farming patches extended wherever they lived. The Republic of China agricultural experts proved to be highly valuable in helping the RVNAF units in this respect. In general, units in the Mekong Delta were more successful in food production than their brothers in MR-1 and MR-2, given the scarcity and aridity of farmland in those areas.

In 1967, by imposing compulsory savings, the RVN Ministry of Defense attempted to accumulate a sizable capital called "Military Savings Fund", in order to invest in industries and create an economic basis for the betterment of the individual soldier's lot. This was a major effort toward achieving partial self-reliance for the RVNAF. Unfortunately, because of mismanagement and lack of a legal basis, the effort was suspended in April 1972 after the fund had accumulated billions of piasters and several other assets.

In 1969, moving in the direction of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, the Central Logistics Command of the JGS initiated the Military Farming Program which was funded initially by a 17 million piaster capital borrowed from the national treasury. The program was designed to create several poultry and cattle farms and feed plants as foundation for a country-wide planting and breeding enterprise run by RVNAF units. After three years of operation, however, the program met with severe criticism and was finally dismissed by orders of the RVN government. It was made clear there and then that the Army should stay away from production or business altogether. So the effort made by the RVNAF to achieve self-sufficiency in a destructive war situation amounted to practically nothing.

The Communist Counteraction

When the Vietnamization program was initiated, enemy reaction at first was unclear, partly because he did not fully grasp the scope and content of the plan. Besides, the enemy was in a defensive position, militarily speaking. As a matter of fact, COSVN Resolution number 9, which was issued in July 1969, confirmed the enemy's renunciation of a quick major military victory and advocated instead "partial victories" to be achieved by a flexible military strategy adapted to the various
phases of US troop withdrawal. This strategy concentrated on attriting war-making capabilities of the US and the RVN by extensive employment of small but elite units called "Dac Cong" (Special Action or Sappers). In keeping with this strategy, the enemy substantially increased his sapper forces. In July 1969, there were 39 sapper battalions; a year later this figure was up to 65.

Not until the first half of 1970 did the enemy come up with a strategy to counteract the Vietnamization program whose objective, he reasoned, was a US step-by-step de-escalation of the war that still kept the US in a position of strength. The enemy envisioned his strategy as:

1. To attack US forces vigorously and cause them losses and difficulties as to deny them the chances to "clear and hold" and to implement the step-by-step de-escalation in strength. The goal to be achieved through these attacks was to force the US to withdraw completely.

2. To attack the RVNAF vigorously so that they would be unable to replace US forces and unable to consolidate, and therefore would have to crumble.

3. To build up forces and to wrest back the right to become master of large rural areas, strategic bases in jungles and mountains, and strategic lines of communication.

Despite their bombast, enemy actions failed to impede the Vietnamization program. And when the program resulted in remarkable achievements, its success, according to enemy documents, stunned COSVN. Contrary to what the enemy had set about to achieve, his bases and major regular units were destroyed one after another and his supply storages had to be moved across the border. As a result, the enemy provincial and district units, and the guerrilla forces of his infrastructure completely lost rear support and backing. It now took the enemy about two months to move from Kien Hoa to Ba Thu (enemy base in the Parrot's Beak area) instead of one week. The morale of enemy cadres was also on the decline. Besides, 1972 was a US election year and the Paris talks were still dragging on inconclusively. Convinced that only a forceful military action could
redress the situation to his advantage, the enemy decided to launch a
general offensive.

Intelligence reports and signs of the enemy preparations that the
US and the RVN gathered all pointed toward a big offensive and this had
been expected since the beginning of 1972. But when the enemy's Nguyen
Hue campaign, or the 1972 Summer Offensive, was finally launched, it
still created some surprise as to the targets coveted, timing and
intensity. The western border of South Vietnam which stretched along the
Truong Son mountain range was truly a big weakness for South Vietnam. Three
major frontal efforts broke out fiercely in conjunction with several
supporting actions elsewhere: Quang Tri - Thua Thien in MR-1, Binh Long
in MR-3 and Kontum in MR-2. (Map 3)

On March 30, 1972, the Quang Tri front was aflame. The enemy began
by a massive preparatory artillery fire against almost all RVNAF bases
and positions south of the DMZ and northwest of Quang Tri. Wave upon
wave of "human sea" attacks then took over, with the support of T-54
tanks. Three definite attacking spearheads took shape: north, northwest
and southwest of Dong Ha, all directed against Quang Tri city. The of­
fensive went on uninterrupted for five consecutive days and only abated
on April 4. Units of the newly activated ARVN 3d Infantry Division were
forced to fall back to the Dong Ha line of defense. (Map 4) In total,
the NVA committed in the battle four infantry divisions (304,308,312 and
325) supported by several armor, artillery and anti-aircraft units, all
under control of NVA Corps 70B.

In the meantime, in the boundary area between Quang Tri and Thua
Thien provinces and around the defense perimeter of Hue city, another
NVA division, the 324B, augmented by forces of the Tri Thien front, also
pushed vigorously against Hue city. On April 5, an armor unit of the
ARVN 1st Infantry Division was ambushed and suffered heavy losses, but
subsequent actions by the 1st Division succeeded in stabilizing the
situation.

In the area south of Hai Van Pass, Da Nang airbase was repeatedly
shelled by enemy rockets. On April 9, two bases, West and O'Connor,
located east of Hiep Duc (Quang Tin province) were overrun by forces of
the NVA 711th Division. Hiep Duc district town became isolated and Que Son district town was threatened. By the end of April, Hiep Duc had been overrun and the ARVN 2d Infantry Division was feverishly defending Que Son district town. (Map 4)

On the Quang Tri front, meanwhile, RVNAF units consolidated a line of defense and mounted limited counterattacks, but were unable to make any progress despite US air and naval fire support which increased considerably after the first few days of bad weather. In the morning of April 27, the enemy launched a second wave of attacks, making use of the concerted effort of infantry, armor and artillery. RVNAF units became disjointed and gradually retreated toward the south. The enemy kept up his offensive and by May 1, 1972 the entire Quang Tri front caved in. RVNAF units fell back again toward Hue. In the afternoon of May 1, the command post of the ARVN 3d Division was forced to evacuate the Old Citadel of Quang Tri. The local population and troop elements fled south together on National Route QL-1 which had been continually shelled by enemy artillery fire for the last two days. Losses were mounting and scattered along QL-1 south of Quang Tri city.

On April 28, in simultaneous action with the second wave of attacks in Quang Tri, the NVA 324B Division launched an attack against fire support base (FSB) Bastogne southwest of Hue, which was held by an element of the 1st Infantry Division. The base was overrun during the night and friendly troops had to evacuate the base and another one, Checkmate, nearby. (Map 4) With Bastogne in his hands, the enemy could now bring his deadly 130-mm guns to bear on Hue city, so its loss meant that Hue was under direct threat. By May 1, after the loss of Quang Tri, the mass of refugees and battered troops swarmed disorderly into Hue, creating a chaotic situation. To redress the situation, the new I Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, took drastic action which helped restore calm and confidence. Then the Airborne Division was moved into MR-1 as reinforcement and after force reorganization and a more rational division of tasks, the defense of Hue was consolidated and assured. US air and naval support, meanwhile, became more effective due to better planning and coordination.
North of Saigon, three days after the first attack against Quang Tri, an enemy tank-supported regiment attacked Lac Long base, 22 miles northwest of Tay Ninh; the base was defended by the 1/49 battalion of the ARVN 25th Infantry Division. Overwhelmed by enemy tanks, the defenders fell back from the base after only a few hours of fighting. Spurred by his victory, the enemy moved on to attack Thien Ngon base, northwest of Tay Ninh city. Again, this base was quickly overrun and Tay Ninh city was directly threatened.

While the 25th Infantry Division was preparing to counterattack, the battle of Loc Ninh broke out on April 4. (Map 5) Loc Ninh is a small district town situated in the north of Binh Long province, sitting astride QL-13 near the Cambodian border. The town was defended by a force composed of the 9th Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, a Ranger battalion and an armored squadron. After a heavy artillery barrage, the enemy tank-supported infantry began to attack. The bloody battle lasted all day long with maximum US air support. To reinforce the town defenders, the 1st Armor Squadron, which was operating north of Loc Ninh with two infantry companies, was called back. On its way to the town, this armored force ran into an extensive ambush and was largely destroyed. The next morning, with new reinforcement brought in, the enemy attacked and overran Loc Ninh.

Immediately after the attack against Loc Ninh, there were signs of enemy field preparations around An Loc, the provincial capital of Binh Long. On April 6, national route QL-13 south of An Loc was interdicted. Now that it had become clear that the enemy would strike An Loc, III Corps brought in reinforcements to organize the city's defense. On April 7, the Quan Loi airfield, about 4 miles northeast of An Loc, was attacked and overrun at night. The enemy now occupied a vantage terrain dominating the city from the north. (Map 5) While the 5th Infantry Division Headquarters and defending units within the city were improving defensive positions, the enemy was also busy preparing for the attack. Friendly patrols that moved beyond the city perimeter constantly clashed with enemy troops.
MAP 5. - THE 1972 SUMMER OFFENSIVE - MILITARY REGION 3

CAMBODIA

PHUOC LONG

Loc Ninh

Binh Long

Quan Loi

An Loc

△ 172

△ 169

TAY NINH

Loc Long

Thien Ngon

Tay Ninh

Chon Thanh

Binh Duong

Ben Cat

Go Dau Ha

Siray Rieng

Dong Soi

En. Attack Blocking Position

QL 22

QL 13

QL 1
On April 12, enemy artillery pounded An Loc and at 0600 hours the next morning the attack against the city began. By this time, III Corps Headquarters and the US Third Regional Assistance Command (TRAC) were prepared to provide support for the besieged city. After several artillery barrages, enemy infantry and tanks moved in to attack. During the next three days, alternated shellings and ground attacks were launched against the city. But the enemy appeared to have trouble coordinating the movement of infantry and tanks. As a result, several enemy tanks were left isolated when they moved into the city; they became excellent targets for our troops' M-72 rocket launchers. The attack gradually subsided in the morning of April 16. By then, 23 enemy tanks, mostly T-54's, had been destroyed and enemy troops also suffered heavy casualties. Units of the 5th Division and the provincial RF and PF units held their positions but the northern half of the city was under enemy control.

Intelligence indicated that three enemy divisions supported by several tank and artillery units had been deployed into the offensive: the NVA CT-5 Division against Loc Ninh, the CT-9 Division against An Loc and the CT-7 Division blocking reinforcement route QL-13. III Corps was reinforced by the 1st Airborne Brigade and the 21st Infantry Division (deployed from MR-4), which shared the responsibility of clearing QL-13 into An Loc. Meanwhile, enemy radio broadcast boasted that An Loc had been occupied on April 18, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government was going to move into the city on April 20.

Probably because the deadline had been set, on April 19 the enemy heavily shelled An Loc and positions of the 6th ABN Battalion south of the city. Overwhelmed by the tank-supported combined attack by the enemy 141st and 275th Regiments, the 6th ABN Battalion fell back into the city. Hill 169 thus fell into enemy hands, but the CT-9 Division failed to take the city. On April 21, the 5th and 8th ABN Battalions succeeded in moving into the city and joined forces with the 5th Division. The northern half of the city, meanwhile, was still in enemy hands. As a result, all supplies for the city had to be brought in by air, and only part of the wounded could be evacuated. Air activities were greatly hampered by the enemy extensive array of anti-aircraft weapons and the
city was constantly shelled by enemy artillery fire.

In early May, 1972, the enemy brought in the CT-5 Division and 2 other regiments to replace the ineffective CT-9. The city of An Loc was then tightly encircled by three inter-connected enemy divisions: the CT-5, CT-7, and CT-9. On May 11, after careful preparations, the CT-5 Division began to assault friendly positions. But US air support had been planned for the besieged city. On May 11 alone, 30 B-52 and 297 tactical air sorties were flown in support of ARVN troops and subsequently a daily average of 260 tactical air sorties were provided. On that same day, An Loc was the target for 10,000 enemy artillery rounds. At the same time, the enemy also changed his infantry-armor tactic. However, by May 13, all of his 40 tanks that had penetrated the city were destroyed and two efforts by the enemy to break through friendly positions were also stopped.

The enemy attacking force, therefore, diminished greatly as of May 11. Every assault attempt seemed to be broken by the deadly B-52 bombs, and as of May 15, the enemy renounced the conquest of An Loc altogether. In the meantime, south of the city, the 21st Infantry Division, now reinforced by the 15th Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division, tried hard to clear QL-13. On June 8 and 12, the defenders of An Loc completed the annihilation of the enemy's last two pockets of resistance inside the city. On June 14, 1,500 troops of the 18th Infantry Division were helilifted into An Loc, and the next day, units of the 5th Division enlarged the city's perimeter without encountering enemy resistance. The siege on An Loc thus ended after two long months.

In MR-2, the enemy design to attack the Dakto-Kontum area was no surprise to II Corps because his troop movements had been detected for a long time. As a result, the northern area of Kontum was heavily reinforced. VNAF air reconnaissance and US air cavalry teams, as a matter of fact, had found enemy tank tracks as early as in February 1972. The 22d Division Forward CP and two of its regiments, an ABN brigade, the 2d Armored Brigade and Ranger units, supported by a total of 50 artillery pieces were constantly moving in search of enemy contact and stood ready to fight. Tactical and strategic air strikes, meanwhile, were employed to attrite enemy forces.
On April 14, ARVN units in the Dakto - Tan Canh area began to clash with enemy troops but the ensuing battles were largely inconsequential. On April 23, the enemy suddenly employed AT-3 guided missiles to attack the Tan Canh area, the Forward CP of the 22d Infantry Division located there, and destroyed a number of M-41 tanks. Some bunkers and the command shelter of the 22d Division were destroyed. During the night of April 23, a sudden maneuver of enemy tanks created disorder in two bases at Tan Canh (Forward CP, 22d Division CP plus its 42d Regiment) and Dakto II (47th Regiment). Troops of the Forward CP broke ranks and fled, giving the enemy NT-2 Division an easy victory. Other units of the 22d Division were either ambushed by the enemy when trying to save the Division CP or fell back to Kontum.

After the fall of Tan Canh - Dakto and the disruption of the 22d Division, Kontum was threatened. In the face of the enemy threat, II Corps moved the 23d Infantry Division into Kontum. While intelligence indicated that the NVA 320th, NT-2 Division, and other B-3 front units were moving into a new staging area, the 23d Division, Ranger units and provincial RF and PF units were also busy preparing defensive positions and training troops in the use of the LAW rocket launcher. In the meantime, north of Binh Dinh province, the NVA 3d (Gold Star) Division, taking advantage of the situation, attacked and overran all three district towns there: Hoai Nhon, Hoai An and Tam Quan. The danger of South Vietnam being cut in half along QL-19 from Kontum to Qui Nhon again loomed ahead. (Map 4)

As intelligence reports had accurately indicated, on May 14 the enemy B-3 front units began attacking Kontum. But the enemy infantry and armor effort moving toward the city was effectively interdicted by ARVN concentrated artillery fire. Despite being interdicted and a delay in movement, the enemy still moved in. He had not used artillery intensively before maneuvering his troops for assault, thinking perhaps that Kontum would also be as easy to take as Tan Canh three weeks earlier. This time, however, TOW-equipped US gunships were extremely effective in searching out and destroying enemy tanks. The enemy daytime attack was driven back but it was followed by a heavier one during the night.

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About one enemy battalion managed to penetrate into the city between the TAORs of the 44th and 53d Regiments of the 23d Division. To clear this infiltrated force, the 23d Division moved back its units and let B-52s do their work. This success broke the first enemy attempt to take Kontum. Subsequent patrols sent out of the city reported that the enemy suffered extremely heavy losses.

On May 25, the enemy launched his second wave of attacks. This time, enemy artillery was especially active and some sapper elements succeeded in penetrating the RF defense area and held it firmly. The city was shelled all day long and the enemy artillery fire effectively neutralized the 23d Division artillery pieces. By nightfall, only fourteen 105-mm and two 155-mm pieces were firing. The next day, the enemy pushed hard with his combined artillery - infantry - armor attacking effort and, during the next five days, attacks and counter-attacks succeeded each other inconclusively. Friendly troops, meanwhile, destroyed many T-54 tanks and B-52s also created havoc in areas of enemy troop concentration. On May 30 the battle ended; the enemy broke contact and retreated. The 23d Division immediately radiated outward and counted enemy losses. As of June 10, all enemy pockets of resistance within the city were completely annihilated. Total enemy losses during the battle of Kontum amounted to 4,000 killed.

While the defensive battles of An Loc and Kontum were raging, I Corps was preparing for a major counterattack to retake Quang Tri. By the time the enemy had been dealt a resounding defeat in MR-3 and MR-2, I Corps immediately launched Lam Son-72 operation in the northern area of MR-1 on June 28, 1972. This was perhaps the first Corps-size operation entirely planned by a Vietnamese staff. The operational plan involved the employment of 3 divisions. The Airborne Division and the Marine Division were to push northward while the 1st Infantry Division defended the western flank of Hue. It was estimated that Quang Tri could be retaken within 9 days with maximum US air and naval support. The operation started with excellent results. On July 25, an element of the ABN Division succeeded in penetrating the Old Citadel of Quang Tri city but in the face of fierce enemy resistance had to fall back two days.
later. The Marine Division was then moved in for the attack. Enemy reactions were fierce and extensive, particularly in the Quang Tri area. His artillery caused many losses to our divisions. Finally, after an enveloping action to the northeast of the city, the Marine Division made the final assault and overran the Citadel, historic symbol of Quang Tri city, on September 15, 1972. To minimize losses, however, the counterattack effort stopped short of the southern bank of Thạch Han River which ran across the northern part of Quang Tri city.

In early August, 1972, while the ABN and Marine Divisions moved against Quang Tri, the 1st Division also pushed outward its line of defense and reoccupied Bastogne and Checkmate bases. Hue was safe and no longer under the threat of enemy 130-mm artillery fire. Meanwhile, south of Hai Van Pass, the NVA 711th Division drove back the ARVN 2d Division, occupied Ross base, Que Son district town (Quang Nam province) and also Tien Phuoc district town (Quang Tin province). After the 2d Division succeeded in retaking Que Son, however, Quang Ngai province began to feel enemy pressure. I Corps, therefore, assigned Quang Nam province and the northern area of Quang Tin to the 3d Infantry Division, which had nearly completed reorganization and refitting. After only one week of intensive actions, the 3d Division succeeded in reoccupying Ross Base and Tien Phuoc district town and cleared enemy pressure around Hau Duc district town (Quang Tin province).

In Binh Dinh province, the 22d Division, after regrouping and refitting, also quickly retook possession of Tam Quan and Hoai Nhon districts. In MR-4, during all this period of enemy offensive, RF and PF units successfully maintained security in the absence of a regular force equivalent to two divisions redeployed as reinforcement to MR-3 and MR-1. The enemy 1st Division did not launch any significant action in the Mekong Delta.

By pushing its main force divisions overtly across the DMZ and by employing modern weapons such as the T-54 tank, the 130-mm. gun, the SAM-2 and SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, and the AT-3 anti-tank missile, North VN undoubtedly wanted to prove that the Vietnamization program was a failure. But it was the enemy who had failed—both in this regard
and in his attempt to use battle gains as pressure on the Paris talks. He had occupied a few remote district towns but what a price he had paid: 100,000 troops killed and a major part of his Russian and Chinese-supplied weapons and equipment lost. He had really failed indeed, at least on the military front. The RVN had stood firmly, and its forces had succeeded in stopping the enemy. Two basic weaknesses stood out, however. First, it was obvious that the RVNAF still required substantial US air and naval fire support, and second, by committing the last general reserve to MR-1, the RVNAF were overextended to a near breaking point.
At the same time that the United States endeavored to "Vietnamize" the war, i.e., to turn over the combat burden to the Republic of Vietnam and bring US troops home, it also sought ways to bring about peace through negotiations. Peace proposals, however, had been advanced well before the Vietnamization program was initiated. As early as 1965, after he decided to bomb North Vietnam and commit US combat troops to the ground war in the South, President Johnson had already initiated a peace offensive. On April 7, 1965, at the John Hopkins University in Baltimore, he proposed "unconditional discussions" with North Vietnam and a one-billion aid package for the development of Indochina, which of course included North Vietnam as beneficiary. To induce North Vietnam to accept his proposal, the US President stopped the bombing for five days. But stung hard by the heavy blows of the US stick, North Vietnam was in no mood to bite the carrot.

On September 25, 1965, at the Manila Conference, which assembled the heads of allied countries providing military assistance to South Vietnam, President Johnson announced that the US and allied forces would withdraw from South Vietnam within six months if the other side would withdraw his troops to the north, stop his infiltrations, and reduce the level of war activities. The United States, while indicating its goodwill and inclination toward peace, was nevertheless determined to protect South Vietnam.

The first bombing halt failed to produce a response from North Vietnam. Perhaps it was too short for the enemy to take the proposal into full consideration. So the second bombing halt of 1965 was
deliberately stretched to 37 days, because as Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara explained, "we should give North Vietnam a face-saving chance to stop the aggression." 1

But probes and contacts made to further the peace cause during the next two years, 1966 and 1967, failed to bring about any significant results.

Then, on September 29, 1967, at San Antonio, President Johnson again offered to cease all bombing of North Vietnam if this would lead to peace negotiations and if North Vietnam would not take advantage of it. And, during the following months, in spite of several discrete probings through diplomatic channels, Hanoi still refused to talk.

The American Quest for Peace

The enemy general offensive of 1968 was a stunning feat in view of its scope and intensity. Faced with mounting internal difficulties and divisiveness, the United States elected to de-escalate the war. The American public and political circles, meanwhile, began to see things under a new light. On March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced the cessation of bombings above the 19th parallel, appealed to North Vietnam to negotiate, and made public his decision not to seek re-election. His dramatic move immediately produced a favorable response from North Vietnam.

Hanoi agreed to talk and the first limited US-North Vietnamese meeting took place in Paris on May 13, 1968. The initial talks brought about no concrete results, however. In October 1968, the US delegate, Mr. Averell Harriman, proposed that the US would cease its bombings altogether if North Vietnam consented to an expanded peace conference. Xuan Thuy, the North Vietnamese delegate, agreed. On October 31, 1968, without consulting the RVN, President Johnson ordered the complete cessation of bombing in North Vietnam. The newly expanded peace talks were scheduled to take place on November 6, 1968.

In Saigon, meanwhile, President Nguyen Van Thieu declared that because the United States had acted unilaterally, the Republic of Vietnam was not obligated to attend the Paris talks. It was the start of internal friction on the allied side. South Vietnam, which so far had considered the Viet Cong as mere rebels, was understandably excited and worried when forced to sit at the same table with its adversary on an equal basis. The vision of a coalition with the Communists at the end of the negotiating path created additional concern and reluctance on the part of the government and people of South Vietnam. His opposition to President Johnson's unilateral action turned President Thieu into a national hero almost overnight. South Vietnam, however, was hardly in a position to perpetuate its obdurate stand and finally gave its consent to attend the peace talks. In the meantime, Mr. Richard M. Nixon won the election and was sworn in as President of the United States.

On January 25, 1969, the four delegations to the peace talks convened at the Majestic Hotel in Paris. On our side were the United States and the Republic of Vietnam, on the other side, North Vietnam and the NLF (Viet Cong). No sooner had the first session begun than it ran into an initial deadlock on an appropriate shape for the conference table. This seemingly trivial problem took quite some time to be resolved since the shape of the table symbolized the composition of the conference and the relative position of each delegation. It also exemplified the value attached to propaganda by the Communists and involved to a lesser degree the future outcome of the talks. Since we did not recognize the NLF, our side maintained that the talks were essentially a two-sided affair: our side and the other (adversary) side. The Communists, however, were intent on elevating the role and position of the NLF. Consequently they contended that the conference was composed of four distinct delegations, that it was a four-sided affair.

The US delegation proposed a two-track approach to the talks, or in other words, a separation of military and political problems. Military problems should be settled between the US and North Vietnam; as to political problems, they should be settled between the RVN and the NLF. During the drawn-out talks, the Communists adamantly maintained
that political problems simply could not be separated from military ones. While the US proposed simultaneous withdrawal of troops, our adversary stubbornly demanded that the US withdraw its troops unilaterally and replace the current regime of South Vietnam by a coalition government.

On April 7, 1969, the RVN delegation advanced a six-point peace program. A month later, on May 8, 1969, the NLF delegation made a counter-proposal by advancing its own ten-point plan to end the war.

The proposals advanced by both sides were so distant from each other that there was hardly room for compromise. While the RVN wanted North Vietnam to withdraw its troops and stop using bases in Laos and Cambodia, the Communists insisted on an unconditional withdrawal of US and allied forces and never admitted to the presence of NVA troops in South Vietnam. Whereas the RVN proposed national reconciliation, the Communists demanded the removal of the legal government of South Vietnam and its replacement by a coalition government under an entirely new constitution. Both sides mentioned international control, but the RVN wanted it as a guarantee to prevent the resumption of war while the other side intended it to be an instrument to supervise the withdrawal of US troops.

On May 14, 1969, President Nixon clarified the US position in an important policy speech. The United States, he said, was determined not to seek a purely military solution to the war, nor did it look forward to establishing any bases in South Vietnam. He also laid out the principles of a new US policy toward Vietnam by asserting that the US would readily accept any government in South VN if this government was freely selected by the people and that all political components in South VN should have the right to participate in the political life of their country if they prepared to renounce violence and intimidation. At the same time, the US President advanced eight proposals for the solution of military problems concerning the war, emphasizing among other things the simultaneous withdrawal of US and NVA forces within twelve months, and the institution of an international control body to arrange for a cease-fire, help organize elections, and arrange for the early release of prisoners of war.
Along the new policy lines, both US and RVN delegations strove hard to push the talks ahead but achieved little results.

In South Vietnam, the war still raged, battle after battle. The American public meanwhile became more and more impatient. Following anti-war demonstrations which took place almost everywhere in the United States on October 15, 1969, the US President explained the situation to the American public and appealed to the "silent majority" in a speech he made on November 3. His appeal had the immediate effect of calming public opinion and buying some more time for his peace effort.

At the negotiating table, the Communists maintained a tough position, not yielding nor showing any flexibility. In general, North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam persistently demanded the withdrawal of US and allied forces in the first place, then, the cessation of all foreign aid to the RVN. The problem of armed forces in South Vietnam, they maintained, was to be solved among the Vietnamese parties concerned. The Communists next major demand was to remove the government of the RVN and replace it with a coalition government which would organize general elections in South Vietnam. Only then could a cease-fire be arranged. In other words, a political solution had to be achieved prior to the cease-fire.

American objectives, meanwhile, were to terminate the war as early as it was feasible, bring home US troops, and recover US prisoners of war. President Nixon and US high officials persistently maintained that the US position was flexible and US offers were generous and negotiable. In keeping with this line of thought, the longer the negotiations lasted, the more the US was inclined toward equalizing the differences between the two sides.

The secret talks between the US and North Vietnam became, in time, more important than the open negotiations at the Majestic Hotel. The Paris talks provided North Vietnam with an inexpensive forum for propaganda and psychological warfare. The drawn-out war, the various military "high points", and the losses incurred by the US, meanwhile, were like many repeated blows striking at American nerves and creating a stiffening pressure. North Vietnam leaders apparently felt that they could win
by just waiting, and they seemed to be confident they could do just that. They surely never renounced their ultimate goal; they agreed to talk only because it could afford them an international outlet for propaganda and the time needed to strengthen their armed forces. To them, talks were just a temporary phase of total war and should last as long as it was required to wear down the adversary's will and determination. Besides, their efforts were reinforced by anti-war demonstrations, vocal doves, severe domestic divisiveness in the American heartland, and the promise by the American president himself to end the war. All of these happenings apparently did not allow the US to negotiate from a position of strength. And so the US went from one concession to another concession and to still another.

It was under these conditions that on October 8, 1970, Ambassador Bruce advanced the standstill cease-fire proposal. He said that the US was also prepared to withdraw all its troops and agree to a rational political solution for South Vietnam. So, the United States no longer demanded that its troop withdrawal be reciprocated by North Vietnam. Instead, it implied, by the standstill cease-fire proposal, that North Vietnam could keep its troops in the South. By its implications, a standstill cease-fire also meant that the Communists were in legal control of the areas they now occupied.

The Communists, however, were hardly moved. In fact, they did not appear to be ready for a cease-fire. For one thing, the RVN government was still firmly in control; 90% of all hamlets were in the RVN hands. For another, its cross-border operation into Cambodia had resulted in a resounding success. So, the Communists felt they needed more time. But the people of South Vietnam, meanwhile, were becoming genuinely concerned, and they began to feel they were in fact the losers. The "leopard skin cease-fire", as it was called by the people in Saigon, became the object of animated discussions and debates. The explanation of its true meaning by the RVN government left people suspicious and even more concerned. And with apprehension they tuned in to foreign broadcasts. The BBC, the Voice of America, and Radio Australia had more listeners than Saigon Radio during that period of time.
By mid-August 1971 the US again advanced a new proposal, a standstill ceasefire and withdrawal of US troops within nine months. This was the first time the US ever suggested a time frame for the withdrawal, a major concession to Communist demands. On the political future of South Vietnam, the US promised to remain neutral during the coming RVN presidential elections. It also agreed to limit aid to South Vietnam if Russia and China would do the same for North Vietnam and finally accepted the principle of non-alignment for the Indochinese states. Generous as it was, the US latest proposal was rejected. The peace conference made no progress and the American public, meanwhile, grew increasingly impatient.

In January 1972, the US made public still another peace proposal; two items were most significant. First, the US pledged to withdraw all troops within six months after the agreement was signed. Second, the US had obtained President Thieu's agreement to step down one month before general elections were to take place in South Vietnam. Other familiar areas of agreement were still binding, such as a standstill ceasefire over the entire territory of Indochina, prompt and unconditional release of prisoners of war, international control of the ceasefire and elections, and finally an international guarantee for the strict observation of the agreement. The offer to withdraw all US troops within six months was a considerable reduction when compared to the nine months just the previous summer. The requirement for President Thieu to step down before the elections was also regarded with considerable suspicion by the RVN. The US had lost patience, and this became more and more evident to the people of South Vietnam. It was now all too clear that the US was going to withdraw its troops sooner or later, and President Thieu too had to resign before the elections. So, as more was learned about the secret talks, the RVN became more conscious of its unfavorable position. Despite the improved military situation and the beginning of economic recovery after three years of security, the RVN government found it hard to convince the people through its information program, which by now had lost its persuasive power. And in a war in which politics played a key role, this was a fundamental setback. Each concession made by the American "big brother" resulted in political fever for the RVN.
The Vietnam war was wearing down American will, and this threatened to shatter the Vietnamese people's will to fight as well. Even with all its generosity, however, the new US proposal was still not palatable to North Vietnamese leaders. Apparently, they wanted more.

One day after its troops overran Quang Tri, North Vietnam received another US proposal. If North Vietnam consented to a cease fire and released American prisoners, the new proposal said, the US was prepared to withdraw its troops from Indochina within four months. Deep concern seemed to have edged the US toward this ultimate concession which again was not enough for the Communists who, on the way to winning the military war, wanted even more. The Communists apparently concluded that if they persisted, they could obtain more concessions from the US. Le Duc Tho, therefore, rejected Dr. Kissinger's proposal.

As of June 1972, however, the Communist Summer Offensive gave all the indications of a military fiasco. Communist negotiators, as a result, began to tone down their tough demands. It was all too apparent. Fighting had not accomplished much. Now it was time for talks, and they immediately outlined a political solution. After more meetings in Paris during the summer of 1972 and again on October 8, 1972, Le Duc Tho handed to Dr. Kissinger a nine-point proposal drafted under the format of a tentative "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam." This draft served as a basis for discussions with Dr. Kissinger and his staff. There were a few points, however, which challenged the American position. The ceasefire, for instance, was to be effective only with regard to South VN and not to Indochina as the US had proposed. Tho's proposal was also ambiguous as to the establishment of an "International Commission of Control and Supervision," which Washington wanted to be fully manned and readily employable at the time of the cease-fire to deter violations. The wording and terminology used in Hanoi's proposal also sounded uncivil to Saigon. The draft needed some modifications.

In the final analysis, however, Hanoi had retracted from its obdurate stand. For one thing, it no longer demanded the removal of President Thieu and the replacement of his government by a coalition. For another, the doors were now wide open for an honorable American exit.
from Vietnam and the recovery of American prisoners. Almost immediately, both US and NVN staffs went to work to achieve early agreement and to complete a workable draft text for the Agreement. Then, with the draft Agreement in hand, Dr. Kissinger left for Saigon.

Arriving in Saigon, Dr. Kissinger immediately met with President Thieu on October 19. After submitting an English copy of the Agreement draft to President Thieu, Dr. Kissinger explained a few major issues which he thought were advantageous to South Vietnam. First, President Thieu was to remain in power and enjoy the veto prerogative in the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord. This Council, Dr. Kissinger asserted, was not a form of coalition; the Communists were simply permitted to participate in a political process, i.e. they completely renounced a conquest. Second, the US would continue to maintain airbases in Thailand and the 7th Fleet offshore to protect South Vietnam and deter Communist aggression. Third, economic and military aid to South Vietnam would continue to be provided. The United States also believed that an understanding had been made with Russia and China to limit the supply of weapons to North Vietnam. Finally, the Agreement would permit the US to withdraw its troops, recover its prisoners of war, and be in a better position to support Saigon. Dr. Kissinger then concluded that "this was a good agreement worthy of our joint effort". However, he did not go into detail on the unsettled issues.

This was indeed the first time President Thieu ever saw the text of the Agreement, an agreement that decided his fate and that of the RVN. In the evening session when he met with Dr. Kissinger again, President Thieu asked for a draft text in Vietnamese. Late that night, he came into possession of the Vietnamese text.

The meetings between President Thieu and Dr. Kissinger continued. To President Thieu and his staff, it was clear that the Vietnamese text had been originally drafted by Hanoi. It smacked of Communist jargon and terminology, North VN-style. And the English text seemed to be based on

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it. There were some exceptions that were taken to the Vietnamese text. The most important of these concerned the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, whose significance was not entirely clear. The English text used the expression "administrative structure" but rendered by the Vietnamese text, the term meant "governmental structure." According to Dr. Kissinger, he had discussed these expressions at length with Le Duc Tho and they had agreed on "administrative structure." Apparently, someone had elected differently for the Vietnamese text. It was difficult, however, to know for certain the implication of the differences in texts. Aside from this, there were many important issues contained in the text with which the RVN could not agree.

While American and Vietnamese officials worked on the text of the Agreement, two events occurred which made their task more complicated. On October 18, during an interview with a US journalist in Hanoi, North VN Premier Pham Van Dong declared that a "coalition government of transition" would be formed in Saigon. Thus the suspicion of a real difference that originally came from the deliberate use of different terms in the two Agreement texts was now further reinforced. The second event was the capture of an enemy document of more than 10 typewritten pages belonging to a VC district political commissar. The document contained detailed instructions for a plan to be implemented on the occasion of the ceasefire. The text of the Paris Agreement was also described in great detail in the document, a proof that even the lowest level of enemy infrastructure in South Vietnam had intimate knowledge of the agreement and was prepared to exploit it. In sharp contrast President Thieu of South Vietnam had only come to know about the Agreement text a few days earlier. Shocked by the discovery, he ordered the document brought to Saigon immediately. The next day he handed it over to Dr. Kissinger as evidence of Communist perfidy.

During subsequent meetings with Dr. Kissinger on Sunday October 22 and again on Monday October 23, President Thieu accepted the standstill ceasefire but firmly refuted three things: first, the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, which by now appeared to be a disguised form of coalition; second, the continued presence of NVA forces in South
Vietnam; third, the free use of the DMZ by the enemy. He finally refused to endorse the text of the Agreement as such.

Cease-fire and agreement with the Communists, however, were realities with which South Vietnam was soon going to live. To calm the aroused public sentiment and to enlist the people's understanding and backing, President Thieu felt he needed to prepare public opinion for what was going to happen in the days to come. So he went on television and radio to talk to his fellow countrymen. He expounded the difference between US and RVN positions, informed the public of his personal struggle, and declared he flatly rejected coalition and the presence of 300,000 NVA troops in South Vietnam. As expected, the Communists immediately went on the counter-offensive a few days later. On October 26, Hanoi radio broadcast the nine points of the Agreement text and also disclosed details concerning secret talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. Hanoi demanded that the US sign the Agreement as it was committed to do. Only then did the South Vietnamese people realize that Dr. Kissinger had agreed on a timetable for the signing of the Agreement with North Vietnam. The RVN government knew absolutely nothing about it; neither did its delegation in Paris. Now the secrets had come out in the clear. The US, meanwhile, halted all bombings in North Vietnam on October 25, 1972.

In Washington, Dr. Kissinger called a press conference during which he reported to the American public that "peace is at hand" and emphasized that:

"We will not be stampeded into an agreement until its provisions are right. We will not be deflected from an agreement when its provisions are right. And with this attitude and with some cooperation from the other side, we believe that we can restore both peace and unity to America very soon."2

The South Vietnamese people certainly heard the echoes of these words. The RVN could do nothing to prevent the US from ending the war and restoring peace. For its part, it had sincerely hoped for peace but knew

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2 News Conference of Dr. Kissinger, Documentation on the Vietnam Agreement, Department of State Bulletin.
all at once how precarious this peace would be. And left to their fate, the people and armed forces of the RVN anxiously waited for the day when they would have to take up the lone struggle against the Communists.

The signing of the Paris Agreement failed to materialize in late October 1972 as previously agreed. In November and December 1972, Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met again in Paris to discuss certain modifications, some of them based on the RVN recommendations. The North Vietnamese negotiator was irreconcilable and the meetings went into a deadlock on December 13, 1972. President Nixon then ordered a renewal of bombings, apparently to press North Vietnam into accepting the changes. He also sent a special letter to President Thieu, warning him that if South Vietnam still persisted in refusing to sign, the US would go ahead and sign the Agreement with North Vietnam. Should this occur, President Nixon emphasized, military and economic aid to South Vietnam would be suspended. On the contrary, he promised, if North Vietnam committed a grave violation, the US would react vigorously. This was what amounted to a guarantee by the President of the US. In the prevalent situation of South Vietnam, President Thieu hardly had any choice other than clinging to this promise. He finally gave in, apparently to avoid an immediate crisis.

Gravely wounded by twelve consecutive days of intensive bombings, North Vietnam finally dragged itself to the conference table. Dr. Kissinger met with Le Duc Tho again on January 8, 1973. Six days later, the revised text of the Agreement was completed. President Nixon decided to stop all US military actions against North Vietnam as of January 15. On January 23, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met at the Majestic Hotel, went over the Agreement text for the last time, and initialed it. On January 27, representatives of the four parties to the Paris talks officially signed the Agreement on behalf of their governments. And at 0800 hours, Saigon time, the next day, January 28, 1973, the cease-fire went into effect, in principle. To the US, at least, the war had ended.
The Paris Agreement

The Agreement which was signed in Paris on January 27, 1973 was officially called "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam".

In form, the Agreement includes a principal text and four protocols. Aside from the protocol on Mine Clearing in North Vietnam, which was signed separately by the US and North Vietnam, the text of the Agreement and the other three protocols were prepared in duplicate. One set of copies was signed by four parties and the other signed between the US and North Vietnam.

In content, the Paris Agreement deals with five central problem areas:

1. Military and security problems.
2. Political problems.
3. Control and guarantee problems.
4. Problems concerning Laos and Cambodia.
5. Problems directly involving the US and North Vietnam.

The ceasefire took place at midnight, GMT, January 27, 1973 or 0800 hours, Saigon time, January 28, 1973. Armed force units of both sides and police forces were to cease all hostilities, sabotage and reprisal acts, and end all operations, patrols, reconnaissances on the ground, in the air or on the sea into the territory of the other side. All mines, booby-traps or obstacles impeding traffic would be dismantled or destroyed within 15 days of the ceasefire. In areas where fighting still continued, unit commanders of both sides would personally meet with each other after the ceasefire to arrange for interim measures. The US would cease all military activities on North Vietnam territory and clear the blockade mines. The US would dismantle, detonate, or neutralize all mines that had been implanted in North Vietnam. Within sixty days after the signing of the Agreement, US and allied countries would withdraw all military forces, advisers, military personnel and technicians, and all weapons...
and equipment from Vietnam. Military installations would also be dis-
mantled within the same period. Armaments, munitions, and expendable
items of war materiel, which were destroyed or damaged, could be re-
placed on the basis of piece-for-piece of the same characteristics.

The introduction of replacement items of war materiel would take
place under the control of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission (JMC)
and the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) at
points of entry to be designated. Each South Vietnamese party was per-
mitted to select a maximum of 6 points of entry in addition to the
locations where ICCS teams were installed. All prisoners of war and
captured foreign civilians would be returned to the party concerned
concurrent with the withdrawal of foreign troops. The parties would
exchange complete lists of detained personnel on the day of the signing
of the Agreement. The parties would also help each other to gather in-
formation about those personnel missing in action and to locate and
recover remains of the dead. The ICCS and JMC would witness and monitor
the prisoner exchanges. As to the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel
captured and detained in South Vietnam, it would be resolved on the
basis of Article 21 (b) of the 1954 Geneva Accords (concerning cadre
and other personnel of each party). Each South Vietnamese party would
exchange lists of those personnel and inform each other of the detention
locations within 15 days, then solve the return problem within 90 days.

In the realm of politics, several points are worth mentioning. The
US and North Vietnam pledged to respect the right for self-determination of
South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese people would select a future political
regime of their choice through free and democratic elections under inter-
national supervision. The two parties in South Vietnam would observe the
ceasefire, maintain peace, reconcile, and guarantee freedom and demo-
ocratic rights to the people. Immediately after the ceasefire, the two
parties would consult each other in order to establish the National
Council of Reconciliation and Concord with three equal segments. This
Council was to operate on the principles of consultation and unanimity.
Afterwards, there would be discussions to establish the Councils at lower
levels. The two parties would have to achieve an agreement on domestic problems as soon as possible and try to accomplish this within 90 days.

The National Council of Reconciliation and Concord was to have the task of determining the procedures and modalities for general elections and organizing them. The institutions for which the general elections were to be held would be agreed upon by both parties. The question of Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam would be settled by the two parties in the spirit of national reconciliation and concord and mutual respect. South Vietnam would pursue a foreign policy of peace, independence, and non-alignment. The reunification of VN would be carried out step by step through peaceful means, and, pending reunification, the 17th parallel and the DMZ, as determined by the 1954 Geneva Accords, would be respected.

The task of controlling and supervising the implementation of the Paris Agreement was assigned to the International Commission of Control and Supervision and the Four-Party and Two-Party Joint Military Commissions. The four countries which participated in the ICCS, Canada, Indonesia, Hungary, and Poland, were to contribute an authorized 1160 man-strong force. The Commission was tasked especially to enforce the ceasefire, the release of prisoners, and the ban on illegal introduction of armed forces and war materiel. Operating on the principles of consultation and unanimity, representatives of the four member countries would take turns in chairing the Commission. In addition to the general headquarters at Saigon, there were seven regional teams assigned to and responsible for the seven regions of South Vietnam and 51 teams would carry out permanent or special duties. (Map 6)

The Four-Party Joint Military Commission was made up of representatives of the four signatory parties of the Paris Agreement. This was the only organization that included US representatives. The JMC was charged with the task of coordinating and supervising the implementation of the Agreement and also served as a liaison agency for the four parties. It also had the additional responsibility of preventing and discovering violations and helping to solve conflicts. In addition to a Central JMC at Saigon, there were 7 Regional JMC corresponding to the ICCS Regional teams and 26 JMC teams located throughout South Vietnam. (Map 7) The Four-Party JMC would
Map concerning the Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the International Commission of Control and Supervision
Map concerning the Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions

Region Boundary
Teams - Article 13 (b) □
Teams - Article 13 (c) ◦
be disbanded after 60 days of operation and replaced by the Two-Party JMC. The JMC also operated on the principle of unanimity but did not have a Chairman. Meetings were convened at the request of the representatives.

The four signatory parties also agreed to convene an International Conference within 30 days of the signing to guarantee the ending of the war and the maintenance of peace in Vietnam. Participation to the conference would include France, Russia, China, England, four member countries of the ICCS, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and four members of the Paris Talks.

Regarding Laos and Cambodia, the signatory parties pledged to respect their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity and to abstain from using their territories for aggressive activities.

Finally, the United States, in the prospect of an eventual reconciliation and re-establishment of useful relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, would make contributions, in keeping with its traditional generosity, to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of Vietnam and throughout Indochina.

The Communist Scheme

While drafting the last peace proposal in Paris, the Communists also laid out a detailed plan aimed at taking advantage of the ceasefire. The plan was disseminated to all echelons of the Communist party and armed force hierarchy with detailed instructions for action.

In mid-October 1972, an ARVN unit operating in Quang Nam province seized an enemy document which turned out to be the ceasefire plan itself. It gave an accurate description of the Agreement and the "leopard skin" ceasefire, and prescribed an implementation through three phases.

**Phase I:** This was the pre-ceasefire or preparatory phase. Cadres were instructed to study the Agreement carefully, to memorize its provisions, to learn how to interpret them to their advantage and to be prepared to present them to the public or to debate them with adversaries.
Propaganda teams were to be organized as the basic means for proselyting actions. All sewing machines were to be requisitioned for the manufacture of NLF flags, which would be planted, on the cease-fire day, in every house, every hamlet, and on every hill. The enemy was thus prepared to demonstrate his ubiquitous presence to whatever international control body was in place at that time. Major units, meanwhile, were to conduct attacks in order to pin down RVNAF units. During this time, Communist regional forces and the local militia, broken down into small elements, were to penetrate every hamlet and every populated area, block every important axis of communication and stay in place until international representatives arrived.

Phase II: This was the implementation phase centering around the ceasefire day. The precise date and time of the ceasefire would be announced. Three days before ceasefire day, all Communist units were to push military attacks vigorously in order to occupy the maximum amount of territory and number of important objectives. On the ceasefire day, they were to hold firmly to the gains thus achieved and simultaneously fly the NLF flags. The population and various organizations would stage demonstrations demanding the RVNAF to implement the ceasefire and to return RVN soldiers to their families. Subsequently there was to be insistence on the exercise of the rights of freedom, movement, meeting, abrogation of military service, curfew, etc. All these actions were designed to create maximum trouble for the RVN government. In the meantime, armed propaganda units were to push proselyting actions vigorously, explain the Agreement, exhort ARVN soldiers to stop fighting, go on leave, visit their home villages, and renounce military service altogether.

Phase III: This was the post-ceasefire or consolidation phase. All the gains achieved were to be held and consolidated. Subsequent actions would depend on the situation and the results obtained in the previous phases, but the objective was to press on and dismantle the RVNAF, to enhance Communist prestige while keeping up a propaganda effort to demand the implementation and observance of the Agreement.
This was, in summarized form, the content of directives issued to subordinate echelons of the Communist party and army. They were to be responsible for a face-to-face showdown of force and wits. But the ceasefire, which was supposed to take place at the end of October 1972 never materialized. As a result, certain lower-echelon enemy units, which had not been informed of the delay in time, went ahead according to plan. And the population and land grab campaign which broke out prematurely during the last few days of October 1972 turned into an important military "high point".

Captured documents, when corroborated with intelligence reports and the depositions of returnees and prisoners of war, provided still more revealing details. Most important was Directive No. 2/73 issued by the Communist Party's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) in January 1973, and intended for the party and army hierarchy. The Paris Agreement, according to the Directive, was a decisive, historic victory for the Communist movement in South Vietnam and constituted an important step toward achieving the people's democratic revolution in the South. The Agreement did not end the struggle for country reunification but brought about a status of "half-war, half-peace" in which politics was to have a primary role and military actions a support role. In performing this role, military forces were to provide support for the proselyting effort directed at enemy troops, to protect the people's struggle movement, and to defend the liberated areas.

To push the political offensive ahead, Directive 2/73 prescribed five principal tasks for infrastructure echelons: 1) to mobilize the population, 2) to develop the people's movement, 3) to modify the infrastructure and local forces so that they would be consistent with the new circumstances, 4) to reinforce the infrastructure, armed forces, and revolutionary committees, and 5) to adjust operation and administration procedures to the new task and new situation.

This political offensive effort particularly emphasized the use of propaganda which was aimed at three main objectives: 1) to win over international public opinion, 2) to win over the population and to disintegrate the RVNAF, and 3) to consolidate Communist ranks.
With respect to the world at large, the enemy propaganda effort sought to praise his strict observance of the Agreement, to denounce (and also to defame) violations by the US and the RVN, and to justify his military actions as mere acts of self-defense or punishments. It also endeavored to gain the sympathy of the American people and to revive the old anti-war movement in support of this struggle.

The second enemy propaganda objective was to disintegrate the spiritual and physical cohesion of the RVNAF by proselyting means. His basic line of coaxing ARVN troops was "Now that peace had come back, instead of participating in operations and trying to kill each other, we should get together for friendly chats and invite each other to celebration parties; also, we should take time out to visit our home villages and free ourselves from military service."

Another major enemy effort was directed toward maintaining the morale of his own troops. After many years of separation from their families, these troops were naturally longing for a chance to return to their home villages in the North. But the Communist leadership did not sign the Agreement for the purpose of restoring peace. As a result, the enemy made a deliberate effort to distract his troops by holding uninterrupted education sessions alternated by celebration parties. Political cadres from the North were sent into South Vietnam to visit troop units and hold talks. A returnee from the enemy Quang Da Front who came over to the RVN side after the ceasefire told of a visit by To Huu, a famous poet and also member of the Labor (Communist) Party Central Committee. To Huu told NVA troops in the South that the Ceasefire Agreement was just a stopover in the long journey of liberating the South, which was still continuing. He also announced that several youth groups and people's organizations in North Vietnam were "volunteering" for service in the South to help build and develop South Vietnam and that troops were to carry on their mission as usual. Several days later, intelligence reports revealed the presence of several civil organizations infiltrated from the North. There were students from Hanoi and other North Vietnam provinces, women from northern rural areas who came South to build roads, farm communes, and cities, and to live among NVA troops.
North Vietnam also introduced into the South several civic and adminis-
trative cadres of all branches with a view to organize and run a
governmental structure in Communist-held areas and also to stand ready
to take over the RVN administration in others. Another political
struggle task assigned to enemy cadres after the ceasefire was to
demonstrate the influence of the Provisional Revolutionary government
(PRG) of South Vietnam by confiscating RVN-issued identification cards and
replacing them with those issued by the PRG. Many such ID cards seized
in Quang Nam province were signed, stamped, and backdated several years
with only a blank space for names. Apparently, the enemy wanted to
prove that he had been in control of Quang Nam for several years.

An enemy document captured in Can Tho clearly showed us how the
enemy infrastructure cadre perceived and implemented Directive No. 2/73.
On February 19, 1973, the Revolutionary Committee of Can Tho issued
a Directive labeled "Instructional Materiel for Provincial Units of
Can Tho". Armed units, this document said, were responsible for
supporting the political struggle by violence, but such military actions
were not meant to be clear-cut violations of the Agreement. To do this,
army units were to protect liberated areas to create an environment
conducive to the development of governmental structure. RVN village
and hamlet cadres were to be eliminated; outposts were to be encircled
by mines and booby traps; and guerrilla actions such as ambushes and
attacks should be stepped up. Enemy cadres were also ordered to organize
permanent education sessions in order to "develop leadership spirit".
Thus the performance that the enemy expected from his army units in Can
Tho after the ceasefire was their occupation of the entire rural area
so that the enemy could set up his government. There would be no major
attacks which looked like flagrant violations; outposts manned by RF
and PF units would simply be neutralized through encirclement and iso-
lation. And if there were any shootings or killings, they would be
described as self-defense acts: the PRG was simply defending its areas
of control.
In early 1973, Van Tien Dung, NVA Chief of Staff, made a visit to South VN battlefields. He echoed To Huu by explaining to his troops that the Paris Agreement was but a "short rest" on the way to liberate the southern half of VN and that it was a link in the "talk and fight" strategy. The Labor Party, he said, had resolved to lead the people's liberation war to its final goal with a policy adaptable to each phase of the struggle. Now, he said, this policy was the establishment of a three-segment coalition government; the army, therefore, should be prepared to respond to the new situation. In particular, Dung emphasized, armed units should be guarded against two extremist attitudes: first, to believe that the Paris Agreement could bring about a peaceful solution to the problem of liberating the South, and second, to believe that war ought to be resumed, and by military force alone, the army, could achieve final victory in the struggle.

In April 1973, the warning against these extremes was analyzed in Directive No. 3/73 and described as a flexible strategic policy adapted to a situation which the enemy called "peace in war" and aimed at taking advantage of the legalistic aspect of the Agreement while carrying on the struggle. The difficulty for the enemy leadership, apparently, was how to reconcile these extremist attitudes among lower-echelon cadres and troops. As a result, this subject was explained at length and carefully studied.

Intelligence reports also revealed that during a meeting of provincial level cadres in May 1973, the enemy came to the conclusion that revolution in South Vietnam could only be achieved through military force by a lightning offensive of the 1968 type. A returnee, former cadre of Lam Dong province, disclosed an enemy plan to launch a lightning offensive and also mentioned a "strategic raid" against Hue and Da Nang in MR-1. This information was corroborated by other intelligence reports. It had become obvious to the enemy that he could not win by a political struggle after attempting it for four months after the ceasefire. In another meeting, party commissars in the enemy MR-2 also reached the same conclusion. If the RVN failed to establish a coalition government as required by the Paris Agreement, the Communists had the capability.
to launch a "general offensive and general uprising". The enemy thus became more and more convinced of the employment of military force to reach his goal.

During all this time, high-level North Vietnamese delegations quietly went abroad seeking aid. The enemy was striving to strengthen his forces and prepare his battlefield. In an interview with the press, Nguyen Huu Tho, leader of the NLF, declared that while the PRG was not intent on launching an offensive, it would enjoy an advantageous position if war broke out. The enemy attack against the Le Minh border camp in MR-2 on September 22, 1973, marked the turning point of Communist strategy. By mid-October 1973, both Hanoi and the NLF radio openly ordered Communist units to attack "everywhere and under every appropriate form" in retaliation of the RVN. Directive No. 4/73, which was disseminated by COSVN at about that time, gave clear guidance as to "attacking point by point" in order to "achieve partial victory" and "to progress toward final victory". Armed forces, the directive said, were to attack and make propaganda afterwards or to make propaganda and then attack. During this time, enemy combat units began to move out and successively overran several Ranger-held border outposts of the RVN.

The change in enemy strategic direction was described in the clearest terms in COSVN Resolution 12, which was based on the Resolution adopted by the 21st Central Committee Plenary in late December 1973 or early January 1974. Both documents came to the conclusion that the Communist movement in Vietnam since 1954 had never been so strong as it now was. Communist units would implement the motto "War in Peace" and would conduct local attacks while publicly contending that they respected the Paris Agreement. These local attacks, in the enemy scheme, included attacks against outposts and bases such as district towns, district headquarters, rear bases of RVNAF battalions and regiments, and even division headquarters. In political action, the enemy focused his effort on the infrastructure and continued proselyting actions.

Resolution 12, therefore, provided close guidance for all enemy activities during 1974.
In January 1975, the "Hoc Tap" (Study) gazette of the Communist Party of North Vietnam reported on the 23d Meeting of the Party Central Committee. The report hinted at the possibility of a general offensive in South Vietnam. But as prerequisite for the offensive, the North Vietnam leadership felt that five tasks should be accomplished: to defeat the RVN Pacification and Development program, to consolidate and enlarge liberated areas, to build up military force in all aspects, to promote anti-RVN opposition movements in cities, and finally to push vigorously military and political offensive efforts. Among the five tasks mentioned, the most important was to oppose and defeat the RVN Pacification and Development effort and to disintegrate the RVN military forces. By defeating the pacification effort the enemy would be able to enlarge his control over contested areas and to destroy most RVN political and economic achievements.

Subsequent directives issued by the enemy went into such details as how many hamlets should be occupied, how many outposts should be destroyed, how much population should be liberated and the percentage of RVNAF troops to be annihilated, for example 1/2 of PSDF, 1/3 of RF and PF, 1/4 of regular forces, etc. One document also revealed the enemy intention to attack important cities such as Saigon, Hue, Da Nang, and Can Tho. The enemy reasoned that once these vital centers were occupied, other areas would follow suit. The enemy 23d Party Congress also debated the US intervention capability. During the 1972 summer offensive, the enemy had erred in his estimate that the US would not blockade his harbors and unleash massive B-52 bombings. This possibility was taken into account this time; however, he believed that there was little chance that it would occur.

As to future military actions, the North Vietnamese leadership saw two possibilities: possibility one predicted the deterioration of the RVN, and in this case the enemy would launch a general offensive; possibility two envisaged forceful reactions by the VN, which the enemy would consider as a resumption of war: in that case, the enemy would retaliate and was prepared to seize what he called "a strategic opportunity" in
order to launch a general offensive. In possibility one, the US
would have no reason to intervene because the enemy only employed
units actually located in South Vietnam; hence the fighting was just an
internal conflict. In possibility two, the enemy would try to launch
a lightning offensive by using all his forces, including the general
reserve in the North, so that the US would have no time to intervene.

Whatever his final course of action, the enemy had already opted
for a decisive military solution to settle the problem of South Vietnam.
Thus the long-range political struggle appeared to be relegated to
a secondary rank if not entirely forsaken.

The Ceasefire

The enemy plan of taking advantage of the ceasefire had undergone
no significant changes between its disclosure in October 1972 and
January 1973. In the meantime, the RVNAF had made preparations and
were ready to counteract. The enemy went into action on 23 January,
1973, a little ahead of schedule. Besides major attacks, the enemy
broke down into small elements and penetrated about 400 hamlets through­
out the country. He also shelled important installations and set up
blocking positions on several lines of communication. Because they
had been well prepared for counteraction, the RVNAF immediately de­
ployed and held key areas. Their reactions were quick and effective
wherever the enemy happened to be. As a result, all clashes subsided
only one week after ceasefire day.

In the DMZ area, the enemy initiated no significant activities
before the ceasefire. On January 27, the Marine Division deployed a
tank-supported brigade northward to attack and occupy the southern
bank of Cua Viet base. The operation was designed to seize a position
from which the RVNAF could control enemy sea traffic into Dong Ha
after the ceasefire. In spite of fierce resistance from the enemy,
the Marines succeeded in occupying the objective a few hours before
the ceasefire.
In Thua Thien province, elements of the NVA 324B Division had infiltrated into the coastal plain area since January 24 and penetrated some hamlets northwest of Hue city. South of Hue, at An Lo and Phu Bai, other forces of the enemy Tri-Thien MR also surfaced but were all driven back with heavy losses after a week of fighting.

South of the Hai Van Pass, in Quang Nam province, the enemy rocketed Da Nang airbase for three consecutive nights. During the night of January 27, after shelling almost all district towns and Hoi An city, regional forces of the enemy 44th Front penetrated several hamlets but were immediately repulsed the next day. The NVA 711th Division, which had suffered heavy losses prior to the ceasefire, was not active during this time. The ARVN 3d Division, after defeating the NVA 711th Division, redeployed its forces before the ceasefire and reoccupied the entire Quang Nam coastal plain, part of which had been under enemy control up to the ceasefire day.

In Quang Ngai province, the situation was more difficult for friendly troops. Enemy regional forces had penetrated several hamlets and on January 27, launched attacks and shellings throughout the province. The NVA NT-2 Division, after detaching some units to support the regional forces, pushed one of its regiments to attack Sa Huynh on January 26. Sa Huynh was a small fishing port inhabited by some 3,000 people, situated at the extreme south of Quang Ngai province. It lay astride National Route QL-1 and also the boundary of MR-1 and MR-2. If the enemy succeeded in seizing Sa Huynh, he would be in possession of a port, albeit a small one, which could serve as a point of entry, and at the same time would be able to interdict road communication between MR-1 and MR-2. All outposts at Sa Huynh were quickly overrun by the enemy save for the main fire support base, which still held by the time of the ceasefire on January 28 but finally succumbed that very afternoon. After seizing Sa Huynh, the enemy pushed northward and threatened Duc Pho district town. The ARVN 2d Division reacted forcefully and retook Sa Huynh on February 16, 1973.

Two days after the ceasefire, in the northern part of MR-1, a sizable enemy force, supported by tanks and artillery, attacked Cua Viet base.
defended by the Marines. Overwhelmed by a superior force, the Marines fell back to their old positions to avoid being annihilated. After this serious ceasefire violation by the enemy, the northern part of Quang Tri became quiet. Quang Tri was to become the primary location for future exchanges of prisoners.

In MR-2 the military situation immediately before and after the ceasefire followed the same pattern as in MR-1. In Darlac province, the enemy 25th Regiment (separate) occupied eight hamlets in the Buon Ho district, north of Ban Me Thuot and interdicted National Route QL-14 connecting this city with Pleiku. The 23d Division and Rangers deployed rapidly and retook the hamlets. West of Pleiku and Kontum, the NVA 320 and F-10 Divisions also attempted to push near these cities. The Chu Pao pass which lay halfway between the two cities was interdicted but was cleared quickly by friendly forces. West of Kontum city, the enemy occupied a few hamlets and threatened the city with indirect fire. This area was soon to become a bloody battlefield during the following months. Along the coast, the enemy also interdicted QL-1 at many places, especially in Binh Dinh and Phan Thiet.

In Binh Dinh province, which adjoined Quang Ngai province of MR-1, the NVA 3d Gold Star Division deployed in force and rapidly overran the province's three northern districts, Bong Son, Hoai An, and Hoai Nhon. The ARVN 22d Division, which had recovered from its defeat the previous year, reacted forcefully and successfully. Most enemy units were driven back with heavy losses from the areas they occupied within days after the ceasefire. In Phan Thiet, local enemy forces staged a series of extensive activities, attacking several places around the city and interdicting QL-1 at the boundary of MR-3. Despite having only organic RF and PF units, the Sector succeeded in repulsing all enemy units.

The short period centering around the ceasefire day also saw MR-3 in upheavals. In fact, the enemy launched a most widespread landgrab campaign in almost all provinces surrounding Saigon city. Tan Son Nhut airbase was rocketed just a few hours before the ceasefire went into effect. But Hau Nghia, Tay Ninh, and Binh Duong were the most trouble-ridden provinces. In Hau Nghia, the 25th Division had to battle
enemy forces to wrestle back control of National Route QL-1. In Tay Ninh, a regimental enemy unit attacked the city's defense perimeter and also set up blocking positions on QL-22. The ensuing battle in the suburbs of the provincial capital, especially in the Cao Dai Temple area, was fierce and lasted many days. However, finally the Sector's RF and PF units successfully drove back the enemy and cleared QL-22. Regiment 272 of the enemy CT-9 Division meanwhile surfaced in the area northwest of Binh Duong, but it was unable to achieve anything spectacular.

In the Mekong Delta, enemy activities were low-keyed but quite extensive. The enemy made a significant effort to grab populated hamlets and villages. Almost all district towns in An Xuyen, Chuong Thien, Kien Giang, Vinh Binh, Dinh Tuong, and Kien Tuong provinces were shelled. The most significant enemy attack against Cai Lay district town was defeated and several blocking positions on QL-4 were quickly cleared. Near the Cambodian border, the enemy 1st Division made further inroads into That Son, which was to become a fiercely contested area between the enemy and the ARVN 9th Division during the post-ceasefire period.

Simultaneously with landgrab and lines-of-communication interdiction actions, the enemy staged another form of warfare — the flag-planting campaign for which he had been well prepared. Several days before the ceasefire, the blue-and-red NLF flag appeared in the areas under his control and wherever his forces succeeded in penetrating. But the RVN had expected it all along and was equally well prepared to counteract. On the ceasefire day, suddenly the red-striped yellow flag of the RVN was displayed throughout the country. It was painted on rooftops or in front of houses, and on every moving vehicle. The spectacle was phenomenal. Troops were even issued individual flags and they waved them wherever they went. It was impossible for the International Commission of Control and Supervision to find out what was happening and who was in control of various areas. A good effect of this campaign was that all the population appeared to be involved and genuinely displayed a positive anti-Communist spirit. It also resulted in frenzied competition by both sides to "remove enemy flags and plant ours". Only one week after the ceasefire day, nearly all the 400-odd hamlets
that had been penetrated by the enemy were back under government control and proudly flew the national flags. An exception was a few outlying hamlets and the Hoai An district town north of Binh Dinh province.

The ceasefire upheavals gradually calmed down after a few weeks and both sides desisted from probing each other with provoking actions. The military situation also stabilized in all areas. The enemy proselyting campaign was a fiasco. No demonstrations materialized and no troops deserted their units despite ear-shattering exhortations on front lines or quietly whispered friendly persuasions elsewhere. The RVNAF stood firm; they did not disintegrate as the enemy had expected. Outsiders might have expected that, in the wake of the inevitable upheavals and skirmishes in the initial stage of the ceasefire, both sides would take steps to seriously implement what had been agreed upon and that a genuine ceasefire would soon take place. Events that followed proved them wrong, because barely two months after the signature of the Agreement the Communists committed two other major violations which were considered the most serious of all: the siege of Tong Le Chan Base and the attack against Hong Ngu district town.

Tong Le Chan was a Ranger border camp located in the middle of an enemy-controlled area. It effectively interdicted all enemy liaison and troop movements from War Zone C (north of Tay Ninh) into Binh Long or Binh Duong province. The presence of Tong Le Chan forced the enemy to make long detours and caused him serious difficulties. So, the enemy began to encircle this base on March 25, 1973, with the design to force its evacuation. Friendly patrols and supply routes of the defending garrison, the 92d Ranger Battalion, were effectively blocked. The base had to be supplied at first by helicopters, but the risks they ran became too great because of the dense anti-aircraft network around the base; as a result, supplies were airdropped. During the four following months, the enemy shelled the base nearly 300 times with a total of 10,000 assorted rounds and attacked it by infantry 11 times and by sapper actions nine times. While strangling the base, the enemy also stepped up propaganda activities and coaxed the defenders
to evacuate the camp under safe-conduct. But by July 1973, the base still stood firm despite an increasing number of dead and gravely wounded (over 30) and the fact that most of the Rangers were either ill or wounded. Forceful protests voiced by the RVN government all fell on deaf ears.

Hong Ngu was a district town north of Kien Phong province (MR-4), which lay on the eastern bank of the Mekong near the Cambodian border. It was a river port where supply convoys bound for Phnom Penh usually stopped over to pick up escorts. At the end of March 1973, the reinforced NVA 1st Division crossed the border and attacked the Hong Ngu river port. The losses the enemy caused to the local population were severe. The area was inhabited by Buddhists of the Hoa Hao sect, a fiercely anti-Communist group, who enjoyed peacefulness and prosperity during the entire war. Now, for the first time, their haven was destroyed and 300 of their people savagely slaughtered. By mid-April 1973, the ARVN 9th Division augmented by armored elements counterattacked and drove the enemy division over the border and back into Cambodia, where its troops were further decimated by extensive US airstrikes. 

In keeping with the Paris Agreement, the RVN government made a conscientious and systematic effort to report all Communist violations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission (JMC) and the ICCS. These organizations, however, were greatly constrained and could not operate effectively to enforce the ceasefire or impose sanctions against violations. Activities and the influence of these institutions will be discussed in detail later in the next chapter. The practical result of it all was that both sides were led to denouncing each other for violations committed, and this competition soon turned into a propaganda battle in which each side strived to demonstrate the ill will and belligerency of the other. And while this war of press releases, bulletins, and radio broadcasts went on unabated, the real and hot war still continued with more killings and more bloodshed. The high-keyed guerrilla warfare silently took its toll. Sabotages, assassinations and kidnappings were the daily fare, interspersed occasionally by

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3 At that time US air action was still going on in Cambodia.
resounding affairs such as Tong Le Chan and Hong Ngu. It was as if the enemy wanted to remind the world at large that the Vietnam war was still far from being wrapped up.

In May 1973, Kissinger met again with Le Duc Tho in Paris. Ceasefire was the subject of renewed talks. The Watergate affair, meanwhile, grew into a major crisis, and with all its troops now away from Vietnam, the US was no longer in a position to exact demands from North Vietnam. On June 13, 1973, all four signatories of the Paris Agreement issued a "joint communique" reasserting enforcement of the ceasefire and the implementation of other provisions.

The June 13 joint communique seemed to work for a few fleeting days. As a matter of fact, there were practically no noisy violations, and for a certain time, both sides appeared to be willing to desist from provoking each other into flagrant violations. At least the situation was much quieter than the earlier period and each side was chary to be the first one to violate a renewed agreement whose signature was still fresh. The situation, consequently, remained uneventful for the next three months. Tong Le Chan base, however, remained under siege and other border camps also carried on under constant duress. This lull, however, soon proved to be largely illusory, and MR-2 was to become the first area of major confrontation.

On September 22, 1973, the NVA 320th Division suddenly moved one tank-supported regiment against the Le Minh (Plei D'jereng) Ranger border camp, 25 miles west of Pleiku. Le Minh base was located on a dominating terrain which effectively controlled a major enemy infiltration route from lower Laos into the Central Highlands and a north-south road system which the enemy was building along the Truong Son corridor. It was also near the enemy Duc Co logistics base that was being developed into a major supply point for future battlefields. This was, in fact, the first time since the ceasefire that the enemy used a regimental size unit with tank support in an overt attack. It was a clear sign of a significant change in enemy strategic direction. In view of his effort to develop a new infiltration road system, which ran the entire length of South Vietnam's western border, it had become a necessity for
the enemy to get rid of obstacles that lay in the way of his progress. Le Minh base, as part of the border surveillance system, ought to be disposed of, just like Tong Le Chan. And as he progressed, the enemy felt, other bases in the system should be either forced to evacuate or simply destroyed: Mang Buk, Dak Pek, Dakto, Chuong Nghia, Plei Me, Tieu A Tar, Duc Lap, Dak Son, and Bu Prang, a long chain of border outposts designed to control enemy infiltration and collect intelligence. Most of these outposts held out but all had become isolated and had to be supplied by air.

Two months after the loss of Le Minh base, the enemy north-south strategic road system reached down to the boundary of Quang Duc province. This system picked up from QL-14 in MR-1 down to north of Kontum, then veered westward near this side of the border, ran parallel to it, and bent inward again when it came to Quang Duc. But to go further inside MR-3, the enemy ran smack into Dak Son and Bu Prang, border camps which were to be removed at all costs. In early November 1973, in a mobile warfare field exercise conducted to test combined arms effectiveness, the enemy repeatedly drove attacks against Bu Prang, Dak Son, and Kien Duc, the district town of Quang Duc province. The enemy propaganda line used to justify his military action in this case was that since the RVN mounted pacification operations and established new border outposts in his area of control, it was perfectly appropriate for him to retaliate in kind. Nothing could be farther from the simple truth. Everybody knew that these outposts were former CIDG camps that had been turned over to the RVNAF by the US Special Forces long before the ceasefire. But protestations to the ICCS availed to nothing. The 45th Regiment of the ARVN 23d Division, therefore counterattacked and retook Kien Duc and Dak Son. Bu Prang and Bu Bong border camps nearby remained in enemy hands. As a result, the enemy road system had to make a detour over the border before connecting with MR-3 north of Loc Ninh.

In MR-3, the second half of 1973 did not bring about any significant change in the situation. Tong Le Chan remained under siege but still held out. However, a whole line of outposts ringing the enemy Ho Bo and Bui Loi bases and the "Iron Triangle" area north of Saigon was constantly
under harassment. The enemy had re-infiltrated into these areas with a view to consolidate his bases where pressure could be brought to bear on the Saigon area itself. Efforts by III Corps to clear National Route QL-13 leading to isolated bases in the north such as Chon Thanh and An Loc were unsuccessful. In the meantime, Don Luan district town (Dong Xoai) and the province capital of Phuoc Long became isolated as a result of enemy actions in Quang Duc. All these places now subsisted by air-dropped or heli-transported supplies.

By this time, enemy violations had become all too flagrant. The RVN was thus forced to respond with its air advantage. The VNAF conducted several retaliation and punishment airstrikes against enemy-held positions such as Duc Co, Loc Ninh, Thien Ngon, Xa Mat, and Lo Go. Apparently to repay the RVNAF in kind, in November 1973 the enemy began to rocket Bien Hoa airbase. In late December, he also shelled, and sabotaged by sapper action, the Shell fuel storage plant in Nha Be, south of Saigon. 80% of storage gasoline was destroyed by an intense fire, and this occurred at a time when the Middle-East oil crisis made its impact felt throughout the world.

In MR-4, the enemy concentrated on neutralizing the RVN pacification effort. Assassinations, kidnappings, harassments against outposts, small-unit attacks, and ambushes were resumed with renewed ardor, as of old. Major enemy units also increased infiltrations into the That Son area with a design to extend his encroachment corridor into the U Minh base. This action resulted in further security deterioration in Kien Giang, Chuong Thien and An Xuyen provinces.
CHAPTER VI

Developments Following the Ceasefire

Implementing the Agreement

The basic things that the Paris Agreement was supposed to bring about, a standstill ceasefire and peace for South Vietnam, thus turned out to be illusory. Nor did other provisions of the Agreement fare any better, except for the exchange of prisoners and the withdrawal of US and allied troops.

The first problem for the Paris Agreement was the international machinery which was instituted to control and supervise the implementation of the Agreement itself. The negotiators must have been fully aware of the Geneva antecedent — the impotent ICC of the first Indochina war. Thus a four-member International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) was created, which apparently struck a perfect balance: two from the Free World (Canada and Indonesia) and two from the Communist Bloc (Poland and Hungary). The obstacle that the ICCS ran into from its very inception on the ceasefire day was its basic principle of operation: unanimity and consultations. The four members understandably took sides and having equal voting power, came invariably to a deadlock almost every time an issue was raised. Hungary and Poland naturally sided with the NLF, whom they protected and whose violations they ignored. Canada and Indonesia, meanwhile, tried their best to be objective, but they also supported the RVN and its cause.

Because of the usual intransigency of the Communist bloc members, it was impossible to arrive at a unanimous agreement whether to conduct
an investigation or to submit a report on violations. In May 1973, for example, the local government in Can Tho invited the ICCS to meet with some captured North Vietnamese troops who were recently infiltrated into the South, apparently with a view to demonstrate continued NVA infiltration. While Canadian and Indonesian representatives agreed to go ahead with the investigation, the Poles and Hungarians declined to participate in it with the pretext that they were not so instructed by their superiors in Saigon. In the absence of unanimity, therefore, the ICCS team could not even make a report on the investigation, while the Hungarian and Polish representatives denounced their Canadian and Indonesian counterparts for having acted against the established unanimity principle.

Another incident happened in Cai Lay where nearly 30 school children were killed by an indiscriminate shelling of their school by the enemy. Upon request by the GVN, Canadian and Indonesian representatives proceeded immediately to investigate while their Communist counterparts chose to stay away from it. The NLF also seized this occasion to protest this unilateral investigating action, and the protest caused so animated a debate on the procedural issue that the object of the investigation was completely forsaken. In other investigations on enemy shellings, the Hungarian and Polish representatives invariably contended that the fuses found were not enough proof for any conclusion.

Another problem that seriously hampered ICCS operation was the shortage of NLF members in Joint Military Commissions (JMC) teams. Whenever it was required to move into a contested area, Hungarian and Polish delegates always insisted on the presence of NLF members and a NLF-signed guarantee for their security. But the NLF deliberately kept their JMC teams understrength and, as a result, the attempted trip never materialized. The willingness to cooperate on the part of both South Vietnamese contending parties sometimes affected ICCS operation, too. The RVN, which supplied air transportation, might in some cases cause delays or feign "technical troubles". But the most serious trouble came from the fact that the NLF usually refused to guarantee security for the flights or to send along liaison officers.