietnamese system one can bolster such efforts toward performance criteria by reference to Confucian standards of conduct and ability. President Thieu can agree to accept the principle of adequate training and competence as criteria for assignment of officers. It is more likely that this process will be resorted to when he can be sure that such officers are both competent and loyal to the GVN under his leadership.

Perhaps the best leverage exerted by the U.S. in this regard, apart from material aid extended in helping set up training facilities, is the quality of our own advisers at the provincial and district levels. A shakedown of our own staffs, the replacement of US officials who do not contribute positively to the American effort in Vietnam, and the maintenance of US performance standards through adequate selection and training would do much to ensure that our advice is taken.

Political Mobilization Desertions

It is admittedly difficult to assess the prospects for political mobilization of non-Communist sympathies in support of the GVN using desertion statistics as an indicator. Certainly the statistics for 1968 as compared with the previous years 1966 and 1967 are not promising since the desertion rate is quite high and shows an upward trend.

Data for 1966 shows a rise in gross desertion (net figures not available) commencing with February 1966, the beginning of the Buddhist struggle movement, and continues at high levels to May, when the struggle movement is crushed, declines during June, July and August and remains constant on the average from September 1966 (the first Constituent Assembly elections) through December 1967.

Net monthly figures for desertion were slightly down for the first three months of 1968 as compared with 1967. They then rose to a monthly average that is approximately double the monthly average net figure for 1967. The dip in the first quarter of 1968 seems to be accounted for by the amnesty measures for desertion following the Tet
holidays and the subsequent rise can perhaps be accounted for by higher force levels due to general mobilization efforts that brought in larger numbers of volunteers and conscripts commencing March 1968 who were not as easily integrated into the RVNAF.

-- There is a marked increase in volunteers commencing with general mobilization in March 1968 to approximately double the monthly rate for 1967 through August 1968. The volunteer rate drops back to the monthly rate of 1966-1967 for September and October and then is halved for November and December 1968. Conscription monthly figures remain fairly constant during the same period from March to December 1968 at the higher levels due to the general mobilization effort. These changes may well be accounted for by exhaustion of the eligibles in the manpower pool.

-- However, a more speculative political evaluation of the foregoing could result in the judgement that desertions rose in April coincident with the partial bombing halt and move toward peace negotiations in Paris to their present higher rate. In addition, the political impact of the mobilization drive after Tet accounts for the six month period of high volunteering and falls to the lowest level in three years in November and December 1968 coincident with the full bombing halt and the move toward expanded peace negotiations.

-- Thus, the prospects of an end to the fighting may have some political influence on the stability of the RVNAF. Certainly, the experience in 1954 of large scale desertion coincident with the Geneva peace negotiations is a factor that President Thieu is cognizant of from personal experience. Further study of this matter of desertions and volunteering would seem warranted to make possible better evaluation of the impact of political events.

-- It is not clear what specific US policies could reduce the desertion rate. Contribution to overall material improvement of the status of RVNAF personnel undoubtedly would have some effect. Politically, the prospects of continued fighting and increased combat for RVNAF units replacing US forces could increase the desertion rate since the rate is currently higher for combat units. Education of RVNAF troops politically as to the struggle commensurate with the better indoctrination of the NLF would seem to be indicated.

Willing Alignment with the GVN.

-- The prospects for changes in the GVN for political mobilization by willing alignment of religious, provincial and other leaders would seem to be somewhat mixed.

-- Ever since the shock of the 1968 Viet Cong Tet offensive produced a political reaction favoring the creation of new nationalist political organization to rally the people of South Vietnam, there has been a marked and
growing realization by all political leaders in Vietnam that they are dangerously divided and weak.

-- This realization of the need for unity has been sharply underscored by the prospect that open political competition with the NLF may well be an outcome of the Paris negotiations. While in the past a considerable section of the elite had envisaged a military solution that would eliminate the insurgent forces and had counted on the new GVN constitutional provisions as measures to outlaw the Viet Cong as a political force, more and more of the political leaders have come to believe that they will have to accept the legality of the NLF as an openly functioning political force in South Vietnam.

-- In the past when confronted with political conditions of such a crisis nature, the standard political response of the badly split nationalist leadership elite has been to attempt consolidation within parties, create new parties, and also form some alliances between parties and fronts for unaffiliated individuals. On balance, the historical record would seem to indicate the Communists have been able to build and maintain such alliance organizations or Fronts because the steel structure of such organization was provided by the disciplined Communist Party organization. In contrast, the same process of nationalism which has marked all nationalist political parties has been extended to and led to the ineffectiveness and/or early demise of the non-communist alliances.

-- Since Tet 1968, there has been a flurry of such organizational efforts by the nationalist political elite. The information available to date is hardly promising as to the success of these new efforts. Not only is there personal conflict which threatens the viability of the new formations but the dearth of financial resources is a serious limiting factor for organizational efforts. Moreover, these new groupings have difficulty defining themselves vis-a-vis the GVN and in particular the Presidency which as the center of power is vital to their prospects both financially and organizationally. Considerable instability has characterized legislative attempts to create blocs in the Upper and Lower House as a base for national coalition effort.

-- Nonetheless, the existence of the election system and the Legislature does have its consequences for these efforts at political organization. The new law dealing with political parties will undoubtedly require some coalition and unity of existing organizations if they are to meet its requirements. Changes in the present plurality voting system to reduce the number of candidates and splintering currently operative may well be devised to meet the future challenge posed by possible NLF participation in elections.

-- It would appear the United States has little to gain by participating directly in actions aimed at building new grass-roots political organization or Fronts in Vietnam. US muddling, covertly or overtly, in Vietnamese affairs at this level would embroil us in the very clique and personality struggles that are the bane of Vietnamese politics. However, US assistance in providing training
for selected Vietnamese leaders in the techniques of survival in a world of elections and political institutions that are not geared to personal loyalty and family connections may be required.

In Vietnam it is central to the process of political mobilization that the strengthening of the GVN's institutional structure in all its ramifications, the Presidency, cabinet, legislature, administration and recently organized judiciary be continued. Parallel to this effort is the continued improvement of the RVNAF as the military arm of the GVN. The more this governmental structure and its army appears to be the alternative to the NLF and its armed forces as the holders of the "just cause" mandate then the greater will be the willingness of the non-Communist elite to rally to it.

Alignment with the GVN of existing grass root religious organization such as the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Catholics, Buddhists and Highlanders can best be facilitated by attention to their social and economic needs by the GVN while leaving them considerable leeway to develop politically.

A change in the policy of the GVN leadership toward the handling of militant Buddhists and others who favor peace programs and/or coalition with the NLF, by reinstitution of repressive practices, can contribute to the instability and narrowing of the base of support for the GVN. There is some evidence of desire for tightening up in this regard. Such divisive policies by the GVN leadership can only help to increase the numbers of those who will seek to change the GVN by accommodating to NLF demands for coalition policies and reduce their willingness to ally with the GVN leadership.

Anti-Corruption and Pro-Efficiency Drives.

-- The prospects for cooperation by the people of South Vietnam with the GVN in anti-corruption and pro-efficiency drives would seem to be good if the GVN sought their aid and created the necessary open climate. The major change required here is that the effort be undertaken by the top GVN leadership. The desire of the President and Prime Minister to be successful and survive has already seen them undertake a number of beneficial steps during the 1968 mobilization effort. The Vietnamese system, despite its grave shortcomings, is responsive to vigorous leadership.

-- United States advice and pressures to this end would be facilitated by a tightening of the standards of personal conduct by United States personnel in Vietnam, by streamlining and reducing American staffs in Vietnam and by continuing to take steps to get any U.S. civilians or military who contribute to war-time profiteering and corruption out of Vietnam.

US Support

-- Among the ways the United States might facilitate the movement toward broadening of the government, increasing competence and performance, and mobilizing non-communist sympathies and energies in support of the GVN would be to:
a. Increase the Vietnamese sense of their own worth and capability by reducing the total numbers of American advisors, both civil and military.

b. Assist the Vietnamese in perceiving the necessity to relate to the people and meet their felt needs. Thus, special advisors, chosen in consultation with the highest levels of Vietnamese leadership as to their needs and desires, could be assigned to work closely with some Vietnamese leaders to develop programs of political organization and action. For example, advisors could be assigned to some key senators and representatives and they could assist them in touring their provinces and establishing and maintaining their constituencies.

c. Reassure the Vietnamese oligarchy of continued US support while at the same time providing clear evidence that the US commitment is not "open ended". For example, continued high levels of economic assistance and the provision of specially selected close-in political advisors to the President and the Prime Minister could do much to reassure the key leadership and assist them in developing the political skills for open democratic political processes at the same time the level of US troop commitments and total numbers of US advisors are reduced.

d. Continue to provide, in every case, clear advanced warning to the GVN leadership of major US moves vis-a-vis the scaling down of US forces or negotiations with the DRV/NLF and ask for their advice and assistance.

e. Scale down the numbers and types of demands that we make upon the Vietnamese; we should constantly reevaluate our requests of the Vietnamese in the light of feasibility and suitability to the Vietnamese milieu. For instance, asking the Vietnamese to "neutralize" a significant portion of the Viet Cong infrastructure in a one year period may be equivalent to asking ourselves to crack the Mafia in one year.
QUESTION 24

How critical, in various views, is each of the changes in Question 23 to prospects of attaining - at current, reduced or increased levels of US military effort - either "victory" or a strong noncommunist political role after a compromise settlement of hostilities? What are views of the risks attendant to making these changes, or attempting them; and, to the extent that US influence is required, or US practical ability to move prudently and effectively in this direction? What is the evidence?

The views of the JCS, CINCPAC and MACV are:

The changes cited in Question 23 are important. However, they are only part of the total program needed to complete the constitutional structure, extend pacification throughout the national territory, and carry out a process of reconciliation. The GVN should take the initiative. The United States can contribute by supporting efforts, prodding them into decreased reliance on the United States, and by suspending assistance to recalcitrant elements.

General

-- The three changes cited in Question 23 would, of course, be desirable, but it would be unfortunate to focus solely on them. To develop sufficient GVN strength to carry it to "victory," or to insure continued freedom for noncommunist Vietnamese after a settlement, a many pronged foundation, not a few glittering pillars, is necessary. Thus, these three programs cannot be considered in isolation, but they should play their appropriate role in an overall strategy. Such an overall strategy for Vietnam could consist of a program of centripetal reconciliation and accommodation from the local level toward the national center. The GVN should take the initiative in the process, dealing from the position of strength it has achieved as a result of the military, pacification and political successes of the past year and those which can be reasonably anticipated from a steady projection of these programs into the next.

-- Such a program would be designed to expand the GVN's electoral base, at the local as well as national level. The Ministry of Interior has already decreed that village and hamlet elections will be held in all villages which now have appointed committees. These steps can be supplemented by holding the provincial council elections postponed from June 1968. Certain areas even offer the degree of security which would warrant the election of the province chief.

-- Local power over security, administration, and economic assistance is being given these elected officials and councils, and budgets and similar critical local decisions should be subjected to council vote as well as or in place of higher administrative approval. Thus, the process of decentralizing authority to the local level, and replacing the narrow elite as the power base by the broad mass of the rural and urban electorate can be initiated and even completed within a reasonable time span.
An overall program such as this would obviously include steps toward broadening the Government and political mobilization by incorporation of all elements of the political spectrum. However, this would take place through the electoral process, not by appointment or coalition of self-appointed political forces. The electoral process would not necessarily develop greater competence and performance among elected officials, but it would name those giving greater satisfaction to the voters, a factor of perhaps greater importance. Upgrading could be expected through the process of political selection.

Such a program would include a number of other actions of equal importance to the three noted in question 23, such as providing forums for the growth of nongovernmental groupings, increasing the authority of elected representatives at the national level, providing an atmosphere of security against subversion or paramilitary violence to permit the electoral process to function, and invitation to Vietnamese currently engaged in violent attempts to seize power to participate in the electoral contest. The mere statement of the program outlines the difficulties and risks involved, and it is clear that elements of the establishment and even of the population might be reluctant to see such a trend. At the same time, the steps already undertaken and the provisions of the constitution itself point the direction of the program.

US Action

The United States can contribute substantially to such a development by encouraging and supporting the GVN as it moves in these directions, at the same time prodding the GVN by both word and deed to get on with the job and not perpetually rely on the United States. US support could become a critical factor in the face of a flat recalcitrance by some elements of Vietnamese society to go along. In such a case the United States could suspend its assistance to that group and its supporters, e.g., a military element considering a coup d'etat.

Thus, the steps in Question 23 are important, and can be pressed by the United States, but they are only part of the total program needed to complete the constitutional structure, extend pacification throughout the national territory, and carry out the process of reconciling Vietnamese now pursuing the path of violence, to contend instead in peaceful political courts. The United States can assist such a program, and must, if it is to achieve the reduction of internal violence which can permit it honorably to consider its task accomplished in Vietnam.

Additionally, the JCS points out the following requirements:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the essential conditions for a cessation of hostilities include an effective cease fire, verified withdrawal to North Vietnam of all North Vietnamese personnel (including those in Laos and Cambodia), verified cessation of infiltration, substantial
reduction in terrorism, repatriation of US prisoners, agreement to 
reestablish the demilitarized zone with adequate safeguards, no pro­
hibition against US assistance to insure that the RVNAF is capable of 
coping with the residual security threat, and preservation of the 
sovereignty of the GVN.

-- It may not be possible for negotiations to achieve agreement 
in full on all of the essential conditions. However, the degree to 
which the essential conditions can be achieved as a result of negotiations 
is crucial to the determination of whether "victory" has been achieved or 
a strong noncommunist political role assured. The degree of achievement 
of the above conditions will determine the post hostilities security threat 
in South Vietnam and the capability of the RVNAF to cope with the threat.

-- Achievement of the essential conditions for cessation of 
hostilities is contingent upon continuation of the US effort and improve­
ment of the RVNAF. It is inconceivable that the essential conditions 
could be realized as a result of an early unilateral reduction of US 
military effort. Contemplation of such a possibility is not in consonance 
with our experience in dealing with the communists and ignores the basic 
causes of the conflict as well as the recognized communist objectives.

-- Two considerations loom large in any assessment of the leverage 
which the United States should exert on the GVN for changes in the political 
processes. First is the need to allay South Vietnamese fears that the United 
States might either desert the GVN or impose a settlement which could lead 
to a communist take-over. Secondly, the GVN must be allowed to establish 
its competence and independence as a sovereign government so that it can 
carry the support of the South Vietnamese people and provide confident, 
effective government. Untactful or excessive US leverage could produce 
instabilities contributing to political disintegration. The nature and 
level of pressure which the United States can effectively apply to encourage 
GVN political improvements can best be evaluated by the US mission in Saigon.

With regard to essential conditions for cessation of hostilities, OSD has 
the following views:

-- There is a need within the US Government for agreement on the 
essential conditions for a cessation of hostilities. Interagency efforts 
in the context of preparing for the Paris talks to achieve such agree­
ment are in progress. Planning for the implementation of post hostilities 
programs at this time, however, need not necessarily be identical to the 
US negotiating position in Paris. Implementation of post hostilities 
actions may begin independent of or in phase with the Paris talks rather 
than directly tied to these talks. Therefore, planning for these actions 
should be viewed as a step toward ascertaining general minimum conditions 
for post hostilities. The following as a suggestive list of criteria:

a. Restoration of the Demilitarized Zone defined in terms of the 
1954 Geneva Accords, that is, a buffer zone observed and acknowledged by 
both sides which is free of all military forces. Further, the DMZ would
separate the two zones of North and South Vietnam pending a peace settlement and would have the same exact area as the DMZ set up by the 1954 Geneva Conference. Additionally, all acts of force would be prescribed within the DMZ and an effective inspection system instituted.

b. Mutual withdrawal of forces in accordance with the Manila Communique and as security conditions permit. The required security conditions are: (1) Respect for the DMZ; (2) No attacks on the major cities; (3) No infiltration to replace troops withdrawn; (4) No attacks on units which have been designated by either side to the other for withdrawal and which are in the process of withdrawal.

c. Withdrawals include: (1) All North Vietnamese forces whether or not they are fighting in North Vietnam's units to include regroupes; and (2) The withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops in Laos and Cambodia.

d. An agreement on inspection and verification machinery which might take the form of an international commission or a joint belligerents' commission or both. However, realizing inspection and verification in Southeast Asia has never been a workable proposition except with the full cooperation of all parties concerned, we would be prepared to rely upon our unilateral means of surveillance.

e. Release of all US/FW personnel held by the NVN/NLF.

-- Additionally, other conditions considered necessary but not subject to formal agreement are:

a. External security guarantees on a multilateral basis, or failing these, some declaration of future support for South Vietnam in the event of future breach, signed by ourselves and friendly nations (like the Korea 16-nation declaration).

b. Conditions in South Vietnam that will give an opportunity for free choice of political system and leadership under constitutional processes and without external interference.

Further OSD views re the issues raised are:

-- Question 24 raises issues that go to the heart of the problem posed by the intertwining of the political and military that characterizes "wars of national liberation". "Victory" in such a war has a dual meaning.

--"Victory" in the military sense would be the reduction of the military capabilities of the Viet Cong to the level where it could be dealt with throughout South Vietnam as normal police operations against criminal disturbers of the peace.

24-4

SECRET
The question is fundamentally ambiguous in respect to the military aspect of "victory" insofar as it seeks evaluation of prospects for "victory"... at current, reduced or increased levels of U.S. military effort... or after a compromise settlement of hostilities." Presumably "a compromise settlement of hostilities" would preclude use of the word "victory" by definition and more over by its nature as a compromise would require appreciably reducing the level of the U.S. military effort since it is hard to envisage conditions requiring the maintenance of the current level or an increased level at that point in time.

A possible though unlikely "compromise settlement of hostilities" might lead to mutual reduction in force levels of the United States and NVA troops in South Vietnam leaving the GVN to confront the NLF. In that case the prospects for military "victory" of the GVN leaves much to be desired since they would still have to successfully overcome an insurgent movement with armed forces of its own at a level of approximately 100,000 soldiers. Even the most optimistic would concede that will take some "doing" by the NVN and only after a considerable period in time, if at all, by a transformed RVN would the GVN be able to deal with the NLF at a police level. Thus military "victory" is not an issue under present circumstances.

In its political sense "victory" would require political submission of the NLF to the GVN to be dealt with as the GVN sees fit or at the least it would mean simply dissolving their infrastructure in the villages and leaving the political arena as an organized body. This outcome would appear unlikely at any level of U.S. military effort except one that would be increased to the point where military "victory" was possible and thus does not follow on a compromise settlement of hostilities. It would also seem unlikely that the U.S. would seek this outcome by abandoning the effort for a compromise settlement given the costs of further escalation.

Therefore, the changes envisaged in question 23 are primarily continuing efforts to improve the GVN's prospects as an alternative political system not to that of the National Liberation Front. Thus, when the political and not a military confrontation takes place after the compromise settlement of hostilities, the GVN would be able to play a strong or stronger non-Communist role depending on its progress in the course of the negotiating period.

From the vantage point of the political, the changes indicated above would seem to be necessary for the viability of the GVN in any case. If the GVN does not improve as an effective non-Communist political system even its military effort is bound to suffer as it has in the past. Americanization of the war in Vietnam was made necessary because of near-collapse of the GVN in February 1965. The U.S. military effort has provided the shield behind which the reconstruction of the GVN has taken place. De-Americanization of the war has to go hand-in-hand with the GVN takeover of its responsibilities if it is to survive in its own right and not be perpetually dependent on the United States military presence.
How do military deployment and tactics today differ from those of 6-12 months ago? What are the reasons for the changes, and what has this impact been?

In early 1968, deployments were made in reaction to enemy actions. Later in the year, as a result of having nearly all Deployment Program 6 forces in South Vietnam (SVN) and of seizing the initiative, US forces were deployed in accordance with land area priorities and now are in a position to counter likely enemy threats with a minimum of changes. In addition, a number of developments in 1968 have had, and are continuing to have, a direct effect on tactical operations. They are: adoption of a "one war" concept with all assets brought together in a single effort; provision for major military support of pacification; increased waterway interdiction operations by the Navy; employment of B-52s as a strategic reserve; application of a "single manager" concept for tactical and reconnaissance air operations; and shift in allocation of air resources to interdiction campaign in Laos when the halt in the bombing of North Vietnam (NVN) freed air assets.

In early 1968, deployments were in reaction to the enemy invasion across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and through Laos which placed Khe Sanh under siege and threatened the coastal lowlands. In January and February, the 1st Cavalry Division from II Corps and two brigades of the 101st Airborne Division from III Corps were deployed to northern I Corps. These units were joined by the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, and Regimental Landing Team 27, 5th Marine Division, which were deployed from the Continental United States (CONUS). These additional units enabled allied forces to relieve the siege of Khe Sanh, force the enemy to withdraw from Hue, neutralize enemy strength in the A Shau Valley and Base Areas 101 and 114, and pursue the enemy into the western highlands.

SVN land area priorities, established in mid-year, have influenced subsequent deployments. These were: priority one, the western portion of III Corps (which includes Saigon) and the northern portion of IV Corps down to the mouth of the Mekong River (these areas were to be minimum risk, to be held as inviolate as possible); priority two, I Corps from the DMZ down to Quang Ngai; priority three, the highland areas of II Corps (this area was to be held by minimum forces backed by South Vietnamese Army and Republic of Korea divisions along the coast).

An additional factor influencing deployment was the availability of US forces. By mid-summer, practically all of the Deployment Program 6 forces were in SVN. With the arrival in-country of the complete assets for
the Mobile Riverine Group (Task Force 117), two brigades of the 9th US Infantry Division were moved from III Corps and permanently stationed in the Delta. Operating on the rivers and canals, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) and US units have stepped up the pace of the war in IV Corps, especially against longheld enemy bastions.

By mid-October 1968, it became apparent that the enemy, reacting to allied pressure, had withdrawn virtually all of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units from northern I Corps into sanctuaries in Laos and NVN and that a reduced force could control the remaining enemy units and maintain offensive pressure south of the DMZ. At the same time, enemy forces were building up in III Corps astride the SVN-Cambodian border. Accordingly, on 28 October 1968, the 1st Cavalry Division began deployment to III Corps to screen the border provinces adjacent to Cambodia. The division was given the mission to interdict the movement of enemy personnel and supplies, locate the neutralize base areas and destroy caches, deny freedom of movement to reconnaissance elements, and preempt the enemy’s offensive preparations.

On 1 December 1968, five US helicopter companies and two air cavalry troops were deployed to IV Corps to provide RVNAF and US forces in the Delta with the mobility and reconnaissance capabilities required for the operations that were planned for the dry season.

A major factor influencing deployments within the corps has been the degree of expansion and improved effectiveness of the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF). This has permitted some regular RVNAF and US units to be withdrawn from static security missions and resume offensive operations. The effectiveness of RF/PF has been enhanced by the deployment of US Mobile Advisory Teams to province and district level, providing better training and greater access to air and artillery support through US advisory channels.

US ground forces now are deployed throughout SVN to conduct offensive operations, to exploit enemy vulnerabilities, and to contain the enemy’s offensive capabilities. US ground forces are not held in reserve because the superior tactical mobility of US forces permits any ground force out of contact to constitute the reserve. Two brigades in II Corps have been given a contingency mission and are prepared to move to either the I Corps or III Corps on a 36-hour notice.

Several factors have contributed to the change in the pattern of air operations during 1968. These include: additional deployments of aircraft; cessation of bombing north of 19 degrees; greater flexibility in the shifting of resources between in-and-out-country operations; greater availability of B-52 resources for interdiction; the introduction of centralized management of air support in key areas; new techniques of concentrated targeting; the effective application of sensor technology in tactical air operations; and the availability of sufficient air resources to operate effectively south of 19 degrees.
Deployment changes in air assets in 1968 include: the addition of five F-100 squadrons and one A-1 squadron to the 7th Air Force force structure; the movement to bases in eastern Thailand nearer the interdiction battlefield, enabling greater concentration of effort; employment in the interdiction campaign of four AC-130 gunships, and ten EC-47s; the introduction of F-100F and F-4 Misty and Stormy forward air controllers; and an increase of B-52 sorties allotted from 800 to 1,800 per month.

These changes in deployment have improved the round-the-clock interdiction of the route structure in Laos and the surveillance of the routes day and night, increased the night strike capability, and intensified close support operations in SVN.

A "one war" concept has been adopted which recognizes that there is no such thing as a war of big battalions, a war of pacification, or a war of territorial security. Under this concept, allied forces carry the battle to the enemy simultaneously in all areas of conflict by strengthening cooperation, between US commanders and US advisors to the RVNAF on the one hand, and between US commanders and US advisors to the Government of Vietnam (GVN) province and district officials on the other.

In the employment of forces, all elements are brought together into a single effort. Ground forces, tactical air, B-52s, RF/FF, Province Reconnaissance Units (PRU), National Police Field Force (NPFF), Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), and Revolutionary Development (RD) cadre attack the North Vietnamese Army (NVA)/Viet Cong (VC) units (main and local forces), guerrillas, and the VC infrastructure across the broad spectrum of the conflict to neutralize the enemy's capabilities and offensive options. The "one war" concept in-country achieved its biggest breakthrough with the combining of the civil/military support of pacification under a single agency in MACV.

Military support has been provided for the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) of the GVN for the period November 1968 through January 1969. The APC seeks to expand the GVN presence and control into contested areas by upgrading about 1,300 contested or VC-controlled hamlets containing some 1.4 million people to relatively secure status, based on Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) security score alone (the first nine factors). US forces have been used to keep large enemy forces away from the pacification areas, to destroy local forces and guerrillas in them, and to assist with an intensified attack on the VC infrastructure. Denied access to these formerly contested or VC-controlled hamlets, the enemy's main forces lose sources of food, recruitment, intelligence, and concealment. The GVN 1969 Pacification and Development Plan is an extension of the APC and is designed to maintain the momentum of the political/military attack on the enemy.
Interdiction operations on the navigable waterways of SVN have been intensified, utilizing the diverse capabilities of ground, air, and naval forces. These operations include actions to locate, block, and inflict personnel and materiel casualties on the enemy's supply, communication, and evacuation routes. Multiple barriers are established across lines of communication. Waterborne assets, US airborne troops, Special Forces, RF/FF, tactical air, and helicopters are used to form the barrier, augmented by sensors and other intelligence-gathering assets, and defoliation of the river banks. Interdiction operations in III Corps are designed to make the enemy reorient his logistic structure and restrict the flow of supplies into the Saigon area.

B-52s have been employed as a strategic reserve. The B-52 force in Southeast Asia is a flexible reserve which gives the theater commander a means for influencing the battle without constant shift of major troop units. See Question 27 for additional comment.

A "single manager" concept has been adopted for control of tactical air assets. The COMUSMACV Deputy for Air was given the responsibility for management of III Marine Amphibious Force fighter-bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. At Khe Sanh, total centralization of reconnaissance and targeting functions, coupled with massive concentration of force, was a decisive factor in the outcome of the battle. The "single manager" concept for tactical and reconnaissance air operations, although providing overall more effective air support, has resulted in some impairment of the air/ground organizational integrity of US Marine Corps forces.

The allocation of air resources has been shifted. On 1 April 1968, all bombing operations north of 19 degrees ceased, enabling the US Navy and Air Force to concentrate out-country tactical air in the NVN panhandle. As in-country ground operations diminished in intensity, additional tactical air sorties were applied out-country. This concentration of air power succeeded in disrupting the logistic flow into SVN along the coastal routes of the NVN panhandle, the DMZ, and the overland routes into Laos. The termination of all bombing operations in NVN on 1 November 1968 released more air resources which were shifted to the interdiction campaign in Laos. However, the same tactics used and lessons learned in bombing NVN are being applied in Laos, subject to political constraints. The object is to create impassable choke points on lines of communication. Waterways and crossing points are seeded with MK-36 mines and roads are closed with blast and delay fuzed munitions. The result is off-loaded supplies and backed-up logistics carriers which are located by all-source intelligence and attacked with area-coverage munitions. However, the geography of Laos is not as well suited to line of communication air interdiction as is NVN. This is offset partially by a higher rate of B-52 and tactical air strikes. With the aid of Igloo White sensor technology, road watch teams, and other intelligence collection assets to locate and monitor the flow of truck traffic, the enemy's truck parks have been systematically attacked. This has forced the enemy to change his convoy patterns and daytime truck parking habits. The major truck parks are no longer safe to use, and convoys cannot move freely. The air effort is reducing significantly the enemy's throughput capability.
Allied military forces in SVN almost have tripled in size during the last four years from about .5 million at the beginning of 1965 to approximately 1.4 million today. In the first three years of this period they increased about 650,000 and in the last 6-12 months they increased approximately 240,000. They currently are programmed to increase over 45,000 in the next six months to a strength of almost 1.5 million by mid-1969. The following table shows the increasing size of allied military forces in SVN since early 1965.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength (Thousands)</th>
<th>Dec 64</th>
<th>Dec 67</th>
<th>Jun 68</th>
<th>Dec 68</th>
<th>Jun 69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States a/</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>485.6</td>
<td>534.7</td>
<td>536.7</td>
<td>546.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam b/</td>
<td>514.3</td>
<td>643.1</td>
<td>765.3</td>
<td>826.5</td>
<td>872.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Nation c/</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Strength</td>
<td>538.1</td>
<td>1188.1</td>
<td>1362.4</td>
<td>1428.8</td>
<td>1474.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a/ Does not include forces offshore or in Thailand.
b/ Includes only national military forces (RVNAF); does not include paramilitary/security forces.
c/ Includes only forces from Australia, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines and Thailand.

In the past, the primary mission of US forces in SVN has been to destroy the enemy’s main force units, to protect US bases and to provide air and artillery support for other allied forces. On the other hand, the primary mission of the RVNAF has been to provide territorial security and to support the pacification program. The third nation forces have operated autonomously in specific geographical areas and carry out offensive and security missions.

To accomplish these missions, the number of allied maneuver battalions has increased commensurate with the increasing size of allied military forces in SVN. During the last four years there has been one maneuver battalion for every 4000-5000 of total military strength. In the first three years of this period the number more than doubled, due to the expansion of the RVNAF and the deployment of US and third nation combat forces to SVN. In the last 6-12 months the number increased at a slower rate, as the deployment of free world forces slowed down and the continued expansion of the RVNAF placed greater emphasis on more RF and PF for territorial security. The following table shows the increasing number of infantry-type allied maneuver battalions in SVN since early 1965:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battalions (Inf-Type)</th>
<th>Dec 64</th>
<th>Dec 67</th>
<th>Jun 68</th>
<th>Dec 68</th>
<th>Jun 69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam a/</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Nation b/</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Battalions</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a/ Includes only national military forces (RVNAF); does not include paramilitary/security forces.
b/ Includes only forces from Australia, Korea, New Zealand and Thailand.
The total number of allied maneuver battalions in each corps has varied as US combat units and RVNAF general reserve units (airborne and marine) were shifted to meet the prevailing enemy threat. The maneuver battalions organic to RVNAF infantry divisions and third nation forces generally have remained within their assigned corps. In the last 6-12 months the number of maneuver battalions has fluctuated the most in I Corps (78-100), while II Corps (62-73), III Corps (94-102) and IV Corps (45-51) have been more stabilized. This fluctuation in I Corps has been dictated primarily by the changing enemy threat to Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces (XXIV Corps), particularly from enemy forces located in sanctuaries north of the DMZ and in Laos.

Until the last half of 1968, allied efforts were directed largely against enemy main forces through major unit operations. A significant portion of allied assets also was directed against enemy infiltration and committed to the defense of cities and towns. Because of these other operations, insufficient forces were available for continuous direct support of pacification and local security. These efforts are essential to countering both the political and military threat in the rural areas.

The withdrawal of a large part of the enemy main forces recently has permitted allied forces to concentrate on offensive actions against the VC support apparatus, including the political structure, and on countering infiltration by improved intelligence and territorial security. This effort has accelerated progress in this area, but it still is unlikely that the conflict can be brought rapidly to a close. Conversely, deescalation of US military activities, not tied to a significant increase in RVNAF effectiveness or NVA deescalation, could lead to a deterioration of our position.

At present, the major threat to allied objectives in SVN is the enemy's effort to extend his political control over the population and claim a facade of legitimacy for his authority. Currently the enemy has two main alternatives for military action: either to conduct protracted guerrilla warfare, or to undertake widespread attacks similar to those mounted earlier last year. It now appears that he has settled on a protracted war with the threat of major military activity, combining his military actions with intensified political activity.

Before the US can reduce its force levels in Southeast Asia the RVNAF will have to assume an even larger share of the fighting and pacification. Since 1965 the RVNAF has increased both the quality and quantity of its troops, but it still is far from being able to stand alone against the VC/NVA forces. The army presently is the best equipped and most effective fighting branch of the RVNAF and recently it has begun to assume a larger share of the main-force war throughout SVN, particularly in VI Corps which normally has only two US brigades. On the other hand, the RF and PF, who are supposed to provide security for the population in conjunction with other allied forces, generally have been less effective because of severe leadership, firepower, supply and motivational difficulties.
In summary, the Vietnam war is both a political and a military one; the ultimate key to victory for both sides in SVN is control of and support by the people. At present the major threat to allied objectives in SVN is the enemy's effort to extend his political control over the population and claim a facade of legitimacy for his authority. The withdrawal of a large part of the enemy main forces recently has permitted the allies to concentrate on offensive actions against the enemy support apparatus, including the political structure, and on countering infiltration by improved intelligence and territorial security. While elements of the overall situation may change and show signs of improvement, there is little likelihood that the allies can attain their objectives in the immediate future by military means alone. If the allies continue to shift towards the political aspects of the struggle, the present US effort appears to be the proper one to counter enemy actions and options and permit a gradual shifting of the war to the Vietnamese as they demonstrate the ability to handle their own political-military problems.
In what different ways (including innovations in organization) might US force levels be reduced to various levels, while minimizing impact on combat capability?

While there appears to be no acceptable way of reducing US force levels in Vietnam without at least an equal reduction of combat capability, there are a number of ways to reduce forces with minimal effect on combat capability. They are:

1. Reduction of logistic and headquarters forces limiting effect on combat capability by consolidation of units, locations and utilization of innovations in organization.

2. Reduced tactical air capability.

3. US troop reduction in phase with expansion and improvement of RVNAF.

4. Reductions of forces saved through revised tactical concepts for using US combat forces.

5. Increased use of contractual efforts and use of logistic facilities other than in South Vietnam.

6. Elimination or reduction in specific units of the force structure as they are no longer necessary.

The question of US force levels in South Vietnam and possible reduction of these levels is being reviewed by DoD continually.

OSD controls tightly all US deployments and redeployments to and from South Vietnam. The existing force structure and possible ways to reduce US force levels in South Vietnam are continually under review.

In addition to the reviews conducted by the Commander in Chief, Pacific, and the Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services continuously study the force structure in the Republic of Vietnam to identify lower priority forces, possible reorganizations, and other innovations to provide tradeoffs, within ceiling to accommodate outstanding high priority requirements.

COMUSMACV reports this question has been raised and reviewed almost daily since the current force ceiling was established in mid-1968. Under present conditions in South Vietnam, any significant reduction in current force levels will result in a significant decrease in combat capability. An integrated Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, unit priority list is maintained under constant review to determine which spaces can be traded off at any moment to meet higher priority requirements.
For the future, the JCS report that as reductions in US force levels become possible and are directed, a number of criteria will be applied, weighed in accordance with the situation then obtaining. The principal criteria are perceived to be:

1. The tactical situation, in particular the residual threat. US/Free World Forces must, at all times, be adequate to ensure security.
2. The capability of the RVNAF to assume US missions.
3. The requirement to provide US combat support (e.g., helicopter, artillery, and combat service-support units) to the expanded RVNAF and, thus, assure a balanced combat capability in South Vietnam.
4. The requirements of the roll-up mission.

An additional criterion that OSD will consider is the political situation in South Vietnam and the political stability of the Government of Vietnam (GVN). A large or precipitous withdrawal of US forces without prior preparation of the Vietnamese political structure may weaken seriously the GVN's progress in preparing itself for political confrontation with the Viet Cong.

The following paragraphs contain a brief review of some of the considerations involved in each of the ways to reduce forces.

Reduction of logistic support and headquarters forces. COMUSMAC reports that combat service-support units have been drawn down recently over 15,000 spaces to meet the civilizatation program goal and to provide spaces for higher priority combat and combat-support units. Within the space ceiling established by Southeast Asia Program 6, the maximum number of combat-type units has been included with the result that only essential combat support and combat-service support are provided. The austerity of these type units is reflected in the Command's integrated unit priority list where the emphasis is on more combat-service support units as opposed to combat units.

On the other hand, OSD analysts consider that significant reduction in logistic and headquarters elements in SVN could be made. For example, as key engineer constructions are completed, engineer construction personnel could be reduced. Further, reduction could be made by reducing some of the over 12,000 personnel assigned to major units headquarters.

Reduced tactical air capability. OSD analysts consider that some reduction in tactical air capability devoted to SVN could be made with only limited reductions in combat efficiency. First, one of the three attack
carriers could be withdrawn from Vietnam action; since the bombing halt over North Vietnam, Navy fighter operations have declined and could be supported by two carriers. Second, some reduction in the tactical aircraft devoted to Laos interdiction might be feasible.

However, either or both of these actions depend on North Vietnamese observance of the tacit conditions of the US bombing halt. Reduction of tactical air capability at this time without an unacceptable reduction in combat capability is not supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC, and COMMACV. They consider that force requirements in Southeast Asia are not reduced as a result of cessation of bombardment operations against NVN and air assets should not be reduced at this time. Sorties currently being flown do not utilize the full tactical air capability. This is not the result of a reduced requirement but rather the consequence of adverse weather conditions and targeting problems associated with the interdiction program in Laos. The improvement in targeting procedures is now being pursued as a matter of urgency.

(TS) RVNAF improvement and expansion. US forces could be reduced as RVNAF improves and expands:

-- The ongoing RVNAF modernization and expansion program should increase RVNAF ground combat capability by the equivalent of more than 30 US Army combat battalions by the end of FY70, provided that RVNAF combat effectiveness increases along with combat capability, the security situation does not worsen, and the RVNAF desertion rate can be appreciably reduced. Depending upon increases in RVNAF effectiveness, some US combat capability could be withdrawn. Based on current levels of effectiveness, OSD analysts consider that about one-half the Vietnamese regular combat battalions are sufficiently effective so their combat capability should increase rapidly. Consequently, up to about 15 battalions might be reduced by mid-1969 without a decrease in total allied force capacity. Some associated support elements could also be reduced.

-- In regard to reduction of combat forces, COMMACV considers that, with the momentum that has been built up in the pacification program, the expansion and modernization of RVNAF, and the steady attrition of the enemy, it would be possible to plan for removing one division from South Vietnam during mid-summer of 1969. He and Ambassador Bunker recently discussed this with President Thieu and were met with a favorable response. OSD considers that at least some of the 43,000 men "division equivalent" could be reduced; however, those elements of this equivalent that could assist in quickly maximizing RVNAF's combat power (such as helicopter units, some logistic elements, etc.) should remain.

-- In addition to possible reduction of US forces through increased RVNAF capability, some US units will turn-over their equipment to RVNAF units during the accelerated modernization program. Most of these are combat support (helicopter and artillery units) and logistic units. While
about 12,000 spaces will be freed under this program; most will not be available for reduction until FY 70 or later.

Revised tactical concepts. It is OSD view that recent changes in tactical concepts and resulting innovations, may make some troop reductions possible. First, the increases in the number of integrated and combined operations with RVNAF should result in increases in RVNAF effectiveness above a level possible with a modernized RVNAF operating alone. A second, but less desirable approach would be encadrement, placing US forces in RVNAF units similar to the US Marine Combined Action Platoon program. A third way, would be to concentrate on extensive long range patrols in lieu of battalion size operations. Proponents claim that these operations are more effective; however, small units are often more vulnerable to ambush and a highly mobile reserve is required. Regardless of the approach taken, ways of "stiffening" RVNAF with US combat and combat support are being studied and these may lead to possible reductions in US forces.

Increased use of contractual effort and use of logistic facilities other than in South Vietnam. In addition to continuing emphasis at all levels on combat capability in force structure development, two innovations have been undertaken: (1) the extensive use of civilian contractor effort in lieu of troop construction and service units; and (2) the use of directly hire local nationals to fill selected positions within US military organizations. The potential saving in military manpower spaces was originally estimated to be 12,500, but it has not yet proven to be possible to realize a saving of this magnitude, a principal reason being the implications of combat on a country wide basis, e.g., at Tet 1968. In this regard, COMUSMACV, reports that civilian labor is unreliable during periods when proximity of combat is close, when there is labor unrest or security conditions are unfavorable.

Elimination or reduction in specific units of the force structure as military requirements for them decline in priority.

-- The JCS consider that US military ceilings in the Republic of Vietnam have always been substantially less than assessed military requirements, necessitating a continuing search for tradeoffs, within ceiling, to accommodate outstanding high priority requirements. During 1968, the ongoing search for space-saving actions or units of relatively lower priority, have produced over 12,000 spaces which, in turn, were used to accommodate, within the 549,500 ceiling, the most critical of the unfulfilled requirements. However, the directed method of accounting for spaces within this Program 6 ceiling includes personnel who are either not participants in combat effort, or for various reasons (temporarily assigned in-country hospitalized, R&R, temporarily assigned out-of-country, and in replacement or returnee status) are nonproductive personnel that must be included in accounting procedures. These procedures necessitate reductions in combat personnel so as to remain within the Program 6 ceiling. Currently, consideration is being given to redeployment from Vietnam of certain Marine
Corps units and personnel integral to the organic Marine air-ground division/wing team to permit manning, within the Marine Corps space authorization, of the remaining elements of the division/wing teams at their full organizational strength. Elements being considered for redeployment include units such as a fighter-attack squadron and support, two antitank battalions, one amphibian tractor battalion, an armored amphibian tractor company, and two medium tank companies (reinforced).

At present, COMUSMACV has certain unfulfilled high priority requirements for which compensating tradeoff spaces have not been identified. Some of these requirements, such as the AC-119 gunships, have been specifically developed at great cost for use in Vietnam and will soon be available for deployment. Additional new requirements will develop as the situation in RVN changes or as other new or improved organizational equipments become available for units in RVN. Any such new requirements will require tradeoff spaces to remain within the ceiling. Thus not all actions mentioned herein can be applied to a reduction in the existing military ceiling but some must be utilized on an ongoing basis to offset organizational strength changes in-country or approved new deployments.