Chart 2 — Organization, Provincial Intelligence and Operations Coordination Committee

PIOCC

1st Deputy
Deputy Sector Commander

2d Deputy
Provincial NP Chief

Message Center

Situation Section
S-2

Operations Section
S-3

Political Sub-Section
Police Special-Branched Chief

Military Sub-Section
S-2

Chart 3 — Organization, District Intelligence and Operations Coordination Committee

DIOCC

1st Deputy
Deputy Sub-Sector Commander

2d Deputy
District Police Chief

Message Center

S-2

S-3

Political Sub-Section

Military Sub-Section
The role of the DIOCC or PIOCC 2d Deputy Chairman called for him to replace the chairman in controlling and guiding intelligence operations in the district or province, coordinating civilian and military intelligence activities, verifying and controlling intelligence sources, maintaining source control files, and advising the sector or sub-sector commander on intelligence operations and the enemy situation. These duties far exceeded what might have been reasonably expected, in qualifications and prestige, of the chief of a police service or sub-service. For this very reason, an inter-ministerial directive was originated which allowed sector and sub-sector commanders to fill the position of 2d deputy chairman of the PIOCC or DIOCC as the local situation warranted, no longer making it a police prerogative. Generally speaking, however, the above situation remained a basic cause of unsuccessful coordination despite the great efforts invested. When the NP became a command in 1971 and its strength was increased to 121,000, it filled 13,000 slots with Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) personnel who had volunteered to transfer to police status. A number of high-ranking military intelligence and military security officers were also detached to the NP Command to take over key positions and facilitate coordination between this civilian authority and the armed forces. This greatly enhanced the spirit of cooperation between the civilians and the armed forces on the one hand and improved the NP collection capabilities on the other.

In summary, having numerous intelligence agencies does not necessarily guarantee good intelligence. It has been known to produce adverse results. Collection activities may be entrusted to two organizations: a civilian organization specializing in political intelligence and a military organization specializing in military intelligence. These two organizations would support and complement each other. Since each had its own distinct field of activity, there should be no duplication or undue competition. Internally, each organization would be structured with an equally clear-cut division of responsibilities. The relationship between the operational elements and the staff elements would be clearly defined, as would be the interrelation between the various collection areas. Consequently, when weaknesses are identified in a specific field or a specific target area, supplemental plans may be made but no additional agencies would be established. This would help avoid
total reliance on higher headquarters and disregard of lateral agencies, or vice-versa. There would be no room for those intelligence agencies which could not collect a single item of interest and spent all their time and efforts doctoring up friendly agencies' reports for dissemination within their own channels.

Vietnamese intelligence agencies which operated jointly with US intelligence organizations were somewhat influenced by the latter. United States military intelligence includes intelligence agencies of the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. These agencies are independent from one another. This was not feasible in the RVNAF because VNAF and VNN were but small services. Because they were directly supported by their US counterpart agencies and were able to observe the independence enjoyed by the latter, A-2, VNAF, and N-2, VNN, during 1965-67 wanted to demonstrate their own independence from other Vietnamese services by having their own concepts of organization and operations, their own training programs, their own collection plans and operations, etc.

The organizational concept as applied to Vietnamese intelligence reflected an indiscriminate combination of US, French and Chinese concepts, whereas only the strong points of each system should have been selected and reconciled with the others in keeping with the context of the Vietnam situation. This would have been the best way to arrive at an appropriate organizational concept. Unfortunately, it was not the case with Vietnamese intelligence. Consequently, collection efforts were weakened and resources misused or even squandered. While everyone expected good coordination to provide the solution to all problems, this very same coordination—be it in intelligence or in other fields—remained but a "state of mind."
1. **The Central Intelligence Office (CIO)**

The CIO was established in May 1961. It was given authority to control and coordinate the operation of intelligence organizations in the country to ensure that requirements for intelligence of national scope would be adequately met. This included military and non-military organizations as well as the NP. It had by then become evident that the various intelligence agencies in Vietnam were too self-centered and no agency had access to another's resources. The stated objectives of the CIO were never reached because of the ever-changing internal political situation and the complex nature of the intelligence agencies involved.

The CIO's ultimate missions were: to satisfy requirements for strategic intelligence (primarily political); to conduct counterespionage (security of the regime); and to satisfy special intelligence requirements of the President's Office.

It was last organized as follows *(Chart 4)*:

*Chart 4 — Organization, Central Intelligence Office*

![Diagram of CIO organization]

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CIO personnel numbered 1,400, 60% of them high-ranking cadre. Intermediate-level cadre made up 20% of the force and the remaining 20% were junior cadre. Personnel of the CIO enjoyed special status and such privileges as draft deferment or military discharge.

The foreign intelligence division operated numerous stations. These stations were the eyes and ears of the CIO in foreign countries. They collected intelligence on both North Vietnam and South Vietnam. They were positioned in friendly countries where there were reasonable prospects for developing collection activities. Among these countries were France, Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. In Laos alone there were two stations, one in Vientiane and the other in Pakse. Plans had been made to establish stations in the US and Singapore as well, but favorable circumstances did not materialize. Each station had three to five men operating under cover of Republic of Vietnam (RVN) embassy or consular staff. These stations were not successful in their efforts to collect information on North Vietnam because of tight control exercised by its regime over activities of overseas Vietnamese visiting home. Personnel of the embassies of East European countries, some of them indirect CIO sources, were subjected to similar controls in North Vietnam.

At home, the CIO's primary effort was counterespionage. Counterespionage by the CIO differed from counterespionage by the NP or MSS in scope, nature and sensitivity, and mostly involved cases over which neither of the latter two had jurisdiction. Those were cases involving constitutional institutions like the Upper House and Lower House of the National Assembly, the Inspectorate, and the Supreme Court; executive institutions like the President's Office and the Premier's Office; or influential personalities of domestic political movements and parties.

The support division, in addition to its regular functions, operated radio systems which enabled the CIO to communicate with its elements in the country and those stationed in nearby foreign countries. Its communications branch also handled cryptographic materials for RVN embassies abroad. Communications personnel of these embassies were detached from the CIO. The Foreign Affairs Ministry originally intended for CIO participation in its communications to be limited to specialized
training of Foreign Service personnel, but this concept was not accepted. CIO personnel were trained domestically although training materials and instructors were US-supplied.

The interrogation division of the CIO worked with sources of information considered to be of a strategic nature, politically and militarily. In principle, military prisoners of war were first interrogated by military intelligence personnel, then transferred to CIO control upon request by the latter. However, beginning in 1971, the CIO obtained first choice over all sources of strategic intelligence, even if their knowledge was limited to purely military matters. Those selected were evacuated immediately for CIO interrogation and no military agency, even J-2, JGS, was allowed access to these sources. The concept of concentrating all strategic resources into the hands of the CIO was once again evident in 1972 when a presidential directive specified that copies of dispatches sent from Vietnam by foreign correspondents were not to be made available to J-2, JGS, because such distribution was deemed unnecessary.

The CIO's real responsibility remained a political one. In particular, it was responsible for ensuring the security of the regime by watching out for plots against it from within or without. The CIO produced daily information reports and special reports as warranted. Because of its sensitive nature, under certain circumstances it received instructions directly from the President and reported directly to him, bypassing the chairman of the NICC. In these instances, it was not required to inform the Prime Minister.

Consequently, as the CIO effectively turned into the intelligence agency of the President's Office, the NP also became the intelligence agency directly controlled by the Minister of Interior who was also Prime Minister.

5 By order of the Chairman, National Intelligence Coordination Committee.
Police forces experienced several organizational changes between the time they were under control of the Binh Xuyen and 1956; they were subsequently reorganized as a single force in June 1962 and known as the National Police (NP) under the control of a General Directorate which finally became a Command in June 1971. NP personnel strength was increased from 17,000 to 72,000 in 1966 and finally to 121,000 in 1971. The NP force consisted of three major components: (1) Uniformed Police, (2) Police Special Branch (PSB), and (3) Police Field Forces (PFF).

While the uniformed police performed the same duties as uniformed police everywhere in the world, the PSB received special consideration. This special consideration began in 1961 following recommendations from a British advisory group that PSB be effectively organized to cope with the activities of the VCI.

The PSB deployed intelligence nets to collect information on the VCI. The Police Field Forces conducted raids or operations against VCI personnel or targets identified by the PSB. The PFF also served as a reserve for the NP for intervention where needed, such as to quell anti-government demonstrations. The NP Command was organized as follows.

In the fields of intelligence and security, the NP Command was the principal agency responsible for identifying and detaining VCI personnel. This program was known as "Protection of the People Against Terrorism." Police operations center (POC) patterned after military tactical operations centers (TOC) were established at provincial and district levels. The NP also operated provincial interrogation centers.

In its efforts to identify VCI personnel, the NP relied on police-organized informants' nets, information provided by volunteers, and by such forces or groups as the Popular Self-Defense Forces (PSDF), information disclosed by VCI prisoners, information acquired from human or document sources by uniformed police or the PFF, and on information received from friendly sources such as civilian groups, rural development cadre, or civil affairs cadre.
Chart 5 — Organization, National Police Command

Commander

Deputy Commander

Assistant for Security

National Planning Committee

Inspector General

Interpol

Assistant for Security Development

Assistant for Discipline

Assistant for Operations (Chief of Staff)

Criminal Division

Operations Division

Logistics Division

Personnel Division

Training Division

Special Division

Technical Directorate

Traffic Control Directorate

Psywar Directorate

Communications Directorate

Budget and Finance Directorate

Immigration Service

ADP Center

Headquarters Co

Capital National Police Hq

Region 1 National Police Hq

Region 2 National Police Hq

Region 3 National Police Hq

Region 4 National Police Hq

Uniformed Police

Police Special Branch

Police Field Force
Each rural development cadre team strength varied from 30 to 59 men, depending upon the population of the target hamlet or village. In the initial phase of the pacification effort, these cadre were responsible for population census and classification. The census led to classification of the population into: Communists, Communist sympathizers, Communist defectors, families with relatives in Communist ranks, uncommitted, and nationalists or government sympathizers. Civil affairs cadre were in fact rural development cadre on long-term assignments in specific areas to develop information complementing the above project. Information thus acquired was recorded in charts with appropriate codes and symbols which were in turn forwarded to NP centers.

The next phase of the pacification effort saw the NP proceed to control the population by issuing individual identification cards and establishing family registers which detailed each household's composition by members' names and relationship to one another. In some areas the police went as far as requiring all members of a household to be photographed together for the purpose of identification.

The VCI, already deemed to be a large and effective Communist force which provided supplies, hiding places, guides and propaganda resources, was thought by many to be made up of fanatics with something undefinable in them. In reality, there were two categories: the real VCI personnel imbued with Communist ideology, and those who had been persuaded, bought or coerced into working for the former. The second category consisted of civilians that were like other civilians except that most of them were indigent. Many became part of the VCI out of greed. For example, they purchased drugs and other necessities in government-controlled areas and resold them to the Communists. Some made a living out of this; others did it because of Communist pressure.

People caught in police raids or military tactical operations fell under three categories: the innocent, whom the police commissioner, the district chief, or the province chief were empowered to release; the truly guilty, who were turned over to court-martials; and those who were considered harmful but without enough evidence to warrant legal proceedings. The latter were processed by a provincial security
committee which consisted of the province chief, deputy chief for internal security, public prosecutor or presiding judge of the local court, chief of the police service, military security representative, S-2 representative, and a representative of the operational forces or Regional-Popular Forces (RF-PF). This committee was empowered to release, assign residence or detain without due legal proceedings. In the latter case, the terms of detention ranged from a minimum of three months to a maximum of two years. The committee met once a month to review its cases. The police chief presented the charges in each case and, if there were no objections, the committee decided on the spot as to disposition of the case. This trial process was subjected to frequent criticism and opposition as it was an administrative procedure rather than a due process of law, and in most cases the defendant was either not allowed to stand for trial or denied the right to legal counsel.

This method of disposing of the VCI dealt with the branches, not with the roots, of the problem. Sentencing was done mechanically and based solely on effects as recorded in the files; it ignored causes such as weak minds, coercion, or false accusations by people seeking personal revenge, etc. It left indicted people with no way out. In most cases, the suspects were originally not VCI at heart, but in the course of detention they might have been approached and indoctrinated by other detainees who happened to be hard-core Communist cadre; in time they all became real Communist agents. Also the indignation of their relatives at the injustice was readily exploited by the Communists in their recruitment efforts.

The VCI suffered a devastating blow in 1968 when its forces came out in the open during the Tet general offensive. The resulting losses were such that it never again matched the magnitude and performances of the past.

In large cities and suburban areas VCI agents were difficult to identify because they blended with the masses and infiltrated all the heterogeneous elements of society. This prompted the individual policeman to keep away for fear of treading on touchy grounds or touching off a personal vendetta, either because there was no personal gain in
sight for him or because he had been bribed to look the other way. In some cases, the police reacted only because they had no choice. The lack of aggressiveness on the part of the police caused people to think it would be foolish to get involved. This was a severe drawback because no one was better informed on what was happening in a city block or ward than the people who lived there. Popular Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) were available everywhere and, though they were not intelligence collection units in the true sense of the term, they were designed in part to serve as a source of information to the NP. In each PSDF combat team, one to three men had received a week of general intelligence training. However, as the designation Popular Self-Defense Forces indicates, these were people's organizations, commanded by city block or ward chiefs, and were loosely structured. The objective in establishing the PSDF was to make it mandatory for those citizens who were not in the service or in the police to participate in security and defense of their own blocks or wards. Because in large cities certain people avoided PSDF guard duty by hiring others to substitute for them, society saw the birth of a new occupation: professional PSDF.

The NP kept tabs on all citizens and reviewed applications for civil service jobs, for which no special security clearance was required. In order to control the ranks of the administration, particularly in the wake of the Huynh Van Trong espionage case in 1971, a new security organization was established which became known as the Directorate General for Administrative Security. Civil servants, too, were cadre of the state and played an equally important role in the conduct of the state. However, their political loyalties had never been questioned and naturally they had never been subjected to security clearances, except when considered for such high positions as cabinet minister or under secretary or directors of important departments. In these cases required clearance by the CIO was based on data furnished by the NP or MSS. In addition to weaknesses in personnel security,

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6See Chapter VII for details on the Huynh Van Trong case.
the civil service suffered from its personnel's ignorance of fundamental security measures required to protect documents and work premises. Classified documents could be lost without being detected, and people who did come upon lost documents usually did not bother to report them. The Directorate General for Administrative Security was designed to fill these gaps but achieved no positive results. Its very first step of establishing personnel files for security purposes met with a negative attitude, if not resistance, from the civil servants who generally objected to preparing detailed personal history statements.

The Directorate General for Administrative Security failed to become an MSS counterpart of the administration although it was patterned after the MSS mission and concept of organization.

**Vietnamese Military Intelligence Organizations**

When attempting to define responsibility for military intelligence operations in the RVN armed forces, attention is always directed at the role of J-2, JGS, thought by many to be the highest authority in military intelligence and enjoying the sole prerogative for planning, coordinating and controlling all intelligence efforts in the armed forces. Nothing is farther from the truth. This misconception of the role of J-2, JGS, apparently derives from knowledge of the organization and mission of the earlier French "Deuxieme Bureau" and of American military intelligence.

In reality, J-2, JGS, was but a military intelligence agency among others. With regard to authority, it was on a par with MSS, J-7, JGS; and STRATDAT. MSS was responsible for counterintelligence (CI), while J-7, JGS, was responsible for signal intelligence and communications security. STRATDAT, however, was more of an operational unit than an intelligence agency.

The organization of military intelligence in the RVN armed forces lacked a principal agency which would normally prepare a common military intelligence plan, establish common intelligence requirements, and act as the only authority responsible for reporting on the enemy situation.
The intricacies of internal politics had defeated efforts to unify military intelligence organizations. As a result, coordination and cooperation among these agencies were based on personal concepts and convenience of the agency heads involved rather than on established staff policies.

1. **The Military Security Department**

Contrary to US organizational policies, responsibility for counterintelligence in the Vietnamese armed forces was entrusted to the Military Security Department (better known as Military Security Service or MSS), not to J-2, JGS. The Republic of China's influence was evident in the subordination of MSS to the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD) which came under JGS. However, this subordination was only theoretical because for all practical purposes the MSS usually reported directly to the President or the Premier from whom it received its directives.

While other Vietnamese intelligence agencies were patterned after US intelligence, the organization of the MSS was entirely the product of self-formulated concepts. Though counterintelligence was its avowed mission, one of the MSS unofficial but most critical efforts—which was performed only at headquarters level—was to detect and prevent military coups against the regime. With such a politically-oriented real mission, MSS was organized to become an agency vested with power, authority and influence. It was fully funded by the national budget without need for US assistance. MSS was the only military agency empowered to apprehend, detain, and investigate civilians and military personnel alike without due legal process. MSS commented on appointments within the armed forces, granted security clearances, cleared applications for exit visas or overseas training, and was the key member of annual military promotion boards.

Added to political influence derived from its association with national leaders, this power enabled MSS to organize itself the way it saw fit and to fear no competition or opposition from other agencies.
For instance, MSS was allowed to have its own signal communications system which made intra-agency communications totally free of outside control. The Military Security Department was organized as follows:

(Chart 6)

Chart 6 — Organization, Military Security Department

-- -- -- operational control
Military Security was 4,328-men strong. MSS headquarters in Saigon had 657 men. The Capital Military District (CMD) MSS had 221 men. Each military region (MR) MSS had 50 men, each province 30, each district 6, each corps 20, and each division 25.

Military Security personnel fell into two categories: the professionals trained and appointed by MSS, and those appointed by the regiments and battalions to serve as security officers or non-commissioned officers.

Military Security's counterintelligence mission called for countering sabotage, subversion, and espionage. Its duties included personnel security, installation security, and document security. Another mission, which was more of a psychological nature, was to safeguard and maintain the morale of troops and prevent desertion.

MSS prepared daily and special reports. Those of a political nature were sent directly to the President's Office and to the Premier's Office. In times of political crises, MSS headquarters staff concentrated maximum efforts on collecting information concerning the opposition. The only bilateral activities involving US elements were those operations which were conducted in coordination with the US 525th Military Intelligence Group against Communist targets in MR 1 and MR 2. MSS supported US forces by conducting security clearances for Vietnamese employees of US agencies, issuing gate passes, etc. Military Security personnel were trained both at home and abroad. Although its organization and mission were different in nature, Vietnamese military security generally operated on the basis of US principles.

MSS did not confine itself to counterintelligence activities. Whenever the occasion presented itself, it also sought intelligence information from counterintelligence nets or through interrogation of prisoners of war.

In summary, MSS was well and strongly organized and was able to retain its independence. It was credited with many successful counterintelligence feats. Had all Vietnamese military intelligence agencies been organized like the MSS, military intelligence as a whole would have earned more respect and consideration.
2. J-7, JGS and the Special Technical and Security Branch

J-7 was a general staff division of the JGS responsible for planning, supervising and controlling signal intelligence and communications security activities performed by units and organizations making up the "Special Technical and Security Branch." In addition to J-7, JGS, the "Special Technical and Security Branch" consisted of Unit 15, Unit 16, Unit 17, and field organizations and units such as signal intelligence centers assigned to corps and divisional technical detachments.

The mission of the Special Technical and Security Branch was to collect and produce signal intelligence and communications-electronics intelligence and ensure communications security for the entire RVNAF and certain key governmental agencies.

The Assistant Chief of Staff, J-7, JGS, was chief of the Special Technical and Security Branch (STS) whose total strength was 3,500 men. The STS Branch was organized as follows: (Chart 7)

Chart 7 — Organization, Special Technical and Security Branch

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ACS, J-7, JGS

Division I
  Sect 1
  Sect 2
  Sect 3
  Sect 4
  Sect 5
  Unit 15
  Unit 16

Division II
  Sect 6
  Sect 7
  Sect 8
  Sect 9
  Sect 10
  Unit 17

Division III

Military Region I Signal Intell. Center

Military Region II Signal Intell. Center

Saigon Signal Intell. Center

Military Region IV Signal Intell. Center

Division Technical Detachment

716th USAF Sqdn

718th VNAF Sqdn
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J-7, JGS, was organized into three principal staff divisions, in addition to Sections 1 and 2 which were responsible for administration and personnel. Division I had three sections: 3, 4 and 5. Section 3 maintained liaison with J-2 and J-3, JGS, to obtain updated information on the enemy situation and prepared and distributed technical intelligence reports. Section 4 prepared ARDF (Airborne Radio Direction Finding) information reports, monitored flights, and reported technical changes in enemy radio stations. Section 5 processed enemy defectors' and prisoners of war interrogation reports related to signal intelligence, interrogated these sources when necessary, processed news bulletins from enemy and friendly (BBC, VOA) radio broadcasts to prepare daily information reports, and maintained liaison with civilian and military security agencies in matters related to counterintelligence planning.

Division II was responsible for communications security. It consisted of two sections: 6 and 7. Section 6 processed technical data and prepared communications security reports recommending corrective action. Section 7 studied friendly cryptographic security methods, maintained liaison and coordinated with J-6, JGS, for cryptographic inspections within the armed forces.

Division III was responsible for research, improvement, and coordination of support and training. It was made up of three sections: 8, 9 and 10. Section 8 handled organization, recruitment, operations, support, maintenance and transportation. Section 9 conducted inspections of short-range operational plans. Section 10 trained specialists, monitored training, and prepared training materials.

During the period from 1961 to 1970, Unit 15 was the basic unit responsible for radio intercept. Later this mission was turned over to the four regional/corps signal intelligence centers and the unit became a special unit in charge of code-breaking or decrypting enemy messages.

Unit 16 provided communications security to the RVNAF and a number of key governmental agencies, established reports of communications security violations, inspected cryptographic facilities and classified technical documents, and coordinated with J-6, JGS, to review cryptographic procedures applied in the RVNAF.
Unit 17 was established in 1970 to coordinate with the VNAF 716th and 718th Squadrons in preparing flight plans for signal intelligence missions. Four phases were involved in this preparation: mission analysis, briefing, debriefing, and reporting.

The 716th and 718th Squadrons were subordinate to the 33d Wing of VNAF 5th Air Division. The 716th Squadron had five U-6A aircraft and the 718th had thirty-three EC-47 aircraft.

Of the four signal intelligence centers, three were established at I, II and IV Corps Headquarters in Da Nang, Pleiku and Can Tho respectively, and the fourth was established in Saigon to support III Corps. (Map 1) Each center collected information through radio intercept, radio direction finding and transcribing. To provide support for these centers, there were, in addition, four fixed radio intercept stations located at Phu Bai (MR-1), Song Mao (MR-2), Vung Tau (MR-3) and Con Son island.

Infantry divisions, to include general reserve divisions, were each assigned a Technical Detachment to provide direct support in communications intelligence. (Map 2) Each Division Technical Detachment was capable of collecting information through radio intercept and radio direction finding, to include CW, Voice(AM) and low-power Voice (FM). Each Divisional Technical Detachment was organized as follows (Chart 8):

Chart 8—Organization, Divisional Technical Detachment

![Diagram of Divisional Technical Detachment Organization]
MAP 1
LOCATION OF J7 CENTERS AND STATIONS

LEGEND:
- Δ DIRECTION FINDING STATION
- O INTERCEPT STATION
- □ TRANSCRIBING STATION

DEMARCATION LINE
MAP 2
LOCATIONS OF
DIVISION TECHNICAL DETACHMENTS
Signal Intelligence Centers and Divisional Technical Detachments reported directly to Corps and Division commanders (or their Chiefs of Staff) respectively. Their reporting channel did not go through Corps or Division G-2's. However, copies of their special reports were always made available to G-2. The major shortcoming of this direct reporting system lies in the fact that intelligence data submitted to field commanders were usually raw and not interpreted. This shortcoming became a real danger when communications specialists tried to analyze and interpret data by themselves as they sometimes did. The Signal Intelligence Center at Da Nang, for example, once submitted a report predicting that an enemy military "high point" was going to occur at a certain precise date. But the expected event never materialized. An investigation later revealed that a communications specialist had taken the liberty to analyze and interpret the raw data collected all by himself.

Techniques employed and controlled by J-7, JGS can be summarized as to include: 1) high-frequency radio direction finding (CW and AM); 2) airborne radio direction finding; 3) ground-based radio direction finding; 4) medium-range radio direction finding; 5) short range radio direction finding; and radio intercept (CW, AM and FM).

High-frequency radio direction finding was not very effective in Vietnam because the length and narrowness of the country did not lend themselves to accurate cross-bearings. This technique only helped determine target areas for ARDF. Airborne communications intercept was performed in conjunction with ground intercept to produce communications intelligence (COMINT) and electronic intelligence (ELINT) data. This technique was very effective in providing accurate and timely information. However, J-7, JGS only had EC-47 aircraft at its service while US forces used sophisticated aircraft such as C-130F, RC-135, RU-21D, JU-21A, etc. Information provided by communications intelligence at the beginning of the US direct participation in the Vietnam war enraptured ARVN unit commanders with its accuracy and timeliness. Beginning in 1970, as US forces phased out, the STS Branch expanded in an attempt to replace them in this field but the gap was not too obvious because US resources and capabilities, though reduced, were still adequate in relation to the
needs. Following the 28 January 1973 Paris Agreement, the most significant loss was in ARDF resources as EC-47 aircraft were unable to operate over areas heavily defended by enemy anti-aircraft artillery; they were confined, therefore, to operating over the lowlands and coastal areas. Still, with the expansion of SIGINT and COMINT efforts, signal and communications intelligence contributed substantially to supplementing combat intelligence collected from other sources.

3. **J-2, JGS and the RVNAF Military Intelligence Branch**

J-2, JGS, as a general staff division of the JGS and command body of the Military Intelligence Branch, was primarily responsible for military intelligence activities in the RVNAF. Its duties were generally limited to combat intelligence, and its span of control, confined to South Vietnam. J-2, JGS exercised no control over foreign intelligence activities which were performed by Vietnamese military attaches under the direct control of the Minister of Defense; nor had J-2, JGS any connection with political warfare intelligence activities which were under direct control of the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD). Since war was the primary national effort, the role of J-2, JGS and the military intelligence branch by extension became more and more pre-eminent over the years. Its position and authority with regard to other intelligence agencies, however, remained unchanged. The chain of command of the Military Intelligence Branch ran from J-2, JGS down to corps and divisions, G-2's and regiments and battalions S-2's, in the tactical structure and down to sectors and sub-sectors S-2's in the territorial structure. (Chart 9) The principal human intelligence (HUMINT) collection agency of J-2, JGS was Unit 101. In addition, the Military Intelligence Center under J-2, JGS control provided technical support in the areas of imagery interpretation, order of battle, targeting, documents, interrogation of prisoners of war and defectors, and exploitation of enemy weapons and equipment. Corps and division G-2's were supported by their respective military intelligence detachments. J-2, JGS also exercised operational control over the operation of A-2, VNAF, N-2, VNN and the RVNAF Military Intelligence School.
The Military Intelligence Branch had 4,328 men. This did not include divisional and regimental reconnaissance companies or the Sector security/intelligence platoons and sub-sectors security/intelligence squads. The Military Intelligence Branch received its charter in 1971. Those who held positions in military intelligence organizations and had received military intelligence training or had operated in this field for at least a year were considered members of the Military Intelligence Branch. Military intelligence personnel at all levels were appointed by authority of the Assistant Chief of Staff J-2, JGS, who was also commander of the Military Intelligence Branch, or upon recommendation by tactical commanders subject to ratification by the ACS J-2, JGS. Most appointments fell in the second case. Until the charter of the Military
Intelligence Branch was promulgated, MI staff at all levels were usually subject to full control by tactical commanders and were required to comply with the latter's directives no matter how they conflicted with intelligence standing operating procedures in the armed forces. Some commanders of large units went so far as directing their G-2's not to report significant information on the enemy or tactical situation to J-2, JGS. In some cases liaison officers detached to Corps from J-2, JGS were even denied access to daily briefings or the use of local communications facilities to transmit information to their central headquarters. This snubbing occurred at a time when excessive military and civilian powers were given to field commanders, who usually reported directly to the President's Office. Because of the lack of real powers over subordinate levels and the lack of a sole-user communications system, intelligence information collected by Vietnamese agencies and units during this period were routed to J-2, JGS through MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) channels rather than through local communication facilities. Information sent through RVNAF channels came in very late. This situation was gradually improved as more operational responsibilities were shifted to the RVNAF and JGS intelligence support to the local levels became more effective. From the time of the 1972 Summer General Offensive onward, military intelligence operational activities proved to be very effective and the only obstacles encountered were caused by insufficient resources. J-2, JGS was organized as shown in Chart 10.

During the period from 1967 to the cease-fire, J-2, JGS exercised operational control over four combined US-Vietnamese intelligence centers in addition to Unit 101 and the MI Center. Depending on its functions, each staff division of J-2, JGS was responsible for coordinating and supervising the activities of one or many centers and/or agencies as shown in Chart 11.

In its responsibility for preparing military maps, J-2, JGS received technical support from the National Geographic Directorate in Dalat and the Military Topography Company in Saigon. The situation room was not
*Also commander of Unit 306 (MI Center).
Chart 11—Coordination and Supervision of Combined Intelligence Centers

ACS, J-2

- Plan Training Organization Division
  - MI School
  - National Geographic Directorate
    - Topo Company
  - MI Center

- Collection Division
  - Combined Military Interrogation Center
  - Combined Document Exploitation Center
  - Combined Materiel Exploitation Center
  - Unit 101

- In-Country Intel Div.
  - Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam

- Foreign Intel Division

----- Operational control
authorized in the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) but was created out of necessity. This room was equipped with hot lines for direct communications with corps and division G-2's when the situation was serious. It operated around the clock and was staffed with field-grade officers who performed liaison duties for the purpose of exchanging intelligence information and tactical information, recording information requirements and support requirements of each MR; processing requests for aerial photographic reconnaissance, answering questions related to the identification of enemy units and infiltration groups. The situation room served as an operations center for J-2, JGS. Important tactical information was always reported immediately by subordinate G-2s. Situation developments were thus reported as they happened. For instance, information on enemy tanks moving into Ban Me Thuot city at 0330 hours on 10 March 1973 was reported and received as the action was in progress. Everyday, whenever the enemy attacked or clashes occurred, enemy unit identification was provided within the day upon processing of captured enemy documents or prisoners of war. These data enabled J-2, JGS daily situational reports to be accurate and timely. In addition to daily reports, J-2, JGS compiled weekly and monthly reports, semiannual reports, and annual recapitulative reports. Occasionally, J-2, JGS was also required to produce intelligence estimates, situational assessments, and special studies. Though entrusted with such an encompassing responsibility as monitoring the enemy situation, J-2 was only vested with the authority of a staff agency, and most people were unaware of its material limitations.

4. **ARVN Combat and Territorial Intelligence Organization**

G-2's of corps and military regions operated the combat and territorial intelligence systems. At this level, each G-2 was directly supported by a military intelligence detachment and a prisoner interrogation center, whose strength was authorized by separate TO&Es. Their aggregated strength was 164 men of whom 27 were assigned to corps G-2. G-2, Corps was organized as follows (Chart 12):
A corps military intelligence detachment had an authorized strength of 62 men and was usually commanded by the deputy corps G-2. Its interrogation section became part of the corps interrogation center when the latter was established. The Intelligence Section's mission was two-fold: collection and production. To carry out its collection mission, G-2, Corps organized agent nets and penetration/reconnaissance teams. Penetration/reconnaissance teams were made up of former Communist defectors or prisoners of war. In the highlands, penetration/reconnaissance teams consisted of Montagnard personnel trained and dispatched according to
specific operations plan. Agents operating for corps G-2 were very limited in numbers. Being carefully screened and trained, they proved reliable. Corps did not have long-range reconnaissance or special reconnaissance companies like divisions and regiments. Its penetration/reconnaissance teams consisted entirely of volunteers from subordinate combat units. G-2, Corps was responsible for monitoring the enemy situation in its related military region and providing guidance and control over all combat and territorial intelligence collection activities. Thus it played a very important role, particularly after the deactivation of division tactical areas (DTA) in 1970.

A Division G-2 had an intelligence section, an air support section and an order-of-battle section; it was directly supported by a division military intelligence detachment. Each Division G-2 had 19 men whereas the military intelligence detachment had 46. Until 1970, G-2, Division was also G-2, Division Tactical Area. After being released from territorial responsibility, it was able to concentrate exclusively on combat intelligence. As an additional tool for intelligence collection, G-2 Division was attached a long-range reconnaissance or special reconnaissance company whose main mission was to carry out intelligence plans prepared by G-2. The tactical conduct of these intelligence operations was planned by G-3. Reconnaissance companies received special training at the Ranger Training Center in Duc My and proved to be daring, combat-experienced units. Because of their combat audacity they were gradually used more as a reserve or reaction unit for special combat situations rather than for intelligence gathering purposes. Division G-2 was the key level in combat intelligence, constantly monitoring the situation, pressing the units to report and turn in captured documents, new weapons, and preliminary information from interrogation of prisoners of war and defectors. The main obstacle that hampered its effectiveness remained the lack of facilities to ensure expeditious movement of materials from the field to base camp and from there on to corps and above. At the regiment level, the S-2 staff was composed of two officers and two NCOs. They operated an OB section, an IPW/DOC section, and Agent Nets Section and a long-range reconnaissance section. At battalion level, there was only one
officer, the S-2, and one NCO, his assistant. The primary mission of the S-2 at battalion level was the interrogation of POW's and the exploitation of captured documents. Sector and sub-sector S-2s were responsible for territorial intelligence. Their collection targets were enemy provincial and district units, guerrillas and infrastructure. S-2 personnel were limited to Regional Force (RF) status. A sector S-2 had ten men and a sub-sector S-2 had only four (one officer, two noncommissioned officers and one enlisted man). Because territorial intelligence personnel were selected from RF ranks, there was no way of reinforcing S-2 staffs as desired nor was it possible for the territorial S-2's to share some of the Regular Army's intelligence personnel. Meanwhile, the S-2 responsibility was a very heavy one, with a vast territory to cover yet without adequate collection means to provide the coverage except for a security/intelligence (SI) platoon for sector level and a SI squad for sub-sector level. These units had the mission of collecting and verifying intelligence information. Each platoon had 28 men organized as follows (Chart 13):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platoon Leader</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platoon Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agents Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Reconnaissance Squad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sub-sector security/intelligence squad had 12 men divided into three teams: one agent team of two men and two special reconnaissance teams totalling seven men. Despite their organizational purpose, SI platoons and squads were usually assigned escort and guard duties instead of intelligence collection.

The sector and sub-sector S-2's lacked everything for their operation, even office supplies. There was a time when each S-2 was given...
a duplicating machine but those were not used for long because they usually ran out of printing ink and paper. Sources in a province who were in a position to provide information on the VCI came under NP jurisdiction and agents nets were not effective because they were short of means. As a result, only information derived from the processing of defectors, documents, and prisoners of war captured by the RF/PF was available, and that also was scarce. The S-2's were also employed by the province and district chiefs in miscellaneous duties unrelated to their intelligence mission.

It may be said that tactical intelligence at sector and sub-sector levels was very inadequate but corrective action or improvement could hardly be expected when basic equipment needs could not be met. In Vietnam, priority for improving intelligence capabilities at the lower levels was given to the NP rather than to the RF. This practice proved effective at an earlier stage but gradually deteriorated as supporting means were reduced and eventually terminated with the advent of the cease-fire agreement on 28 January 1973.

5. Vietnamese Air Force Intelligence Organization

A-2's mission was to collect information on the organization, equipment and capabilities of the North Vietnamese Air Force, the conditions of airfields in North Vietnam and of those in South Vietnam susceptible to use by the Communists, and North Vietnam's air defense and radar systems. A-2 was also responsible for providing bomb damage assessments (BDA).

A-2 had a collection section, a targeting section, an imagery interpretation center and a special collection detachment. (Chart 14). Its authorized strength was 638 men.

Chart 14 —Organization, Air Intelligence
The collection section assigned collection missions and monitored the enemy situation nationwide, with special emphasis on locations of friendly airbases and areas of intense enemy air defense activities. The collection section also kept track of the various types of air defense armament used by the enemy, with special priority being given to such weapons as the heat-seeking SA-7 missile. The special collection detachment had 168 men assigned to a headquarters in Saigon and six collection teams, 17 men to a team.

The targeting section conducted briefings and debriefings for bombing missions whose targets were designated at the national level, and coordinated with air support squadrons in the conduct of photographic or observation flights. Once a photo mission was completed, films were delivered to the Imagery Center for processing and interpretation. Results were then forwarded to the users, J-2, JGS, and the air division concerned. This process took three days and therefore on many occasions results were no longer consistent with tactical developments. Air reconnaissance support was limited to military regions 2, 3 and 4. In MR-1, the highlands of MR-2 and the joint boundary area of MR-2 and MR-3, air reconnaissance support could not be provided due to the intensity of enemy air defenses. As a result, VNAF had to depend on the US "Buffalo Hunter" program for air reconnaissance over these areas.

The Imagery Center was capable of producing selected prints and duplicating positives of aerial photos provided by the USAF as well as making mosaics of photos obtained by VNAF RC-47's despite the obsolescence of its equipment and the scarcity of print paper. In June 1974, a fire broke out at the center because of deteriorating electrical wiring and its activities were subsequently curtailed. Because of the extremely limited number of photo reconnaissance aircraft at its disposal (four RF-5's and four RC-47's), the inadequacy and obsolescence of camera equipment, the threat of enemy air defenses, the Vietnamese Air Force had to depend on US support for 95% of in-country aerial photographs during the period following the cease-fire.
6. Vietnamese Navy Intelligence Organization

The VNN's primary mission was to detect Communist seaborne infiltration. This infiltration took on more magnitude and significance beginning in March 1970, after Sihanoukville had ceased to be an entry point for logistical supplies shipped from North Vietnam. After the Paris Agreement, the US Navy discontinued its patrolling off Vietnamese territorial waters while VNN was only capable of coastal patrols and interception and riverine missions. N-2 scope of activity was subjected to the same limitations. N-2, VNN was organized as follows (Chart 15):

Chart 15—Organization, Naval Intelligence

N-2 had a mobile interrogation team which provided interrogation support to naval intelligence units when needed, as in the case of interception of North Vietnamese fishermen lost in MR-1, or foreign fishing vessels violating Vietnamese territorial waters.

The VNN special collection detachment was strongly developed after the cease-fire. Although its authorized strength was 124 men, the Chief of Naval Operations increased it to 230 to step up naval intelligence activities. The special collection detachment conducted both covert and overt operations. Covert operations were conducted by six teams which organized agents nets to operate in coastal and riverine zones. Overt
operations were conducted by the Naval Intelligence Liaison Officers (NILO) who were assigned to 28 stations located throughout the country with the mission to collect and exchange information. These officers also functioned as case officers. The collection teams communicated with the detachment headquarters through single side-band, and FM radios.

In July 1970, the special collection detachment was redesignated Unit 701. Its collection operations were also reorganized to involve personnel of the unit disguised as civilians who operated fishing craft or in fishing villages to monitor Communist seaborne infiltration and smuggling activities.

In general, both VNN and VNAF were not capable of conducting sea reconnaissance either by air or by naval craft; nor were they equipped with telephoto cameras to photograph and identify the various types of vessels. Naval craft at sea provided information on Soviet or Chicom ships loaded with bulky cargoes. VNN repeatedly reported sightings of Soviet ships in territorial waters off MR-1 and MR-2 after the cease-fire but no infiltrations were detected. Apparently, since expanded logistical roadways in-country and in lower Laos more than adequately supported the needs of Communist units, sea infiltration was no longer as much needed as before.

United States Intelligence Organizations in Vietnam
Before The Paris Agreement

There were too many Vietnamese intelligence organizations, as was commonly observed. Each of those usually coordinated with a counterpart US intelligence agency, which proves that the latter were just as numerous. These agencies were either under civilian control or military control. The civilian control was exerted by one of two agencies: the Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador (OSA), or the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).

OSA collection efforts were directed at internal RVN politics and the Communists and closely coordinated with Vietnamese intelligence agencies such as the CIO, NP and J-7, JGS.

CORDS focused on intelligence coordination for the purpose of rooting out the VCI. This effort was also known as the Phoenix Program which
was operated from national to district levels. US personnel assigned to CORDS were OSA or military officers. At sector level they were also intelligence advisors to the province chief.

The military control was exercised by MACV, J-2. Under MACV, J-2 there were three service intelligence organizations: G-2, US Army, Vietnam (USARV), the Office of Special Intelligence (OSI), 7th Air Force, and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), US Naval Forces, Vietnam.

US Army Intelligence in South Vietnam consisted of the following organizations: G-2, USARV; G-2, III MAF, I FFV, II FFV; G-2, Divisions; S-2, Brigades and 5th Special Forces Group; and S-2 Battalions.

Also under MACV, J-2 were the 525th Military Intelligence Group, the 509th Radio Research Group; and the 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Reconnaissance Support). In the beginning, the 525th Military Intelligence Group consisted of the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion, the 135th Military Intelligence Group, the 149th Military Intelligence Group, and military intelligence advisors. The 519th Military Intelligence Battalion was organized into four companies, each coordinating with a combined US/RVNAF intelligence center. Later, military intelligence advisors were organized into a company under control of the 519th instead of being directly subordinate to the 525th. This team had been established to provide intelligence advisors to four corps, 12 divisions, 43 sectors, totalling 622 men. 7

The 135th Military Intelligence Group supported MACV J-2 and United States Army, Vietnam, in counterintelligence. This unit also provided advisors to and coordinated activities with the Vietnamese Military Security Department (MSS). The 149th Military Intelligence Group provided advisors to and coordinated bilateral collection operations.

with the 924th Support Group (Unit 101). The 509th Radio Research Group operated the intelligence communications system between MACV and subordinate units and coordinated SIGINT and COMINT collection activities with J-7, JGS. The 1st Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Reconnaissance Support) provided imagery interpretation of aerial photos taken in-country. It was composed of: Detachment A stationed in Bien Hoa, Detachment B in Da Nang, Detachment C in Can Tho, Detachment D in Nha Trang, and the 45th Military Intelligence Detachment in Hue and Phu Bai.

By the time of the cease-fire, the 525th MI Group had been reorganized to include: the 571st Military Intelligence Detachment in MR-1, the 572d Military Intelligence Detachment in MR-2, the 573d Military Intelligence Detachment in MR-3, the 574th Military Intelligence Detachment in MR-4, the 575th Military Intelligence Detachment in charge of counterintelligence, the 358th Aviation Detachment, and the 504th Signal Detachment. 8

US intelligence organizations in Vietnam played a dual role: advisory and coordinating. With sophisticated equipment, substantial resources, expertise, and modern operating methods, US intelligence helped Vietnamese intelligence improve gradually and move into real professionalism.

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CHAPTER IV

Intelligence Cooperation And Coordination

Concepts And Problems

There is general agreement that, in the Vietnam war, though US-Vietnamese cooperation and coordination existed in every field and sector, they were nowhere as concrete and distinctive as in the area of Intelligence. A common mission, common objectives, common efforts, and similarity in organization and operational procedures, all contributed to this cooperation and coordination. United States and Vietnamese intelligence organizations had their own assets and liabilities. The United States had sophisticated equipment, lavish means, effective techniques and management, and large-scale organizations. However, they lacked basic knowledge of the enemy, the language and the culture; furthermore, personnel were often replaced after a year's tour of duty. Vietnam didn't have sophisticated assets but Vietnamese intelligence personnel were more experienced and knowledgeable about the Vietnam war, about the enemy and his psychology and techniques, and especially important, they shared a common language with the enemy.

Bilateral cooperation and coordination increased the effectiveness of intelligence activities and joint operation helped each side to overcome its own limitations. However, the spirit of cooperation was the prime factor in determining success or failure of the intelligence program. This spirit was perceived by a high-ranking US intelligence official to be one of "mutual sincerity, openness, confidence and respect."1

Cooperation and coordination must be based on joint agreements. These agreements must lead to clearcut directives for each side to follow, thereby precluding difficulties, misunderstandings, and loss of timeliness. When US forces were committed in Vietnam other problems arose, among them disputes over sovereignty and status of forces. Within the intelligence field, there were difficulties in exchanging information because restrictions imposed by national defense and security laws conflicted with the need to make information available to those concerned. However, all foreseeable difficulties were resolved officially with agreements that were either signed by both parties or were tacit. The foundations for these agreements were laid by the 27 September 1965 agreement between Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and the Chief, Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

Weapons and equipment were classified as either common or sophisticated, with sophisticated weapons being those seized for the first time in the Vietnam theater. The common types were resolved according to status-of-force agreements which provided for the capturing forces to keep what they had captured. The sophisticated weapons, that is those captured for the first time in the Vietnam theater, were Vietnamese property. On the second capture, these items might go to the US side. On subsequent captures either side might keep the items. In reality, the Vietnamese side did not have the capability to test really sophisticated pieces of equipment and the US side was allowed to keep them for testing before returning or transferring them to Vietnamese custody. To facilitate the testing process no time limits were set. Test results were to be made available to the Vietnamese side. Actually, the agreement was carried out in a looser manner, as in the case of the SA-7 heat-seeking missile used for the first time in the Vietnam war during the 1972 general attack. Because of testing needs all captured SA-7s were turned over to the US side, and the Vietnamese had only a plastic mock-up of the weapon.

There were no problems in the area of captured documents because they were easily reproduced. All handwritten, printed, typewritten, drawn
or engraved materials; tape recordings; photographs; films and seals were considered to be documents.

The US side transferred all prisoners of war and "Hoi Chanh" (defectors) to Vietnamese control. Though the US never officially declared war on the Vietnamese Communists, the 1949 Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War provided for a country to be allowed to entrust custody of its PW to another country as long as both fulfilled their obligations concerning good treatment of these prisoners. Consequently, PW of US or Free World Military Assistance Forces (US/FWMAF) were evacuated through US channels to the central Combined Military Interrogation Center (CMIC) in Saigon or CMICs at corps or division level, or Republic of Vietnam (RVN) operated PW camps.

Tacit agreements were reached concerning Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) and Photographic Intelligence (PHOTINT) acquired outside RVN territory. This type of information was usually US-classified as NOFORN (No Foreign Distribution). This precluded dissemination to foreign countries except upon special approval. An irrational situation developed in that third countries involved in Vietnam such as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, received the above information while it was denied to the RVN whose needs were as legitimate. The J-2, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (J-2, USMACV) overcame some of the problems by submitting listings of documents for Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) clearance or by using the authority of the Commander, USMACV (COMUSMACV), to release Secret and Top Secret information to the RVN.

On the RVN side, the difficulty was not in making Secret or Top Secret documents available to the US. Problems were frequently occasioned by US requests to downgrade materials, mostly Communist documents, for distribution to US information agencies or the US press corps. Vietnamese laws prohibited the distribution of Communist documents. Once downgraded the documents were exploited by the US press and were eventually published by the Vietnamese newspapers as translations, which frequently led to criticism of the Vietnamese press and US journalistic privileges.
In Military Intelligence, cooperation and coordination were conducted in one of two modes. The first mode provided for US personnel to function both as advisers and colleagues. The second mode gave them a strictly advisory capacity. The first type of relationship was established at Joint General Staff (JGS) level, the four combined intelligence centers, Collection Unit 101, J-7, JCS and subordinate elements, and the Military Security Department (better known as MSS). The second type of relationship existed at corps and division G-2s, sector and sub-sector S-2s and local MSS services.

Among combat units, intelligence cooperation and coordination were effected by detaching Vietnamese Military Intelligence Detachments (MIDs) to US/FWMAF corps, divisions and separate brigades. Sector S-2s assigned intelligence personnel to cooperate with US units conducting mobile operations on their respective territories. Division Tactical Area (DTA) G-2s assigned personnel to US units involved in interprovincial operations to assist in exploiting human sources and documents. Operational units also enjoyed support from "go-teams" of the combined US/Vietnamese intelligence centers which were dispatched upon clearance by J-2/USMACV and J-2, JGS.

J-2, JGS And J-2, USMACV

During the initial period of US participation in the Vietnam war, cooperation and coordination between J-2, MACV and J-2, JGS were performed through a US liaison team permanently installed at J-2, JGS and consisting of four officers (two Army and one each from the Navy and Air Force) and a noncommissioned officer. The task of this liaison team was more administrative than professional, and little was accomplished in terms of information exchange or situation estimates. This situation improved

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2 Team of US and Vietnamese specialists dispatched from Saigon to support combat units when required.
during the next period when Major General Joseph A. McChristian was assigned as Chief J-2, MACV. For the first time, there were initiated weekly intelligence briefings conducted by US and ARVN staff officers. During these briefings, both parties compared and exchanged information received during the week and presented their respective assessments and estimates concerning enemy capabilities for the following week. Still, coordination was generally limited to staff officers. There were occasional consultations between the two J-2 chiefs but these meetings were not part of any established procedure nor did they relate to anything other than work policies and administration. As a matter of fact, the Chief J-2, JGS and his US counterpart met only when needed and generally with the purpose of acquainting themselves with organization, operation and training of each side. The exchange of information, as a result, lacked spontaneity and timeliness. But it was also during this period that the idea of combined activities took shape and was implemented with the activation of combined intelligence centers whose operations were intended to benefit both MACV and the JGS.

Not until 1969, however, did intelligence cooperation and coordination between MACV and the JGS become really close and effective. This was due to the professional interest given to the combined intelligence effort by the Chief J-2, MACV, Major General William E. Potts. In addition to weekly combined staff meetings, the Chief J-2, MACV also took the unprecedented step of discussing the situation and exchanging professional viewpoints with his counterpart and generally made himself available for every worthy discussion. It was also due to his dedicated and untiring effort that combined intelligence activities were greatly enhanced and became instrumental in improving the effectiveness of Vietnamese military intelligence.

At the combined intelligence centers and Collection Unit 101, coordination and collaboration materialized in the form of bilateral US/Vietnamese activities. There were four combined intelligence centers: Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CLCV); Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC); Combined Military Interrogation Center (CMIC); and Combined Materiel Exploitation Center (CMEC).
Each center had two elements, one Vietnamese, the other US, each with its own director. These two elements shared the same installations and facilities. Personnel were integrated in individual sections. Documents were compiled bilingually. There were a few differences such as in organization and strength.  

**Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV)**

This center was conceived in 1965 and its building inaugurated on 17 January 1967 although the various US/Vietnamese sections of the center had previously and individually initiated coordination of activities. The center operated around the clock with permanent and rotating teams.

The mission of CICV was to compile and provide intelligence data to the J-2s. These data were related to: terrain, weather, lines of communication (LOCs), bridges and culverts, and local area features; Vietnamese Communist order of battle (OB), Communist base areas, infiltration corridors, bombing targets, bomb damage assessment (BDA); imagery interpretation (II). CICV was organized as shown in Chart 16.

The center had six major operating sections. However, the RVNAF element did not staff the Technical Intelligence and Research Analysis sections because RVNAF had a separate center for technical intelligence and its research analysis function was carried out by the Studies Section of J-2, JGS. The Area Analysis Section, though an organic element of J-2, JGS, was integrated into CICV's organization in order to match the US structure. The US Operations Section functioned in a production capacity which involved assigning priorities, editing, and distributing documents and messages. It also had a communications center which enabled it to communicate by teletype with major US units and senior US advisers.

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3 The organization of the four Combined Intelligence Centers is described here at the initial stage of operation in 1967.
The US element had 651 men and the RVNAF 164.
for the purpose of timely dissemination of intelligence information needed for tactical operations. The RVNAF Operations Section's only duties were to receive and/or dispatch correspondence and documents. It was consequently given the additional assignment of handling supplies. The Vietnamese element did not establish a Liaison Section because there already was one at J-2, JGS. Nor was there a Collection Requirements Section on the Vietnamese side because each specialized section handled its own requirements. The Automated Data Processing (ADP) Section provided intelligence data from Intelligence Data Handling Systems (IDHS), using IBM 360-30 computers. Because this was a very new technique, the Vietnamese side did not have specialists to staff the section among its two officers, six noncommissioned officers and enlisted man. Later, the two officers were sent to the US for training in the operation of the 360-30 computer while the noncommissioned officers received on-the-job training. Intelligence Data Handling Systems thus proved to be more useful to the US side than to the Vietnamese.

The Order of Battle (OB) Section of each side had three elements. The first element handled military OB and consisted of five teams: four for the four military regions of the republic and one providing coverage of North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The second element studied and monitored infiltration routes and units. The third element was in charge of political OB and information on the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI). In the area of OB, though close bilateral coordination was effected right on the spot, the two sides differed on enemy strength figures, with RVN-computed figures always the higher. The reason for the discrepancy was that authority to accept enemy strength and forces rested on J-2, JGS on the Vietnamese side, while on the US side acceptance had to come from Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), the DIA, and the acceptance procedure, on the RVN side almost proved, in a few instances, more flexible. In OB considerations, strength figures on guerrilla and VCI forces were usually not very accurate, especially after the general offensive of Tet 1968, when most of the heavy losses sustained by the enemy were actually borne by the guerrillas and the VCI. Efforts to keep a close count of the VCI ran into difficulties because sectors and sub-sectors did not have accurate figures or did not report them objectively. This reporting
depended on each commander's personal appraisal of the local situation. A sector maintained a steady 100 in its count of the local VCI while submitting monthly reports on the number put out of action. In reality, even the Communists did not have these figures. This was precisely why in 1969 they sent inspection groups to each locality to conduct an on-the-spot census. Communist documents admitted that even their own provincial and district officials were unable to keep count of their membership.

As regards enemy units, it was conceived that they must be categorized into Main Force, Local Force, guerrillas or VCI and identified as Viet Cong (VC) or North Vietnam Army (NVA). This second classification was very important because on the one hand North Vietnam always denied it had any forces in the South, and on the other RVN was endeavoring to prove that the war efforts originated in the North. Classification was based upon the following definitions:

North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Units: a unit formed, trained and designated by North Vietnam as an NVA unit and composed completely or primarily of North Vietnamese. Depending upon their subordination, these units may be categorized as Local Force or Main Force.

Viet Cong (VC) Units: a unit formed and trained in South Vietnam (or in some instances Cambodia and Laos) whose original composition consisted primarily of people residing in South Vietnam. Depending upon their subordination, these units may be categorized as guerrilla, Local Force, or Main Force.

Main Force (MF) Units: those VC or NVA military units which are directly subordinate to the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN), a Viet Cong military region, military subregion or front.

Local Force (LF) Units: those VC or NVA military units which are directly subordinate to province and district party committees and

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4 MACV Directives No 381-4 issued on Nov. 19, 1968 and July 4, 1972.
normally operating within the territorial jurisdiction of their respective control headquarters.

Guerrillas: guerrillas are fighting forces usually organized into platoons and squads, directly subordinate to the party apparatus at village and hamlet level. Although they form a full-time part of the enemy's offensive threat, the amount of time devoted to guerrilla duties by the individual guerrilla varies. At times guerrillas operate outside their home villages and hamlets, often with LF and MF units. Typical missions include limited offensive operations, harassment, sabotage, propaganda, protection of party committees, collection of taxes, and also security and reconnaissance for MF and LF units.

Vietnamese Communist Infrastructure (VCI): the VCI is the political and administrative organization through which the VC seek control of the people of the RVN. It embodies the Communist party control structure and the leadership and administration of front organizations from the national through the hamlet level.

The VCI includes individuals who are members or probationary members of the Vietnamese Communist Party, also known as the People's Revolutionary Party, and those non-Communist members who perform an enemy cadre function described in the "Current Breakout of VCI Executive and Significant Cadre" (also known as the "Green Book"), published by the Government of Vietnam (GVN). The VCI does not include members of the enemy military forces who would qualify as PW according to the Geneva Convention rules.

Another aspect of the OB problem was that, when referring to enemy strength and forces, everyone usually implied those physically present on South Vietnam (SVN) territory with no consideration given to those positioned in border areas of Cambodia, Laos or North Vietnam (NVN). Such limited thinking led to misconceptions as to the status of conflicting forces. For instance, it was believed that the Communists had only 300,000 men against the combined 1,500,000 US/RVNAF troops. These 300,000 Communist troops in the South were trained, supplied and replenished by units stationed across the border. In Laos, Rear Service Group 559 alone had 50,000 men to move supplies from NVN to SVN by way of the Ho Chi Minh trail.
In 1970, when the tactical situation compelled major Communist units in Military Regions 3 and 4 (MR-3 and MR-4) of the RVN to seek refuge in Cambodia, the overall Communist strength in SVN dropped, but this very same fact created an illusory situation as Communist divisions could reinfiltrate within a day or two, with their combat capabilities reinforced through rest, training, and replenishment received while on Cambodian territory. Misconceptions could not be dispelled despite the fact that these units were carried in OB holdings as "units in border areas".

Disagreements over enemy strength and forces occurred right within the RVNAF, between J-2, JGS and the corps, divisions and sectors, though authority for acceptance of enemy units had been clearly defined, with the JGS level handling units of battalion-size and higher, and military regions/corps assuming responsibility for companies and smaller units. Quarterly OB discussions with the various units involved accomplished nothing more than reducing the discrepancies.

In late 1972, as the drafting of the Paris Agreement was nearing completion, the RVN side felt the need to demonstrate the presence of the NVA in the South and subsequently insisted that an OB book be compiled that would identify by composition all NVA units in the South. The need was justified but realization was not that easy. Finally, based on all information gathered over a period of three years, from 1970 through 1972, rosters of NVA personnel in each unit were compiled and those thus identified numbered up to 115,000.

The Area Analysis Section on the Vietnamese side was an old organic element of J-2, JGS. Its activities were strictly based on reporting from local agencies as to the status of the population, LOCs, bridges and culverts, etc., and this reporting was generally late. One of the important assignments of the section was to prepare area geographical studies and gazetteers. The area geographical studies described geographical features of the areas studied while the gazetteers listed place-names along with details on each place such as description, grid coordinates, other known names, etc. Another assignment was to update friendly maps and study enemy maps. Following an operation that yielded 127 Communist map
sheets related to SVN territory and scaled 1:100,000, the Area Analysis sections of the US and Vietnamese elements coordinated closely to publish a new gazetteer and a study of Communist military symbols. Thanks to lavish equipment and new techniques available to the US element, the VN element learned to establish a data base and conduct area analyses, which were produced at an area scale of 1:250,000 and were referred to as encyclopaedia of intelligence. Thanks to adequate supplies of aerial photographs, map revising and updating of information on the conditions of LOCs took less time than before. In particular, studies on rice-growing areas were undertaken by the Area Analysis Section in coordination with the II Section for the purpose of estimating rice production potentials and monitoring rice-growing in both government and Communist areas. The resulting documents proved essential to the Ministry of Land Reform. In addition to its regular assignments, the Area Analysis section responded to special assignments such as preparing area geographical studies on Cambodia and Laos for cross-border operations. These studies were completed in two weeks.

The Imagery Interpretation (II) Section was the largest Vietnamese section of CICV because it was a division of the Military Intelligence (MI) Center of J-2, JGS prior to becoming an organic element of CICV. A difference in interpretation scope was that the US side's imagery interpretation extended to infrared photographs and Side Looking Airborne Radar (SLAR) resolution while the VN side's was limited to aerial photographs. The II Section consisted of two elements: interpretation and studies. The Interpretation element had five teams, four in charge of the in-country military regions (MRs) and one in charge of NVN, Laos and Cambodia. It also had a support team with a film library and a photo laboratory. Coordination with its US counterpart gave the VN element the opportunity to use sophisticated equipment such as the 85-view computer, Itek rear projection viewer and the CAF model 910 Ugaliid printmaster. Among these the Itek rear projection viewer was the most popular as it was capable of magnifying an aerial photo 30 times.

Aerial photos were one of the favorite sources of intelligence for briefings, debriefings and intelligence studies. Around June 1972,
after Quang Tri City had fallen, enemy 130 and 122-mm field guns con­tinually pounded on Hue City. Enemy gun positions had to be located but direction-finding radars could not help determine these positions. Air­craft were finally called in to continually photograph the suspected positions in an attempt to catch the guns as they were being pulled out of their camouflaged positions or when they opened fire. Films taken by aircraft from the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing were processed for immediate photo readouts and Hot and Immediate Photo Interpretation Reports (HOPIRs and IPIRs). Results were immediately relayed to the Tactical Air Command and the artillery for firing on them before the enemy was able to move the guns out of the identified positions. This procedure proved more effective in reducing enemy attacks by fire than B-52 strikes.

In imagery interpretation, the US side usually provided preliminary reports to US units and US advisors to RVNAF units. The VN II element at CICV made prints from negatives with Vietnamese captions and sent them to RVNAF units, verified earlier readouts or conducted interpretation phases 2 and 3, i.e. supplemental photo interpretation reports or SUPIRs. When interpretation differed because of translation or the quality of the prints, other photos were taken for verification. Differences frequently occurred in identification of armored vehicles and tanks which came in increasing numbers and types. The US-compiled interpretation keys proved very useful to the Vietnamese specialists who were not familiar with this type of enemy equipment.

The Targets Section provided targets to both Tactical and Strategic Air Commands (TAC and SAC); this mission was carried out exclusively by the US side. On the VN side targets were the responsibility of corps and division G-2s working in coordination with the combat units. At JGS level the Targets Section was only required to establish target folders for follow-up purposes, particularly on B-52 missions. The VN Targets Section focused mainly on observing the status of enemy base areas and infiltration routes. Each base area (BA) was given a three-digit numeral designation for identification purposes, as opposed to the Communists' own designations. Base areas in MR-1 were given a 100 series, MR-2 a
200 series, MR-3 a 300 series and MR-4 a 400 series. Base areas in Laos received a 600 series and those in Cambodia a 700 series. Factors considered in observing and determining the status of an enemy BA were US-established. The same technique was used in conducting pattern analyses. Vietnamese corps and division commanders appreciated this technique very much because the thorough recapitulation of information on a specific area (with up to 30 different types of information) was in itself a factual assessment and needed no further explanations. This information was categorized and normally presented in eight different overlays placed on a master map and with the following information plotted: enemy units and their movements in the areas as indicated in ARDF reports; information obtained by SLAR or Red Haze; information derived from aerial photos and aerial reconnaissance; information derived from PWs, "Hoi Chanh" and documents; information reported by agents; types of incidents recorded in the area; enemy air defenses, and information resulting from intelligence studies of the area. These overlays were updated every three months. Data for the pattern analyses were provided to the Targets Section on an as-soon-as-possible basis. The Targets Section notified the units or agencies concerned. To the corps and divisions, this notification only served to verify information provided by US intelligence advisers, which in most cases meant 12 or 48 hours before.

Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC)

This center was organized on 1 October 1965. Prior to that the US had a liaison element and a team of Vietnamese civilian translators. As a combined MI center, it had both VN and US elements, each with its own director. United States personnel numbered 101. In addition, there were an estimated 100 Vietnamese civilian employees of the US element who performed as translators or typists. On the VN side, the Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) strength was 69 men. The CDEC was organized as follow: (Chart 17)