AIR ATTACK ON TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE
APRIL 28, 1975
F5A DESTROYED
During a war, Communist leaders usually write military articles in which they analyze the conduct of the war and comment on the strategies and tactics employed during each phase of the war. The purpose of these articles is almost always self-serving. It serves either to justify an action taken or to outline a new policy. Intelligence techniques, however, have never been discussed. In the very few instances where it is mentioned at all, intelligence is either treated as an implicit element of knowledge or broadly evaluated in terms of its effectiveness or usefulness during a certain war period.

Mao Tse Tung implied such a knowledge when he discussed the basic rules of guerrilla warfare. He wrote:

"Since May 1928, however a basic principle, simple in character, with regard to guerrilla warfare was already set forth in keeping with the conditions of the time, namely a formula in sixteen key words:

- Enemy advances, we retreat.
- Enemy halts, we harass.
- Enemy tires, we attack.
- Enemy retreats, we pursue.

This military principle in a sixteen-word formula had been accepted by the Party."

In his book entitled "Our Protracted Resistance War Will Win" and published in 1946, Truong Chinh, a theorician and Politbureau member of

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North Vietnam's Labor (Communist) Party, briefly criticized intelligence work in the Viet Minh Army in these words:

"There are many ways of winning the initiative (one among them is): to clearly know the enemy's situation in order to be able to concentrate our regular troops rapidly and move our reserve forces swiftly to the required areas to act in good time. At present our forces are not only poor in intelligence work but also slow in moving and regrouping."²

In 1967, another high-ranking North Vietnamese military authority, Truong Son, wrote an article on "Lessons Learned from the NLF Victories" in which he advocated that, among the five lessons learned from military victories, the first one was Intelligence. Said he:

"Only by understanding the enemy's strategic determination and correctly anticipating the laws and capabilities of enemy action can we rightly build our own strategic determination and our fighting pattern."

Truong Son also elaborated:

"In the summer of 1966, the South Vietnam NLF Central Committee and various other echelons concentrated their efforts on studying matters concerning the enemy's front such as: during the dry season, what is the enemy's strategic intention, how many troops will he have, what are the capabilities of these troops, and where are they going to be used? What are their laws of action and so forth?"

The idea of intelligence as the first lesson to be learned in a war is shared by Van Tien Dung, North Vietnam Army's Chief of Staff. In an article on "Some Great Experiences of the People's War" published during this period, he wrote that he had learned the need to "correctly evaluate the enemy's strategic schemes and operational capabilities, develop a steadfast determination to achieve success, and make careful and positive preparations to cope with the enemy quickly and resolutely."

The first and last remarks ever made on intelligence by North Vietnamese leaders during the long period of 21 years spanning two wars from 1946 to 1967 thus indicate that Communist intelligence had come of age and was to be an effective tool during the conquest of the South.

Intelligence, generally speaking, is a process encompassing a number of basic principles that have become universal. But intelligence as it is actually organized and operated involves certain conceptual particularities and operational characteristics that vary according to the political philosophy and administrative structure of each country.

Being a Communist nation at heart, North Vietnam apparently derives its intelligence theory from Communist philosophical premises—in particular those of Marx and Engels—on the universality of contradiction as a rule. Engels in effect theorized that: "life consists just precisely in this—that a living thing is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and solves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life, too, comes to an end, and death steps in."3

Lenin later translated this conceptual premise into concrete examples that he used to demonstrate contradiction in almost all disciplines of human knowledge. In mathematics, for example, he found it in addition and subtraction, differential and integral; in mechanics, he found it in action and reaction; in physics, positive and negative; in chemistry, the combination and dissociation of atoms; and in social sciences, most particularly, class struggle.

From this purely theoretical philosophy, Mao went a step further

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when he made it a basis for his war theories with a view to single out the decisive factors on which each warring party would rely to gain victory. According to Mao, war depends basically on man and weapons or man and technology, but man is always the decisive factor that wins a war. As a result, the Communists usually rely on human whereas the United States and other antagonists of the Communist bloc—as if in keeping with the rule of contradiction itself—choose to depend primarily on the power of weapons and technology when fighting a war.

It was on the basis of this human predominance axiom that during the war North Vietnam built its intelligence largely patterned after Red China, and to lesser extent, Soviet Russia. Based more on human than technological resources, North Vietnam's intelligence system was conceived within the conceptual framework of a people's war and came to be known as People's Intelligence. As part of a people's war, People's Intelligence also derived from it its two basic characters: all-people and total, which implied that intelligence was the duty of each citizen and should be carried out in every branch and every sector or activity.

Just as the theory of people's war materialized in a unified effort to prosecute the war through the leading role played by the Party and the State, it was also built into the intelligence system which, under the same unified command concept, was placed under the direct control of the highest Communist authority—North Vietnam's Politbureau. War, to the Communist, is just a continuation of politics, and its nature, essentially a political act. Likewise, as North Vietnam saw it, there was no distinction between military intelligence and political intelligence. Situation assessments or estimates, therefore, were highly synthetized works that took into account every consideration, every aspect of the war. Structurally there was no discrimination either, since in North Vietnam there existed no separate military and political collection agencies as was the case in South Vietnam. In the same vein, North Vietnam made no distinction between domestic and
foreign intelligence or between tactical and strategic intelligence.

North Vietnam Intelligence Agency

Thus, North Vietnam's intelligence had been thoroughly guided by Communist philosophy, and people's war theory in particular, in addition to purely professional basic principles. Normally, theories and principles make no profound difference as to their intrinsic values or merits. What really matters is the extent to which these theories and principles are observed and put to practical use. In this respect, North Vietnam seemed to make considerable effort to narrow the gap between theory and practice.

The most visible manifestation of these efforts can be found in the establishment of the Central Research Agency (CRA) which has been North Vietnam's top intelligence agency for many years. During the war, the Central Research Agency not only served the North Vietnamese Army High Command and the Ministry of National Defense but also the government council or cabinet. In many instances when important decisions had to be made, the CRA also provided instrumental intelligence estimates directly to the reduced Politbureau which consisted of the State President, the Party Secretary, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister. In fact, the CRA was only responsible for military intelligence. Civilian intelligence was the responsibility of the Public Security Ministry whose structural ramification encompassed every echelon of the administrative hierarchy, down to villages. The missions of the Public Security Ministry included enforcement of security and order, collection of information, investigation, surveillance and apprehension of criminals and those elements or movements who opposed the Party and the State.

The Central Research Agency was organized into six staff divisions: Administration, Technical, Communications, Training, Protection, and Collection in addition to a Cryptographic Section. The Administration
division was responsible for the status of intelligence personnel, prepared individual biographic records, and recommended appointments, assignments, promotions and sanctions. The Technical division collected all types of identification papers and documents, stamp and signature samples, established false identification papers for penetration agents, produced chemical inks for special document writing, and provided all materiel and equipment required by agents. The Communications division operated radio communications systems between the CRA and its subordinate agencies, other strategic intelligence services, and its emissaries operating in South Vietnam. The Training division conducted in-country intelligence courses or arranged for special agent training in Soviet Russia and Red China. Selected students also included CRA cadre courses varied in length, from six months to two years. The Protection division was responsible for counterintelligence activities; it prevented and investigated traitors, infiltrated agents, saboteurs, and kept a close watch on suspects or elements tainted by a bad record. The Collection division was organized into many sections, each section being responsible for a North Vietnamese military region. Most important, however, were the sections responsible for South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which were called Battlefield C, B, and A Sections respectively. The Central Study Office also kept track of international developments, focusing particularly on countries that were directly or indirectly involved in the Vietnam war such as the United States, France, Thailand, South Korea, etc. The importance that North Vietnam attached to intelligence on the United States was evidenced by the creation of a separate section responsible for America. Meeting intelligence requirements generated by the war in Vietnam was clearly the mission of North Vietnam's Central Research Agency. With this mission, CRA directly controlled all intelligence activities, including those in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In addition to collection networks which were generally local in character, CRA also controlled certain special intelligence nets which were operated by special "emissaries" from North Vietnam and focused on long-range.
objectives. While information collected by these special nets might be provided in support of local needs, North Vietnamese special emissaries who operated them were not under the control of local intelligence organizations. They made up instead a separate organization whose territorial-based structure was divided into: COSVN, MR Tri-Thien - Hue, MR 5, MR 6 and B3 Front. (Map 8) The military intelligence organization in each MR or Front directly subordinated to NVA High Command was similar to that of COSVN which in effect enjoyed the same relationship status with regard to North Vietnam. (Chart 29).

*COSVN Intelligence Organization*

Contrary to what its name may have implied, COSVN did not exercise control over all Communist intelligence activities in South Vietnam. Its control, based on Communist territorial organization, was limited to an area roughly the equivalent of RVN MR 3 and MR 4. The rest of South Vietnam came under the separate responsibility of the enemy B3 Front, MR 5, MR 6, MR 10 and the MR Thi-Thien - Hue.

COSVN's responsibility, however, also encompassed those Communist-controlled areas on Cambodian territory such as Krek, Svay Rieng, Prey Veng and Kompong Cham, etc.

Intelligence activities under control of COSVN's Permanent Committee (Labor Party Central Committee's delegates in South Vietnam) included security and military intelligence. Security activities were organized at every echelon of the Party hierarchy: COSVN, Military Region, Province, District, Village and Hamlet. As to military intelligence, while its activities generally followed along the same line, its organization also included tactical components of the military hierarchy, from Corps to Company. Basically, security functioned under the control of the Party at each level of its hierarchy while military intelligence was part of the staff organization at each tactical echelon.

COSVN's instrument to operate and supervise security activities
Map 8—ENEMY TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
Chart 29 — Enemy Military Command Organization

High Command
North Vietnam Army

B3 Front
MR 5
MR 6
MR 10
Tri-Thien - Hue

Regional Command
COSVN

MR 2 (8)
MR T4 (7)
MR 3 (9)
was the Security Agency. Its mission was to ensure internal security, keep watch over the thoughts and acts of all cadre and to prevent and discover RVN penetration agents. In addition, the Security Agency also provided security for headquarters and installations, protection for high-ranking COSVN and NLF cadre, and directed spy and counter-spy activities in RVN-controlled areas.

COSVN's Security Agency was organized into three sections: Internal Reconnaissance, External Reconnaissance and Protection.

1. Internal Reconnaissance Section:

The mission of this section was to maintain and ensure security in Communist-controlled areas in South Vietnam as well as in Cambodia. The section was empowered to arrest and detain suspects, civilian and military alike, interrogate, investigate, and establish reports. It operated a detention camp for security convicts (code-named K-25) and was supported by a security unit (code-named K-35). This unit studied personnel records, granted security clearance, kept a close watch over military and civilian cadre, and prevented the penetration of RVN agents. In general, the Internal Reconnaissance Section enjoyed large investigative powers and had the prerogatives to install its personnel in every organization to serve as its eyes and ears.

2. External Reconnaissance Section:

The mission of this section was to collect information through spy activities, recruit and train planted agents, train and re-train collection personnel, provide special espionage tools and weapons for agents, direct assassination plots and obtain security reports.

3. Protection Section:

This section was responsible for providing peripheral protection for headquarters and installations by using patrols, insuring protection for high-ranking cadre and constructing shelters. It conducted training for bodyguards assigned to protect high-ranking cadre during displacements through dangerous zones. It also deployed security personnel to help secure infiltration accesses into Communist-controlled areas along infiltration corridors and the Cambodian border, prevent sabotages and investigate penetration efforts by RVN agents. For the performance of its
tasks the Protection Section was assigned to the (COSVN) Protection Regiment No 180 which consisted of two battalions, D-1 and D-2.

The D-1 battalion was assigned the responsibility of protecting COSVN high-ranking cadre, and providing security for headquarters and its base camp and installations. The D2 battalion was responsible for peripheral security.

Outside and under COSVN, security sections were established at every echelon of Party hierarchy. While the responsibilities of these security sections remained identical, their sizes and effectiveness varied greatly depending on the war situation and the extent of Communist control in each area. In general, at the village level, the security cell was tasked to organize and direct such security activities as manning guard posts, checking entry and exit movements, identifying strangers, arresting suspects or criminals, conducting preliminary investigations, and keeping watch over "reactionaries." Another responsibility of the village security cell was to deter and unearth crimes either by the populace or village government officials. In certain pre-determined cases or when authorized by a higher echelon, the security cell was permitted to carry out surreptitious executions or assassinations. Its assassination subcell was usually tasked for these ignoble jobs. A village security chief was generally appointed by the Party hierarchy and usually selected from among the members of the Village Party Committee. He was assigned two assistants if the village consisted of several hamlets. A hamlet was assigned two elected security agents by the village security chief if the hamlet was made up of several households. The village security cell was both subordinated to the Village Administrative Committee and the District Security Section whose mission was to organize and provide guidance to village security cells and resolve problems raised by or beyond the power and capability of village security chiefs.

At the district level, security activities had more of a professional character. They included establishing political and military order of battle records and keeping surveillance files on suspects, nationalist local parties or associations, religious organizations and
leaders, and GVN employees or their relatives. Every month, the district security section prepared a situation report on friendly and enemy activities. With regard to the enemy (RVN), the monthly report specified which types of activities—political or military—had been more intense during the month and analyzed the objective, scope, intensity and characteristics of each. Reports on friendly activities included information on the populace's behavior and reactions to enemy activities, actions taken by the local Communist government with regard to the enemy and the populace, Communist military activities during the month in terms of frequency, form, results, advantages and disadvantages, and a recapitulation of political activities during the month. As far as the Communists were concerned, information on political activities consisted of such data as the results of enemy proselyting actions. Typical examples include: how many enemy troops had deserted, how many more had been contacted; the frequency of indoctrination sessions held, what subjects had been studied; and, in terms of political struggle, how many direct confrontations had been initiated, how many demonstrations had been organized, how many protest motions had been forwarded, etc.

In its responsibility to protect the local district government, the security section had the duty to coordinate security protection plans with military units operating in the area. When there were top echelon Communist organizations in the area, such a security plan usually divided the area into three distinct zones with different control measures applied to each. In the outer zone, checks were made on movements of strangers. The intermediate zone was a zone of restricted movements to strangers, in which every displacement or activity of the local population was placed under tight control. The inner zone was of limited access which was allowed only to people with official business.

In summary, the Communist security system was designed to carry out both defensive activities such as security, protection, order and offensive activities such as espionage. Its objectives included not only the enemy but also the population and Communist cadre and troops. Due to the predominant role played by the Party, in general, enemy security activities were closely coordinated with military intelligence for whose activities they also provided effective support.
COSVN's military intelligence instrument, the Military Intelligence Agency—code-named B-2—was subordinated to its military command, which was called "Regional Command". The Military Intelligence Agency, COSVN (MIACOSVN) was responsible for collecting information pertaining to the organization, operation, policies and plans of the RVN military, political, economic, administrative, diplomatic, activities and others. MIACOSVN supervised and provided guidance on intelligence activities performed by military units, to include espionage.

MIACOSVN was organized into eleven staff sections and was supported by a communications battalion. The staff sections were: Enemy Situation Study, Cadre and Organization, Ground Reconnaissance, Technical Reconnaissance, People's Intelligence Nets, Espionage, Law Enforcement, Techniques and Tracks, Rear Services, Training, and Crypto.

1. Enemy Situation Study Section.

   This section was responsible for keeping track of developments in the RVN and allied military forces, political and economic activities, establishing and disseminating reports to user organizations.

   Information and data collected by military intelligence organizations at all echelons were routed to this section which analyzed and interpreted them and developed intelligence estimates and reports. The Enemy Situation Study Section also received copies of information exchanged between COSVN and Military Regions or disseminated by North Vietnam's Central Research Agency.

2. Cadre and Organization Section.

   This section was responsible for keeping personnel records, evaluating personnel qualifications, recommending jobs and assignments, receiving and assigning intelligence personnel infiltrated from North Vietnam, recommending promotions and sanctions, keeping track of the security status in units and areas under Communist control, and organizing military intelligence conferences.

3. Ground Reconnaissance Section.

   This section was responsible for conducting reconnaissance of the enemy's military organization, dispositions, and equipment for defense in addition to collecting information on order of battle. To carry out
this mission, the section was assigned one or two organic battalions, called Ground Reconnaissance (GR) Battalions. The D46 Ground Reconnaissance Battalion, for example, had a strength varying from 300 to 400 men and was organized into 3 companies and 1 section (Section 7). This section consisted of 3 GR detachments of 17 men each, whose specific mission was to collect information from areas such as Suoi Vang, Cau Khoi, Suoi Da and the Trang Sup airfield in Tay Ninh province. The Ground Reconnaissance Section directed and controlled the activities of 10 GR detachments which were deployed at Cu Chi (Hau Nghia province), Phu Hoa (Binh Duong province), Ben Cat (Binh Duong province), An Loc and Loc Ninh (Binh Long province), Boi Loi (Tay Ninh province), Ba Ra (Phuoc Long province), Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa and Long Khanh. Each detachment was commanded by a cadre having a rank ranging from deputy company to deputy battalion commander.

4. Technical Reconnaissance Section.

This section had been expanded considerably since 1965. Its mission was to intercept enemy radio communications to collect information as well as to conduct ICD (Imitative Communications Deception) and jam enemy radio systems. In its initial stage of organization, the Technical Reconnaissance (TR) Section activated a TR battalion, code-named D4, which was organized into 5 companies totalling approximately 300 men. With this strength, the section was able to organize 30 TR teams, all deployed in the RVN MR 3. Each team had a varying strength depending on the importance of the target area. According to its report of September 1966, the D4 battalion was able to exploit 7745 messages out of a total of 7793 intercepted. The TR teams were equipped with radio sets captured from the RVN and allied forces such as AN/PRC-10, AN/PRC-25, AN/PRC-6, AN/GRC-9, SCR-300, AN/VRC-3, SCR-694, etc. and supplied by Red China, such as models 71B and 102E, or even procured from the local market and modified to receive FM bands.

5. People's Intelligence Nets Section.

This section organized and provided guidance to people's intelligence nets in Communist-controlled and contested areas.
6. Espionage Section.
This section managed and kept track of espionage activities, provided guidance and direction to agents, and studied and reviewed intelligence reports sent in by spies and agents.

7. Law Enforcement Section.
This section detained, interrogated and investigated suspects and established reports. It also handled high-ranking RVN prisoners or those who were apt to provide important information, and provided information support to the Internal and External Reconnaissance Sections. Under the section's control there was a prisoner detention camp, code-named K55, which consisted of three wards, Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Prisoners and detainees were classified and treated in different manners according to their willingness to cooperate. Those who were die-hard or deemed dangerous were detained in underground cells of ward No. 3.

8. Techniques and Tracks Section.
This Section processed negatives and printed photos taken by Unit K45. It also produced false identification papers and documents intended for use in GVN-controlled areas or in Cambodia, collected documents and photos for a reference library, conducted investigations on lost documents and weapons, and endeavored to detect traitors.

9. Rear Services Section.
This section provided rear services for the Military Intelligence Agency and its subordinate organizations and units, to include food service and materiel support. It was organized into several subsections: procurement, truck transportation, bicycle transportation, quartermasters, production, etc.

10. Training Section.
This section prepared and published training materials, organized intelligence courses for all levels, established indoctrination programs, provided instructors and assisted in re-training personnel of the External Reconnaissance Section. Under the section's control, there was the K25 School which provided training only for low-level cadre, from deputy squad leaders down. Cadre of higher ranks, from squad leaders to company commanders were trained separately. Instructors were usually selected
among cadre of various sections. Courses of instruction varied in length from three to six months. However, those cadre who were selected to undergo training in North Vietnam usually went through two years or longer courses, during which classroom training was given in Hanoi but practical work took place in Hai Phong.

11. Crypto Section.

This section's responsibility was to encode and decode messages exchanged between Reconnaissance Sections and their subordinate companies or detachments, or among various sections of MIACOSVN.

12. MIA Communications Battalion.

The MIA Communications Battalion was organized into three radio companies, one express messenger company, one repair unit and one training school. Twice daily, the battalion communicated with subordinate MI units to receive and transmit information. Equipment used by the battalion were all 15-watt Red Chinese or Russian supplied radio sets. The express messenger company was 50-man strong and equipped with 10 Honda motorcycles. In addition to dispatching high precedence correspondence, this company was also tasked to transport high-ranking military intelligence cadre or visitors from the duty guardpost to MIA headquarters and back. Another responsibility of this unit was to detail men to entry points to take delivery of newspapers published in Saigon.

In addition to its eleven staff sections and the communications battalion, MIA also operated a dispensary and a separate recovery center. The organization and operation of MIA revealed certain characteristics of its own. First, its subordinate units underwent constant changes, either merging with each other or being disbanded as dictated by the circumstances. Second, every unit and its staff sections were assigned several different code-names and code-numbers. Third, MIA usually suffered from a shortage of specialists and had to rely on North Vietnam infiltrated personnel for certain key positions. Fourth, MIA enjoyed no prerogatives over strategic intelligence units detached from North Vietnam. Finally, new sections could be created as requirements arose. For example, during the period from 1968 to 1971, there was the Prisoner Exploitation Section, especially created to handle RVN prisoners of war. But this section was
later disbanded and its personnel absorbed in the Law Enforcement Section. After the cease-fire, to meet the needs for prisoner exchanges, a Prisoner Section was created with the mission to study and recommend lists of prisoners susceptible to be released, determine which prisoners to be withheld and suggest which areas would be appropriate for the exchange of prisoners.

Compared to military intelligence organizations serving other military regions or the B3 Front for example, COSVN's MIA organization did not present any significant difference save for an additional subordinate MI agency to handle the Saigon - Gia Dinh - Cholon area which the Communists regarded as the nerve center of the RVN-US war apparatus. Particular importance was attached to this MI agency because it was responsible for an area where strategic decisions were made and directives issued and where internal differences or conflicts, as far as the RVN was concerned, usually broke out most intensively.

Sources and Dispatching Methods

Communist intelligence employed certain sources and dispatching methods which were radically different from those used by the US and the RVN. This difference materialized in reconnaissance and messenger units, and most importantly, in the Communist people's intelligence system.

1. Reconnaissance Units.

Reconnaissance was the name the Communists gave to intelligence units organized especially to serve a battlefield prior to and during a campaign. Generally of company size, reconnaissance units were organized into three-man cells assigned to operate with combat units from company to division level. Prior to launching a military campaign, reconnaissance cells were sent into the objective area to conduct a research on terrain and the situation. Elements of situation research included: enemy, local population, and probable impact of a military action on the political situation. Concerning the enemy, research efforts focused on his order of battle, strength, forces, organization, equipment, disposition, defenses, morale, habits, commanders and reinforcements. Concerning the local
population, the research task was to find out the attitude of the people
toward the Communists, toward the RVN, the kind of popular support that
might be expected, and the probable impact of the campaign on the populace.
Reconnaissance on terrain was aimed at collecting the same information
that every tactical commander needed to know to plan and coordinate his
fire and maneuver with accuracy and to make a judicious use of firepower
on each type of target.

Reconnaissance as it was practiced by the Communists was guided by
certain basic principles. First, it should be specific and based on
sensory perception, or as the Communists put it, what could be "seen by
the eyes and touched by the hands." Second, reconnaissance should be
performed many times, by many different elements to double-check and
cross-check all information gathered. A last-minute reconnaissance should
always be conducted one or two days prior to launching the attack in order
to preclude the unexpected. And if the attack was important enough, the
commander of the unit conducting it was required to personally reconnoiter
the terrain at least once. Data collected through reconnaissance would
be reported on a scaled-down sand table constructed by the attacking
unit for the purpose of planning and rehearsing actions by participating
elements in minute detail.

Methods of collecting information through reconnaissance included
observation from mobile or fixed positions which were generally established
near enemy garrisons and along axes of communication; probes made among
the local population; contacts with local party and government representa-
tives who were usually supported by local sources such as people's
agents nets, security agents and enemy informants; and abduction of
enemy troops and seizure of documents if required. There were still
other forms of reconnaissance which either employed military intelligence
personnel disguised as local inhabitants or the local inhabitants them-
selves who lived near or within the target area and served as planted
agents. During an offensive campaign, reconnaissance cells operated in
conjunction with combat troops on the battlefield. Their mission was to
keep track of developments in the enemy situation, his movements, rein-
forcements and supply activities, and to assess the results of shellings,
attacks or raids. Reconnaissance units also assisted in the routing of information and messages by establishing field telephone lines between the command post and combat units. More recent tasks performed by reconnaissance cells included combined activities with artillery forward observers to assist them in adjusting fire on targets.

The various tasks performed by reconnaissance units were considered of utmost importance by the Communists who were usually convinced that half of the success in any attack depended on their completion. As a result, reconnaissance personnel were very carefully selected and usually regarded as crack troops. The effectiveness of reconnaissance units prompted the Communists to activate special-action units which came to be known as "Sappers." The initial mission given to Sapper units was reconnaissance; at a later stage, they were employed in sabotage missions. Sapper units were rapidly expanded and upgraded beginning in 1969. From company-size units operating individually, Sappers were later organized into battalions and finally regiments, all under control of a separate Sapper Command. If Sapper units drew much attention from ARVN and US forces during the war, it was only because of their conspicuous and sometimes spectacular exploits which seemed to overshadow the more obscure, but nonetheless just as effective, accomplishments achieved by reconnaissance units. Because of its tactical nature, such reconnaissance work was called "ground reconnaissance" to make it distinct from another type of reconnaissance called "technical reconnaissance."

Technical reconnaissance units were in fact communications intelligence units whose mission was to collect information through radio communications intercept. Communist intercept activities, as a matter of fact, became more extensive during the period of US participation, beginning in 1965. For their operation, technical reconnaissance units used mostly captured US-made radio equipment, augmented by Red Chinese and sometimes home-made radio sets which were in fact circuit-modified commercial FM receivers procured on the local market and appropriately given local trademark labels such as Ap Bac, Saigon 1, Saigon 2, etc.
after modifications. In general, these units operated in the vicinities of RVN or US unit headquarters for clearer reception of radio communications. Although their activation lagged behind ground reconnaissance units, technical reconnaissance units proved to be efficient and vital as providers of accurate intelligence for the Communists.

2. The Messenger Systems.

The enemy's basic deficiencies in signal communications and his fear of intercept led him to rely more on messengers for the dispatching of intelligence reports and official mail. Messengers made up an extensive and intricate system. They were usually selected among the local population because of their better knowledge of terrain and weather and their special ability to find alternate routes to bypass ambushes and troop maneuvers. Communist messengers were, therefore, highly familiar with our military activities; they knew where our patrols usually operated, the type of targets on which our artillery usually fired, and where our mines and obstacles were placed. There were two kinds of messengers: legal and illegal, depending on whether they lived and worked legally in GVN-controlled areas. In addition to their routine task of dispatching intelligence reports and official mail, messengers also doubled as intelligence agents. They were thus required, while on messenger routes, to report on everything they had observed concerning the enemy, the populace, the crops, the weather, road conditions, etc. Another task performed by messengers was to serve as guides for visitors, infiltration groups and supply parties.

The so-called "Ho Chi Minh Trail" — sometimes dubbed "The Old Man's Route" by the Communists — was initially a messenger route which resulted from painful and persistent pioneering efforts by the Viet Minh in their quest for a safe transportation and dispatching route from North to South during their "Resistance War in South Vietnam" episode, back in early 1946. This route, which meandered along tortuous mountain trails on the eastern slope of the Truong Son chain, was later expanded
into a large infiltration corridor made up of both longitudinal and latitudinal local messenger routes connecting successive zones with each other. In each zone, there were established liaison way stations manned by local messengers who served as guides. Several way stations were manned by local messengers who served as guides. Several way stations were grouped under a "binh tram" (military post) which controlled messenger activities and routes within a defined zone. Linked together, local messenger stations and routes made up an integrated and intricate communication system which effectively ensured a continuous flow of men and supplies and whose appearance could be likened to a giant cobweb. In addition to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, there were other messenger routes which connected Communist bases and sanctuaries together. From the Cambodian border leading inside the Mekong Delta for example, there were three routes called Ia, Ib and Ic. The Ia and Ib routes were located in Kien Tuong province, while the Ic route was located in Kien Giang province.

3. The People's Intelligence System.

Although reconnaissance and messengers were important elements of the Communist intelligence structure, its outstanding feature was the popular-based collection organization called the people's intelligence system. The concept of people's intelligence can be traced back to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Fundamentally, people's intelligence means that every citizen participates in intelligence in order to safeguard his (or her) own welfare and the welfare of his family and community. The basic objective to be achieved in people's intelligence is to know everything that can be known about the enemy while concealing from him and denying him knowledge about us. The Communists usually likened the enemy to an actor performing on stage under floodlight before an audience. His every gesture, every utterance can be perceived by hundreds of eyes and ears, yet he cannot make out anyone from the audience who, like the people, blend themselves with the dark background.
To enlist participation of the people in intelligence work, the Communists in Vietnam likened informing and reporting to a civil duty bound on every citizen. Any refusal to cooperate, negligence or failure to report automatically made the defendant a reactionary or an accomplice of the enemy, which were crimes punishable by severe sanctions. It was this threat of severe punishment that forced everyone living under the Communist regime or in a contested area to cooperate in intelligence work.

To effectively check every citizen's thought and actions and ensure his cooperation, the Communists imposed on the citizenry a double control system, based on community or administrative divisions on the one hand and on trade, professional or civic organizations on the other. First, no household could function individually under a Communist regime. Every three or five households were to make up a household group in which each household was responsible for keeping watch over the others and reporting on them. Theoretically, each three to five-household unit was under control of a chief who was selected among household heads and assisted by three assistants, for economic and financial affairs, education and cultural affairs, and public health and social affairs, respectively. In reality, however, this type of organization was applicable only to larger communal units grouping ten or twelve households. Whatever the size and organization for control, the purpose of each household group was always to check on the activities and attitudes of its member households in terms of security and information gathering. The character of family gatherings, the identity and purpose of each visitor, for example, were all subjects for detailed reporting. Above the household group level, there were similar organizations based on household groups, streets and blocks.

The second type of control was apparently more important and more effective since it was based on trade, professional or civil organizations of which every citizen had to be a member. For example, farmers were required to be members of the Farmers Association; workers automatically became affiliated to the Workers Association, etc. For each trade, each profession, there always existed some kind of association whose membership
was mandatory. In addition, there were also civic organizations that grouped children, youth, women and senior citizens under attractively named associations, such as the Youngster and Junior Vanguards, the Salvation Youth, etc. No one, in effect, could escape regimentation. It was these organizations that usually exerted a dominant influence upon the individual, much more so than the family. As a member of an association, the individual was constantly exposed to political indoctrination and civic education which taught him, among other things, that reporting was one of the basic and important civic duties.

The people's intelligence system thus reached down to every household and encompassed the entire social stratification. Its basic method of information gathering was reporting. In the areas completely under Communist control, reporting was directed toward counterintelligence and unusual happenings while in contested areas, it covered both intelligence collection and counterintelligence. The method of reporting was made simple enough for everyone to participate while tending to his usual business. A roadside bicycle mechanic, for example, could provide a daily report on the volume of military traffic, the types of military cargo transported, the direction of their movements, etc. A farmer tilling his land or a child looking after his buffalo in the vicinity of an airfield could give an account of how many aircraft had landed and taken off during the day and even their types. A woman merchant in a marketplace could provide such military information as troop strength, operational preparations, new units, etc., through doing her daily business. Within a household group, almost anyone could inform on unusual activities of others, the duration of their absence, contacts made with strangers, and so on.

Those people whose normal business required them to go back and forth regularly between Communist and GVN-controlled areas were usually tasked to dispatch information or documents or to procure items of military necessity. The Communists were especially interested in those people whose relatives worked for the GVN. Depending on the degree of relationship, these people could be used to press or blackmail their relatives into cooperation by providing information of interest to the Communists. Those who had special abilities in intelligence work would be selected to undergo training in order to be employed in a higher collection field.
for example, as undercover agents, by posing as bar girls, waitresses, clerks in those business premises in close proximity to military bases, airfields, ports, etc. In general, women, children and old people were more likely induced into intelligence work than young men because draft-age youths were usually subjected to identification checks. When there were indications that US forces would participate in the Vietnam war, the Communists initiated a program of agent training whereby women were taught English and prepared to apply for jobs in American agencies and organizations. To give them credence and a good cover, the Communists subsequently managed to have them attend GVN-run English classes.

With time and experience, popular sources and informants were apt to graduate into full-fledged intelligence cadre at the service of military intelligence agencies. When thus promoted, they no longer belonged to the people's intelligence system which, in effect, functioned only at lower levels and in those areas under contest or Communist control. Not everybody, however, could become informants in the people's intelligence system. The Communists made certain exceptions and excluded from their service certain categories of people, in particular: 1. those who worked for the GVN or served in the RVNAF and the National Police; 2. those who were pro-GVN; 3. those who were active in religious organizations; 4. those who bore a hatred toward Communism for personal reasons; 5. those who had been convicted or indicted by Communists; 6. those former Communist personnel who had been detained and released by the GVN after cooperating with it; 7. and finally, ralliers.

Despite these exceptions, informants working for the Communists were numerous and ubiquitous. They were generally able to gather information on our activities on a country-wide basis. Among their methods of operation, the most universal and effective was through familial connections.

The purpose of listing these seven categories of persona non grata, according to Communist documents, was to eliminate the possibility of RVN-planted agents volunteering for Communist intelligence service. The Communists nevertheless focused on inducing GVN and RVNAF cadres into their spy network every time they felt they could be certain of success in each individual case.
In 1958, a lieutenant working for G-1, General Staff was found AWOL. He was responsible for processing ARVN strength reports. An investigation discovered that when he fled North Vietnam with other refugees in 1954, he left his family behind. With vital documents on ARVN strength in his possession, he had apparently returned to Hanoi.

In 1962, a young and brilliant signal officer earmarked for an assignment in COMINT was extradited from the United States where he was attending a computer course related to decryptment work. He was arrested as soon as he arrived at Tan Son Nhut. It was discovered that he had been induced to operate as a planted agent in South Vietnam since his school days in Hanoi. While living in Saigon, he was watched over by a Communist cadre, his own stepfather, who also happened to be an ARVN warrant officer. Also arrested with him was his brother-in-law, a Communist agent, who was serving as an ARVN lieutenant and English instructor at the ARVN Language School.

During an operation in 1963, ARVN forces seized from the enemy a copy of the entire RVN Economic and Strategic Hamlet Plan. This plan was drafted in 1961 by economists Vu Quoc Thuc and Staley and disseminated to several governmental agencies. An investigation failed to determine when and where the document had been stolen.

During the 1968 Tet offensive, a note booklet was discovered on the corpse of a Communist intelligence cadre in Hue. In this booklet there was a long list of important RVN personalities, complete with their addresses, professions, vehicles, habits, etc. Even minor details were found carefully noted, if deemed relevant. On a certain official, it was noted, for example, that he always carried a pistol for self-defense but the pistol was usually put away in the glove compartment of his car.

In 1970, operational forces in MR-3 captured from the enemy a copy of the JCS Combined Campaign Plan (AB-144) in which important directives were given to Corps for the implementation of the GVN pacification and rural development program. After an investigation, it was found that the plan
NHA BE POL STORAGE DESTROYED BY SAPPERS - 2 DECEMBER 1973
had been sold by a major working at J-3, JGS for 250,000 piasters, of which he had received 100,000. He claimed that he needed the money to buy a house for his family. Again, in 1970, a Communist cadre disclosed that he was completely conversant with the RVN-US negotiating platform and objectives in the Paris talks thanks to a source close to a member of the RVN delegation.

One of the most important and public-rousing espionage cases was the Huynh Van Trong affair, unearthed in 1971. He was a trusted aide working in the Office of the Presidential Political Assistant. To help his penetration, a Communist cadre recommended him to a Catholic bishop who enjoyed a good relationship with President Thieu. Operating under a pre-conceived plan, he provided much accurate intelligence data on the Communists and soon earned complete trust from his superiors. In his capacity, he was tasked to write situation analyses and estimates.

In December 1973, Communist sappers in coordination with planted agents succeeded in blowing up the Shell fuel storage plant at Nha Be, causing 80% destruction to the fuel stocks. This was done while the world was being caught in the grips of an energy crisis.

In 1974, a rallier revealed that in Kien Giang province, the Communists were able to intercept and break through 90% of the contents of messages exchanged between the Sector and its Subsectors. This feat, he said, was attributable to the effectiveness of Communist Technical Reconnaissance units.

Again in 1974, a "legal" Communist messenger was apprehended at Cu Chi. He was a peddler of plastic toys, and some microfilms were found concealed in his merchandise. Among the microfilms seized, there was a photocopy of a report by the Joint Senate-Lower House Defense Committee filed after an inspection tour in MR-2. The report contained detailed information on the friendly situation, enemy capabilities and policy and the difficulties and requirements of MR-2. Another microfilm revealed a photocopy of the enemy order of battle strength in South Vietnam. The investigation on the Senate-Lower House report did not bring about any results because of constraints imposed by congressional immunity. But it was discovered, in the case of the enemy OB strength, that this document
had been loaned to a major working at the Central Intelligence Office by his friend, a lieutenant belonging to the OB section of Unit 306, J-2, JGS. Using his friendship, the major had asked to borrow the document for reference purposes, claiming that it would take him a long time to go through official loan procedures. He went into hiding one day after the "legal" messenger was arrested.

The above examples are but a few selected among other instances of enemy intelligence exploits. They indicate that the enemy was apt to employ every approach, every technique to collect intelligence data that were required for his strategic and tactical needs. Among his collection methods, the most widely used was found to be the familial connection approach. Quang Ngai province offered the most typical case of this approach. During 1973, an enemy notebook was captured which contained a long list of Communist "legal" agents among whom, there were several civil servants and servicemen. An investigation revealed that in most cases, these civil servants and servicemen had been pressed into Communist service by their close relatives.

Despite its extensiveness, the enemy collection effort was still plagued with tactical deficiencies and strategic errors. During the 1968 Tet offensive, for example, when attacking Quang Ngai provincial capital by surprise, the Communists had estimated that they could seize this city with relative ease. As a result, they began their attack at 0400 hours. Two hours later, ARVN forces of the 2d Infantry Division initiated a counterattack and drove the enemy out of the city, capturing in the process several prisoners. After interrogation, the prisoners revealed that their intelligence estimate for the attack indicated that the ARVN 2d Infantry Division was only armed with M-1 rifles and carbines. They admitted they did not expect so much automatic fire from ARVN forces, which caught them entirely by surprise. This was an instance of enemy failure to collect accurate intelligence data prior to an attack. One day prior to the enemy offensive, the 2d Infantry Division had received emergency shipments of M-16 rifles, for the first time.

In 1970, when ARVN forces made preparations to launch a cross-border offensive operation into Cambodia, an enemy document was captured
which happened to be the CT-9 Division's intelligence estimate, dated one day before the operation's D-day. The enemy division estimated that ARVN forces would not dare to strike into Cambodia for fear of world-wide political and diplomatic repercussions.

In early 1967, the North Vietnamese leadership, and Vo Nguyen Giap in particular, concluded that the US would make a landing in North Vietnam. As a consequence he initiated a plan, which was approved by Hanoi's Politbureau, to organize a people's militia force to face an eventual US ground offensive. The activation of this colossal militia force was met by stiff opposition by some other North Vietnamese leaders because it created two major difficulties. First, North Vietnam ran the risk of drastic curtailment in economic production, its manpower being absorbed into non-productive national defense tasks. Second, the armed militia might be dangerous to the regime's security in case they became disenchanted with the war effort. Still, Vo Nguyen Giap was irretractable as to his prediction of a US landing, which apparently obsessed him and spurred him into taking some pre-emptive counteraction. This was how the 1968 general offensive came about, undoubtedly a result of Giap's estimate. He also predicted that this general offensive would be crowned with certain success because, according to his estimate, it was supported by a general popular uprising. Events had proved him wrong.

Another major intelligence blunder committed by North Vietnam was its failure to assess correctly the nature and extent of US reactions as it decided to blockade Hai Phong and fly B-52 bombing missions over both Hanoi and Hai Phong in late 1972. Hanoi's estimate at that time did not include these possibilities.

In early 1975, North Vietnam estimated that in case of a general offensive in South Vietnam, the US probably did not have the capabilities for a ground intervention by Army forces, but it still had the capabilities for intervention with the US Air Force. As a matter of fact, Hanoi's resolution asserted that no matter what will happen, we must be armed by a spirit that does not fear an American re-intervention.
An Evaluation of Enemy Intelligence

During the Vietnam war, it was evident that the Communists attached much importance to intelligence which they regarded as one of the major causes for success or defeat. The achievements that they obtained in intelligence gave us certain indications as to its effectiveness.

A careful analysis of events revealed that the Communist hands had been reinforced by certain external supports that facilitated to a great extent their intelligence collection effort. A high-ranking rallier who used to be responsible for cultural affairs and history and had served as personal secretary to another high-ranking cadre in the Saigon Military Command told us a revealing story that shed some light on this external support.

Everyday at 1700 hours, he recalled, Communist messengers were ready at pick-up points in Cu Chi (Hau Nghia province), Trang Bang (Tay Ninh province), Ben Cat (Binh Duong province) to take delivery of newspapers from Saigon. (As a matter of fact, all Saigon newspapers were published in the afternoon in order to reach newsstands across the country the next day). The procurement and shipment of newspapers were performed by Communist agents in Saigon and intended for the Press Section of COSVN. By the evening, this Section had completed a press analysis report for the consumption of COSVN's Military Intelligence Agency. The reason for three separate pick-up points, the rallier said, was to make sure that newspapers reached the Press Section in time for its analysis work because newspapers were a major source that provided abundant information on the RVN military, political, economic and diplomatic activities. Should one messenger cell fail to deliver them, there were always two others. It was estimated that up to 80% of information gathered on the RVN were found in newspapers. Communist military specialists took particular interest in reports carried by the "Tien Tuyen" daily (a commercialized Government Political Warfare Department publication) because these provided accurate and timely information. Political and economic specialists favored the "Chinh Luan" daily for its professionally written articles on political and economic affairs.
Even the tabloids of dubious quality could furnish some information of interest to COSVN and help it take timely and appropriate actions. Through press reports, for example, the rallier revealed, COSVN learned that Mr. Nguyen Van Bong, Chairman of the "Radical Movement," was being consulted for the post of Prime Minister and this probability was near certain. As a result, COSVN promptly decided to get rid of him the rallier concluded.

The press as well as other news media in South Vietnam such as radio and television constituted perhaps the wealthiest and quickest source of information. Saigon newspapers were usually censored by the GVN but in most cases, the censored reports just contained controversial information on internal politics. The reader was always able to get vital military information with relative ease. In a press interview he gave in February 1975, for example, the commander of II Corps withheld nothing from what he knew about the enemy's goals and future actions in his MR and even outlined his operational plans in no uncertain terms. There was once an article written by a VNAF officer who took pride in listing everything he knew about the VNAF organization, and the number and types of aircraft. Every morning, the Military Broadcasting Service gave a detailed account of recent battles, complete with live coverage and interviews with participants who reported in vivid and accurate details the battle progress, its objectives, the friendly tactic and, of course, their identities and position.

What made these things happen the way they did? Was it because the GVN wanted to prove some point or just because it wanted to get rid of an inferiority complex? The point to be proved was clear enough. We were a free and democratic society. Our life quality was improving and catching up with other advanced countries in the world. Thus, the GVN felt compelled to duplicate the Western democratic way of life in national affairs, even its errors and weaknesses. It seemed to be oblivious to the fact that South Vietnam was just an underdeveloped country that a vicious war was tearing apart.

Every year, budget projects prepared in detail by each ministry of the GVN were submitted to the Senate and Lower House for approval. The
procedures for reviewing and hearings were as open as in any democratic country. Defense budget committees of both houses of the General Assembly naturally had the right to ask detailed questions about proposed expenditure and the Ministry of Defense was required to present justifications. Questions and answers resulted in the revelation of all defense secrets, for example, how many general reserve brigades, how many armor squadrons would be activated next year, or how would the GVN go about upgrading Regional Forces into regular forces, how many troops would be involved in the process, etc. All these were sensitive defense secrets which, after going through the legislative machinery, ceased altogether to be secrets.

Each year, the Prime Minister's Office published a roster of key officials of the GVN, to include those of the Ministry of Defense, the Joint General Staff and the Services and Arms of the RVNAF, complete with position titles, dates of appointment, personal addresses, and home and office telephone numbers. This roster alone was apt to give the enemy a detailed knowledge about our governmental structure, its subordinate agencies and its responsible leaders, all for free. On the civilian side, it was known that government agencies were generally careless and peremptory in safeguarding classified papers and documents. A crypto clerk in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was once found working on his encrypted messages in an open office in the presence of visitors. The loss or pilferage of documents, therefore, usually went unnoticed and even if it was discovered, there were chances it would not be reported. A utility man might by chance obtain old files and documents and sell them for a profit. In one instance it was discovered, also by chance, that classified papers by stacks were used by street vendors to wrap foods and sandwiches.

The kind of inferiority complex that obsessed the GVN was apparently its feeling of being the underdog in political struggle and propaganda effectiveness vis-a-vis the Communists. This explained why the GVN always went all out to regain an equal status. Intelligence was sometimes employed toward this purpose, unfortunately, without reservations or respect for the safeguarding of secrets. During a meeting of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, a RVN delegate did not hesitate to quote the content of COSVN Directive No. 3/73, a recently captured document, to prove his
point that the other side made a mockery of the Paris Agreement. The unfortunate result was that he had helped the enemy to learn that the RVN did not possess the complete text of the document. As a consequence, the enemy ordered all his cadres to destroy it. To prove that the enemy constantly violated the Paris Agreement, our information and propaganda agencies found it expedient to divulge intelligence data on his infiltrations of men and weapons, his scheme of attack, etc., and even disclosed the sources of these data. This either helped the enemy know to what extent our intelligence effort had succeeded or prompted him to take steps to counter it. Either way, it was the war effort that suffered the most.

The compromise of tactical operations was sometimes attributed to enemy penetration or monitoring feats. The general impression was that no matter how secret an operational plan was kept, the enemy would learn about it sooner or later. The Lam Son 719 operation in early 1971 was frequently cited to make this point on enemy forewarning. But the RVN-US strategic idea of striking into enemy-held sanctuaries and logistical bases across the border had already been exposed by the Cambodian incursion of the previous year. There were indications that Communist units operating in lower Laos had been warned to take precautionary measures against the probability of similar cross-border incursion in their area of operation by RVN-US forces. Thus, it was a matter of simple logic that the next target would be the logistical base complex in lower Laos and the time frame for a possible attack anywhere within the short dry season.

The amount of preparations and the delay in launching the attack could also have been elements that helped reinforce the enemy's reasoning and his alertness. While there was no proof that his intelligence actively sought to find out and know about Lam Son 719 while it was being planned, there were possible clues unconsciously given away by ARVN units getting prepared for the attack that any alert enemy agent could have picked up and reported.

Over the years, ARVN units were plagued by the impossibility to keep operational preparations under wraps. There were some reasons for
this. First, the unit's dependent quarter was always an abundant source of information on the unit's activities. If the unit was preparing for some action, the troops' dependents were bound to learn about it the minute orders were given. Some units tried to offset this shortcoming by confining troops to the barracks prior to an operation but even then, the dependents always managed to learn about what their husbands and fathers were up to. Second, it was a fact that small unit commanders were extremely careless when talking over the radio despite warnings and education. In addition to this deplorable habit, they also never bothered to use voice codes which they considered cumbersome and inconvenient. That explains why the enemy monitoring of ARVN low-powered FM networks was so widespread and productive. Thus, to say that the RVN unconsciously gave Communist intelligence a helping hand is not an abusive statement.

In addition, North Vietnam must have received some intelligence support from the Communist bloc and Soviet Russia in particular. This support was evidenced by the supply of weather information and data concerning B-52 flights. Weather information helped the enemy select the more appropriate days to push their attacks without fear of our tactical air. Data concerning B-52 flights such as take-off time, number of aircraft, direction, speed, etc., certainly helped the enemy to anticipate the approximate time of strike and the general target areas. At least, the kind of external support the enemy received from Russia could be helpful in alleviating his constant fear of B-52 strikes and comforting the morale of his troops. The common belief, instilled by political commissars and held among enemy troops as true was that his intelligence was infallible and knew everything. Enemy troops believed, for example, that every B-52 overflight was known a few hours in advance but never found out why. If this claim had been true, no one else could have provided the forewarning but the Russians with their extensive, sophisticated monitoring network. Other local indications could also have forewarned the enemy about B-52 strikes, such as the suspension of tactical air and reconnaissance flights over the target area, etc. The ARVN could not possibly know about B-52 flights since no field commander had ever been notified in advance. Hence the contention that
leaks on the ARVN side which were picked up by agents within its ranks led to the enemy's advance knowledge on B-52 flights was unjustified. There was only once, an unique instance which was never repeated, that an ARVN corps commander was notified in advance of B-52 flights. The Corps commander felt it his duty to notify his division commanders who in turn notified their subordinates down the channels with the end result that at battalion level, notification was communicated among units by messages in clear. But that was the only time this ever happened. Moreover, the selection of B-52 targets was a MACV prerogative, based on recommendations by ARVN Corps commanders who always communicated directly with their US advisers or Field Force commanders in such matters by voice rather by correspondence. In strategic intelligence too, both Russia and Red China must have been of great help to North Vietnam by providing information concerning US policies, attitudes and probable courses of action for certain periods of time. But apart from this external help, conscious or unconscious, how in reality did Communist intelligence fare by itself?

As has been said earlier, the enemy succeeded reasonably in intercepting our communications through the use of his technical reconnaissance units. However, this effort was only of a small scale and his resources and techniques were rather rudimentary by US standards. The enemy communications intercept effort would have been less successful if on the RVN side, tighter countermeasures had been taken. A novel technique that the enemy introduced late in the war was air reconnaissance; first flights were recorded in late 1974. But the flights were few and their coverage, limited. The results must also have been marginal because sophisticated techniques such as SLAR and Red Haze were entirely beyond North Vietnam Air Force capabilities.

In technical intelligence, North Vietnam was in fact more concerned about finding out how US and RVN techniques worked than trying to employ these techniques. Since 1965, North Vietnam had been trying to learn about the capabilities and limitations of the EC-47, Mohawk, pilotless air reconnaissance, and sensors. Its interest focused particularly on ARDF methods. At first, it was evident that Communist intelligence was
not familiar with this technique of intelligence collection. One of its reports in fact read: "Enemy intelligence has discovered the location of ...division headquarters at ... Please inform the division and apply strict security measures. Try to find out why information has been leaked." It certainly took the enemy a long time to find out. When the enemy began to know more about ARDF, he made a conscientious effort to shoot down what he called "electronic reconnaissance" aircraft wherever possible or took protective measures such as radio silence, or even radio deception as in the case of the NVA 320th Division which left behind its command radio station at Duc Co while slipping out surreptitiously toward Ban Me Thuot in February 1975.

By contrast, the enemy was more successful in people's intelligence. As has been said, the system was built on the base of "all-people" and "totality." Consequently, it provided the enemy with a considerable amount of sources in every locality, in every field, and at any time. The system was totally responsive to the enemy's intelligence requirements without creating incidental problems such as funds, recruiting, operational control, etc. which ordinarily plagued any human intelligence effort. Taking its roots from the people themselves, the Communist people's intelligence system was difficult to detect and destroy. Even if it could be detected, the leads would not help us go far or obtain information of any importance.

In addition to its contributions to intelligence on a professional point of view, the Communist people's intelligence system also played an important political role in the war. By actually participating in it, people felt they were truly involved and in fact behaved as though they held the initiative and actually directed the war effort themselves. This was a definite advantage over our side which was always hard put to elicit the people's participation.

It was however not the Communist intelligence agencies that actually organized the people's intelligence system and pushed it ahead. It was the party and its local committees that played a key role in pushing party policies and directives, enforcing and controlling them, and instituting appropriate sanctions. Even in regular meetings of
local party committees, which were normally held once every week or bimonthly, the most important item of discussion was always a review of the enemy situation in every aspect. Local party committees, however, were active and effective only in Communists controlled areas. Their activities were severely restricted in contested areas.

For all its merits, the Communist people's intelligence system was plagued by a serious drawback: the non-professional or amateurish character of people's nets. Their reports were usually inaccurate, incomplete and confusing. But perhaps people's intelligence derived its merits more from quantity than quality, as Mao Tse Tung put it: "Quality could be replaced by quantity and morale." Another deficiency of this system was that it worked more in theory than in practice. Although the basic motto prescribed that each citizen should be an informant, the passive and resilient nature of the Vietnamese common farmer or villager and his traditionally-ingrained aversion to authoritarian power would never make him a good one.

The extent of enemy penetration into GVN agencies and the RVNAF ranks, and the existence of turncoats among them, however, were not as ubiquitous and potentially serious as they appeared to be or as was generally surmised. If enemy penetration had been extensive and effective, what can explain then his dismal failure to incite disruptions or rebellious acts within the RVNAF ranks during his offensive campaigns of 1968 and 1975 which were, so to speak, go-for-broke affairs? The fact was, even during these extremely confusing times, not a single turncoat incident had been recorded save for the apparently enemy-induced bombing of the Independence Palace by a F-5 pilot in mid April 1975. An idea can be made, however, of the extent of enemy penetration as it existed in 1968, based on enemy documents. The enemy Saigon-Cholon

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4Mao Tse Tung's Selected Works, opus cited.
Front Committee, in fact, disclosed in one of its documents captured during the Tet offensive that he had succeeded in enlisting the service of 112 sources in Saigon-Cholon—an open metropolitan area of over 2 million inhabitants. And this was at the height of his success in infrastructure activities.

A case study of Communist intelligence at work perhaps could give us a better idea as to its effectiveness. This is what a military intelligence cadre of Tay Ninh province told us about his provincial intelligence set up: The provincial military intelligence section has the mission to collect military as well as political intelligence in its area of responsibility (the province) and order of battle information such as unit designation, location, strength, biographies of military and civilian personalities of interest to the Party, defense plans and position of bases, outposts, reinforcement plans, and local terrain. This information is to be reported on a daily basis.

The Tay Ninh Military Intelligence Section was organized into five provincial collection teams under province control, eight district collection teams under respective district control, a number of people's collection nets, and most particularly, a technical reconnaissance team for the collection of communications intelligence. Four out of the five provincial MI teams were deployed around Tay Ninh city: Cau Sat, Cau Khoi, Giong Ca, Ho Don; the fifth one was Trang Bang district. Each team was controlled by from one to three cadres and its mission was to keep track of all ARVN troop movements.

For the dispatch of information, the Tay Ninh MI Section employed both "legal" messengers and radio. Messengers were responsible for dispatching routine or low precedence information between the Section and its teams or between the Section and infiltrated agents or regular agents. Radio was used only for transmitting important information to higher intelligence agencies. Among the teams, the technical reconnaissance team was regarded as the most effective, providing instant information through communications intercept. The Section's people's collection nets were not very active; they existed only in name.

The Tay Ninh MI Section was not successful in recruiting penetration
agents. So far, there were only two such agents known; one was a member of the local Democratic Party (CVN-organized), the other was an ARVN corporal working at Sector headquarters. The Cau Sat team had five agents, none of them penetration. Other teams fared no better. "In summary", the MI cadre concluded, "The Tay Ninh MI Section was not effective. Its activities were seriously curtailed by a shortage of MI cadre, failure in agent recruiting and poor communications."

The status of enemy military intelligence in Tay Ninh of course did not reflect the overall situation; it did, however, indicate that the Communist intelligence system was plagued with many deficiencies and difficulties. Still, it enjoyed some advantage over our own military intelligence. For one thing, enemy intelligence plans were based on and made up part of a national plan conceived by the Politbureau. For another, the enemy intelligence effort was a unified effort, centrally controlled and judiciously distributed to responsible agencies throughout the hierarchy. This feature could be observed through the enemy general offensives of 1968 and 1975.

Regarding methods of collection, the Communists were more effective in human intelligence than technological intelligence which was in effect one of its basic weaknesses. But they were apt to learn more about it in time. What is more important to intelligence, however, lies not in collection methods or the data gathered, but in the analysis and synthesis of these data. This is something no intelligence specialist, regardless of his ideological conviction, can deny. The problem is always to arrive at an accurate estimate for every situation. But to me this has always seemed to be one of the enemy's shortcomings.

His other shortcoming derives from his own shortsighted, subjective view. By subordinating intelligence to politics, he has come up with self-serving estimates just to keep in line with his ultimate goal. He erred fatally in 1968 when surmising that the South Vietnamese population was ripe for an uprising. Only later was he able to find out why it did not happen. In fact, the enemy intelligence establishment has never been able to do a professional job just because it can never bring itself to contradict the party line. To the Communists, facts
after all are not what actually happen but what they wish to happen. This has always been a major shortcoming.
CHAPTER VIII

Conclusions

Every qualified observer will agree that the RVN had too many intelligence agencies, civilian, para-military and military. These agencies were in different command channels and reported to different authorities. This gave rise to redundancies in tasks and objectives, dilution of effort and, worst of all, unhealthy competition. An effort was made to offset the handicaps of this situation by establishing intelligence coordination committees but this solution did not work out as expected. Effective coordination suffered from the fact that it depended upon the willingness to cooperate of the individual members involved. The members enjoyed equal status and enjoyed equal prerogatives; this statutory equality even existed among collection agencies and the command organization which directed the collection effort. The principal endeavors of these collection agencies usually tended toward gaining the trust and confidence of the high-ranking authorities to whom they were subordinate. Among the many ways they could achieve this approbation were by providing the kind of information that the authorities liked most to have and, by giving them raw information for the sole purpose of making them the first ones to know, regardless of the validity of the information which had yet to be analyzed, interpreted and evaluated. The lateral dissemination of such information to other interested intelligence agencies was relegated to secondary importance and sometimes withheld altogether; lateral dissemination was not mandatory.

The assignment of prerogatives and resources to intelligence agencies was based not on the mission, organization and performance of the agency concerned but on the relationship the agency enjoyed with the authority
that employed it, and most particularly on the power of this authority. South Vietnamese leaders were of course fully aware of the organizational complexity and multiplicity of the intelligence establishment and consequently, the need for streamlining, and unifying the intelligence effort. But the intricate interplay of political powers and interests prevented progress along these lines because it remained the basic desire of each executive authority to have under his personal control an intelligence agency that he could freely use for his own end. Moreover there was always the danger of creating a new kind of power rivalry if all intelligence agencies were placed under any one authority. No one really wanted an all-powerful intelligence authority.

Although there existed too many intelligence agencies, their efforts were nearly exclusively limited to in-country collection. Agencies such as the Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Research and Documentation Office of the Ministry of Defense, and its military attaché offices overseas, were ineffective organizations which contributed very little in terms of collection effort in support of the intelligence requirements of the war.

Within South Vietnam, the primary interests in information and the objectives of intelligence activities focused mostly on the military situation and internal politics. Economic intelligence was largely neglected. The lack of good economic intelligence led to ineffective resource control programs. Rice, the most important national resource which directly affected the lives of the populace, was not subject to effective control. Production, distribution and trade in this vital commodity were manipulated by profiteering middlemen who always managed to divert large quantities into enemy-controlled areas. In addition to speculation and pilferage of rice, the RVN Government was also plagued by a proliferation of counterfeited banknotes. There were many reasons to believe that the enemy was behind this sabotage of the currency but this suspicion was never confirmed by hard intelligence.

Despite the emphasis on tactical intelligence, and some considered this emphasis excessive—the resources allotted for tactical intelligence collection were far below requirements. The RVN defense expenditures
represented the greatest share of the national budget but most of the
defense budget was earmarked for what were considered priority needs
"to move, to shoot and to communicate." Very little was spent "to see;"
the leadership failed to realize that it made little sense to have
mobility and firepower if the enemy could not be found and his activi­
ties anticipated.

Not only did the RVN political and defense leadership show little
interest in military intelligence, field commanders in general did not
regard military intelligence as a command responsibility such as opera­
tions, logistics and training. Strange as it may seem, military intel­
ligence was considered a staff responsibility, an activity for which
intelligence specialists were primarily responsible. With this attitude,
it is not surprising that military intelligence was frequently made the
scapegoat for tactical failures while victories invariable appeared the
result of good tactical operation. Although the RVN military doctrine
defined command responsibilities as encompassing all tactical aspects
—including intelligence—the concept seemed to be lost on our comman­
ders. The training of cadets in the military schools was heavily oriented
toward tactics. Future commanders were trained to maneuver troops but
learned little of other command responsibilities. As a result, though­
out their careers as commanders, they held the notion that tactics was
the only command responsibility.

Because most commanders had inadequate knowledge of the art of
tactical intelligence and consequently little confidence in the ability
of intelligence professionals to furnish competent evaluations, they
were not satisfied with the traditional method used to denote the read­
ability and accuracy of intelligence information. For example, a piece
of information evaluated as B-2, should be considered reliable and of
high value. In South Vietnam, however, commanders usually did not con­
sider B-2 information reliable enough to warrant action. Information
whose evaluation stood below A2 or A3 was generally regarded as incon­
sequential and ignored. In an effort to convince commanders of the
true validity of certain important information, and also to tactfully
defer to their intractable disposition toward the evaluation system,
eventually, all pieces of information were clearly identified as.
to their specific source such as aerial photo, communications intelligence, prisoner of war or agents, etc. This disclosure of the nature of the source of course ran afoul of intelligence security principles which were established to protect the source, but it effectively served the purpose of convincing commanders as to the validity of the information. There were instances of course in which the source had to be protected at all costs. In those cases, the information was only described as "special" and "of high value."

Sometimes—and unfortunately with disastrous results—senior commanders were unable to understand the implications of critical intelligence information furnished them. It was not enough for the intelligence officer to gather and analyze accurate, timely information concerning enemy capabilities and intentions and furnish the commander a finished intelligence estimate. Unless the intelligence officer had the time, and opportunity to explain its importance and make sure that the commander fully understood, there was a fair chance that the estimate would be misunderstood and perhaps disregarded.

"Know thyself and know the enemy" is a recognized universal precept. But knowledge about the enemy, as far as intelligence is concerned, was limited to commanders only. Rarely did commanders take the trouble to inform or indoctrinate their troops concerning upcoming operations. A unit going into battles stands a better chance of success if each of its men knows something about the enemy he is likely to confront, such as his identity, type, size, capabilities and vulnerabilities. If such knowledge had been provided before each battle, each soldier would have felt more confident and would have performed his duties with greater spirit.

Intelligence on the enemy in South Vietnam derived from both political and military sources. A problem arose when they flatly contradicted each other. If such was the case, which source should be given more weight and used as the basis for a correct estimate? Civilian intelligence agencies tended to trust information obtained from political sources because they were usually connected with higher enemy echelons. In contrast, military intelligence organizations usually considered infor-
mation derived from military sources more reliable even though the
information was sometimes just the interrogation of an enemy soldier.
The rationale supporting the military intelligence viewpoint proved to
be correct on many occasions. In contrast to the South Vietnamese and
American practice of not informing lower echelons concerning strategic
concepts, at places political indoctrination was the Communist normal
way of life and an important part of basic military education. Communist
soldiers were constantly updated on the latest Party line, political
objectives, the demands placed on military units, and the specific tasks
they had to carry out. As a result, strange as it may seem, even a Com­
munist cadre of the lowest echelon possessed a surprisingly good knowl­
edge about strategy and more specifically what his unit was about to do.
Although there was always the risk that information could be planted by
the enemy for deception. By and large, enemy tactical commanders did not
often go to the extreme of deceiving their own units, neither were they
permitted to alter plans once issued by higher authority. Thus infor­
mation obtained from military sources was usually more reliable and more
accurate than that from political sources. Information derived from
political sources was frequently deceptive and misleading. As preludes
to their offensives of 1968 and 1975 for example, the Communists imple­
mented elaborate and detailed plans aimed at leaking political informa­
tion designed to conceal military moves and degrade the importance of
military intelligence gathered by the RVNAF.

In general, knowledge about major enemy offensive campaigns, and
general offensives in particular, was predicated upon the following
indicators listed in their usual order of appearance in intelligence
reports.

1. Latest resolution adopted by the Politbureau of the Labor
   (Communist) Party.

2. Official trips overseas by key governmental or Party officials
to seek aid and resulting increases in aid from the Communist
Bloc.

3. Appearance of modern weapons.

4. Reorganization or activation of command and control systems.
5. Advance test of a certain form of tactical maneuver to be employed in the offensive campaign.
6. Intensive indoctrination or special study sessions held in units.
7. Visits made by high ranking military delegations from countries giving aid.
8. Decreasing rate of returnees (ralliers).
9. Movement of reserve units into the battlefield.

There were other indicators such as logistic preparations, replacements and replenishment of unit strength, but these are not listed because they were perennial activities applicable to campaigns of short duration as well.

Despite their relatively clear significance, indicators such as those listed above sometimes led to diverging assessments and different opinions as to the enemy design. This was chiefly due to the fact that military commanders and intelligence officers were usually interested only in enemy capabilities and totally overlooked enemy intentions. As a matter of fact this was exactly the way they had been trained to think; military intelligence doctrine always emphasized capabilities and gauged predictions based on intentions. The reason was simple; capabilities could be pretty well measured, qualified and described while intentions were often obscure, vague, and highly contentious. In the Vietnam war, with its strong ideological context enemy capabilities more often than not did not indicate the probability of attack and therefore did not protect against surprise. Political dictates usually overrode military common sense and Communists units were often tasked to launch attacks for political gain without having the required capabilities to execute such attacks successfully. "Suicide" was the usual term used to describe surprise attacks; we learned that suicide was one of the enemy's capabilities. It was apparent that intelligence estimates had to take into account both enemy capabilities and intention no matter how farfetched his intentions might be.

Intelligence estimates were sometimes erroneous because the analyst tended to see the enemy through the lens of his own culture and experience and judged the enemy's actions and behavior as if the enemy would react as
he would given certain stimuli. This was a common shortcoming. Intelli-
gence analysts were rare who could reason the way the enemy did. This
at least in part accounted for the fact that RVN military intelligence
establishment failed to predict the enemy attack across the DMZ in the
1972 Summer Offensive. Such an action, it was thought, would constitute
such a blatant violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords that the enemy would
certainly never do it, given his usually reverent remarks about the
inviolability of the Accords. Similarly, few military commanders expressed
concern when enemy tanks appeared in large numbers on South Vietnamese
battlefields since the US and the Vietnamese Air Forces had absolute
superiority in airpower and could easily cope with the new threat.

In fact, it was not easy to place ourselves in the enemy's position
because our imagination, albeit aided by a thorough knowledge of the
enemy, usually fell short of reality. For example, although it was com-
mon knowledge that the enemy attached importance to the defense of his
bases and rural areas, we only discovered how important they were when
he resolved to attack our cities at great cost, just to loosen our grip
on the rural areas. To most of us it was a sobering experience that
helped us learn more about the enemy.

Operational experience in South Vietnam showed that there were
discrepancies between intelligence theory and practice. The discrepancy
stemmed from two facts. First, Vietnamese military intelligence did
not have a theory of its own. Like military doctrine in general, it was
largely based on American combat intelligence theory which had been
conceived for conventional war in which the enemy was always somewhere
in front of us and reacted in generally predictable patterns. Vietnamese
students attending intelligence courses found out that what they were
taught could not be applied in totality to the local environment and the
conditions of the war. Our tactical commanders acquired the practice
of responding only to simplified, condensed pieces of intelligence. They
were interested only in short, clear-cut answers to their queries about
the enemy for example, what was he going to do, when and where? Seldom
did they ask for more, such as how and why? It was almost a certainty
that any intelligence estimate that was written according to prescribed
staff procedures and format would be automatically disregarded for the simple reason that it was too long to read. Vietnamese tactical commanders rarely took any interest in documents having more than two pages. The gap between intelligence theory and practice, therefore, should have been reduced in the sense that for any theory to be useful, it should reflect realities and be more realistically adaptable to practice.

Intelligence in Vietnam was truly a complex business because the war itself was complex. It was at the same time a war of ideologies, a civil war between the North and the South, and a war that was half conventional, half unconventional, and finally totally conventional at the end. Furthermore it was a proving ground for strategies, tactics, and the modern weapon systems of two great contending world blocs.

Intelligence in Vietnam had its share of failures and successes. During the early period of the war, it was plagued by instability, dilution of effort and a lack of professionalism. With the advent of cooperation and coordination with US forces, however, it gradually improved and really attained solid ground after 1968. From that time on, its activities were crowned with successes on a professional point of view. But its successes could have been more substantial if intelligence had been given its justified status and most importantly, if its capabilities had been employed more impartially, objectively, and in a more disinterested manner. Intelligence could have reaped more successes if the political system to which it responded could have rallied more popular support and consequently obtained more contributions towards intelligence activities from people in all walks of life. Such assistance to one's own armed forces after all, was nothing more than a civil obligation which, like paying taxes, was perhaps not pleasant, but nonetheless was vital to the existence of the nation.

These conclusions on intelligence in Vietnam are not intended to advance any innovative ideas. They are rather an attempt to summarize what actually took place in intelligence activities there during the war. What we experienced there and the lessons we learned from our experiences, although set in perhaps the most complex environment in which any war was ever fought, were not greatly different from what others have
experienced and learned in other conflicts. In fact, throughout there was a thread of sameness, of timelessness in the fundamental principles that have for ages been the foundation of successful intelligence practice. There needs to be simplicity of organization; unity of effort; careful delineation of interests and authority; free lateral exchange of information among agencies; comprehensive coverage of all categories of useful information and sources; clear definition of intelligence priorities; unity of command and recognition that intelligence is a command responsibility; finished intelligence rather than raw information flowing to the decision makers; appropriate high status accorded to intelligence among the other military arts and activities, and this high status must be recognized in the military budget; specific efforts to pass essential information about the enemy to the troops who do the fighting; an appreciation of the importance of learning the enemy's intention and of correctly interpreting intelligence concerning them; a theory of intelligence that fits the situation faced by the commanders and intelligence professionals who use it; and finally, any nation fighting for its existence must make every effort to mobilize its entire population in support of its armed forces, and this support must include intelligence. If it does, the reward could be immeasurable in terms of frustrating the enemy's intelligence and tactical operations as well as providing to the nation's armed forces a vast resource of information concerning enemy activities.
Glossary

ACOFS
Assistant Chief of Staff

AK-47
Russian designed assault rifle, 7.62-mm

ARDF
Airborne radar detection finding

ASA
Army Security Agency

A-2
Assistant chief of staff for military intelligence Air Force

BDA
Bomb damage assessment

CDEC
Combined Document Exploitation Center

CI
Counter Intelligence

CICV
Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam

CIO
Central Intelligence Office

CINCPAC
Commander in Chief Pacific

CMEC
Combined Materiel Exploitation Center

CMIC
Combined Military Interrogation Center

COMINT
Communication Intelligence

COSVN
Central Office of South Vietnam

CRA
Central Research Agency

DAO
Defense Attache Office

DAME
Defense against Method of Entry

DASE
Defense against Sound Equipment

DIA
Defense Intelligence Agency

DIOCC
District Intelligence Operation Coordination Center

DMZ
Demilitarized Zone

EEI
Essential Elements of Information

FFP
Field Force Police
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWMAF</td>
<td>Free World Military Assistance Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>G-2</td>
<td>Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence Corps and Division level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPIRS</td>
<td>Hot and Immediate Photo Interpretation Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMINT</td>
<td>Human Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Imitation Communication Deceptive</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDHS</td>
<td>Intelligence Data Handling System</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Imagery Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIR</td>
<td>Intelligence Information Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPIRS</td>
<td>Immediate Photo Interpretation Read Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JGS</td>
<td>Joint General Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-2</td>
<td>Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-7</td>
<td>Assistant Chief of Staff for Signal Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOB</td>
<td>Lines of Bearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>Military Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Military Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Military Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIBARS</td>
<td>Military Intelligence Battalion</td>
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<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>Military Intelligence Detachment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPD</td>
<td>Man Pack Personnel Detectors</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSD</td>
<td>Military Security Department (also MSS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NICC</td>
<td>National Intelligence Coordination Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NILOS</td>
<td>Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOPORN</td>
<td>No Foreign</td>
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<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>National Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>North Vietnamese Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>N-2</td>
<td>Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>Order of Battle</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSA</td>
<td>Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Popular Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHOTINT</td>
<td>Photo Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIOCC</td>
<td>Province Intelligence Operation Coordination Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td>Provincial Reconnaissance Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSDF</td>
<td>People Self Defense Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Regional Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVN</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVNAF</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA-7</td>
<td>Russian Heat-Seeking Rocket</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIGINT</td>
<td>Signal Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLAR</td>
<td>Side Looking Airborne Radar</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPARS</td>
<td>Significant Problem Areas Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATDET</td>
<td>Strategic Technical Detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPIR</td>
<td>Supplemental Photo Interpretation Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-2</td>
<td>Officer in charge of the Military Intelligence Section of Regiment or smaller unit, Sector and Sub-Sector level</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Technical Reconnaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAC</td>
<td>Target Research and Analysis Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIM</td>
<td>Training Relation and Instruction Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-34</td>
<td>Russian tank</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-54</td>
<td>Russian tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-59</td>
<td>Chinese copied T-54 Russian tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-60</td>
<td>Russian medium tank</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAAG</td>
<td>United States Army Support Activities Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Viet Cong</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCI</td>
<td>Viet Cong Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VNSF</td>
<td>Vietnam Special Forces</td>
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</tbody>
</table>