Table 5. South Vietnam Public Health Program Funds Obligated for Medical Supplies and Equipment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>U.S. Agency for International Development</th>
<th>Department of Defense</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>3,866,000</td>
<td>16,289,000</td>
<td>16,289,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>5,694,000</td>
<td>3,571,000</td>
<td>9,265,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>5,694,000</td>
<td>4,894,000</td>
<td>10,588,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,165,000</td>
<td>20,753,000</td>
<td>34,918,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.—South Vietnam Public Health Program: USAID in Support of the Ministry of Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>U.S. Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>$3,482,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>5,983,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1,706,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>919,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,090,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Hearings

With its first concern directed toward the fate of the mounting numbers of civilians made homeless by hostilities, the Subcommittee urged adequate assistance to refugees as an integral part of any effort in Vietnam. Failing to gain satisfactory response from the Administration, the Subcommittee opened executive sessions in July 1965 to question representatives of the State Department and USAID. Questions were met by assertions that the care of refugees was primarily in the hands of the Vietnamese officials, who were satisfied that all were receiving minimally acceptable care. Representatives of voluntary agencies in Vietnam sharply disputed the contention, claiming that totally inadequate care was being rendered and that refugee totals far exceeded official estimates (6). Persisting through nonpublic investigations, the Subcommittee requested the General Accounting Office (GAO) to pursue both refugee and medical assistance programs. These efforts revealed that no surveys of refugees or their needs had yet been made; that USAID had no personnel assigned full-time to refugee problems; and that contingency plans for handling 100,000 refugees were still being followed when 600,000 persons were already homeless (6, 30).

The Subcommittee's attention to refugees inevitably involved it in the problems of war-injured civilians and the critical shortage of medical care available to them. Little factual information was available. In addition to launching a staff investigation of both problems, Subcommittee members made personal tours of South Vietnamese refugee and health facilities in October. Although budget levels were subsequently increased somewhat, USAID made few changes in its basic policy of a phased increase in medical assistance channeled entirely through the Ministry of Health. Most effective of the changes made was a program instituted in November 1965, the previously described Military Provincial Health Assistance Program (MILPHAP).

Other Criticism

Other outspokenly critical voices began to surface from within the medical profession itself. Dr. Alfred Swanson, an American orthopedic surgeon generally sympathetic to United States objectives in Southeast Asia, returned
after several tours in Vietnam to become a self-described civilian lobbyist for better medical care, directing efforts both toward the American Medical Association and the government agencies. Repeatedly dismayed by the lack of response, he termed the Vietnamese medical service program a complete failure by 1967 and directly attributed the failure to indifference on the part of United States officials charged with responsibility: "Those of us who have campaigned for increased medical assistance to South Vietnam, have met with attitudes and policies which are gun barrel in their vision, which fail to recognize the need or choose to ignore it" (44).

Such voices gained little public attention, however, until one of the leading medical journals, Ramparts, published an illustrated article on war-injured children in January 1967. Color photographs of severe burns and wounds accompanied the author's charge that a quarter-million such children had been killed by the war (45). Just before its publication a group of American physicians and laymen had formed the Committee of Responsibility devoted to the evacuation for treatment of seriously damaged Vietnamese children (41). Together these two events engendered publicity, concern, and reaction, both in Washington and Saigon.

The Administration's Response

Apparently in response to such criticism and to the Subcommittee's persistent prodding, the medical care problem was placed on the agenda of the March 1967 Guam Conference between American and South Vietnamese presidents (42). Shortly after the meeting President Johnson dispatched Dr. Howard A. Rusk on an investigation tour of Vietnamese hospitals (43), and by April USAID announced that three new hospitals would be built and manned by Department of Defense personnel that would be devoted exclusively to the care of civilians (44). As announced, they would provide up to 1,000 beds, and helicopter evacuation ambulances would be provided to USAID for civilian use for the first time. In a New York Times column 3 days later, Dr. Rusk hailed the announcement as "a truly historic milestone" (46). But funding for the hospitals was constantly postponed, and monies were not provided until after Senator Kennedy's personal appeal to Department of Defense Secretary McNamara (46). None of the hospitals opened until July 1968, and then they were reserved for wounded American servicemen and opened to civilians only on a "space available" basis (47). One has since been closed. Helicopters were never provided for full-time use for civilian evacuation (22).

The Medical Appraisal Team

The announcement of the Department of Defense hospitals was followed in July 1967 by the formation of a Medical Appraisal Team, composed of six American physicians under the chairmanship of Dr. F. J. L. Blasingame, Executive Vice-President of the American Medical Association*. After a 1-

*The other members of the team were: Forrest H. Adams, M.D., Los Angeles, professor of pediatrics and head, Division of Cardiology, School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles; Edwin L. Crosby, M.D., Dr.P.H., Chicago, executive vice-president, American Hospital Association; Alvin J. Ingram, M.D., Memphis, associate professor of orthopedic surgery, University of Tennessee College of Medicine, staff member, the Social Science and Reels, American Medical Association; John H. Knowles, M.D. Boston, general director, Massachusetts General Hospital; and William R. Willard, M.D., Lexington, Ky., vice-president for the Medical Center, University of Kentucky.
month tour of Vietnamese health facilities the team reported to President Johnson in September and was called to testify before the Subcommittee that same day. One of the issues before the Subcommittee was a highly encouraging and optimistic press release regarding the Medical Appraisal Team’s findings, a release for which the Team disavowed any responsibility (49). In consequence the Subcommittee announced that public hearings would be held for the first time and called members of the Medical Appraisal Team to appear before the first session, scheduled for 9 October 1967. Testimony during the hearings subsequently produced such observations as the following (6):

At most of the hospitals visited, human excrement was found by the walls of the buildings. Few have workable toilets and patients squat outside the wards; Smell of human waste, and refuse fills the air.

Hundreds of South Vietnamese wounded were living in sheds, corridors, floors, sometimes in open courtyards, awaiting surgery that might be delayed a year or more.

Conditions of extreme overcrowding existed, with two, three and four to a bed.

No means had been developed for getting the war-injured patients to hospitals and the lapse of time from injury to time of admission to hospitals for those who did reach hospitals more often than not was running 24 to 36 hours.

The Medical Appraisal Team testified that none of the 43 provincial hospitals met minimal standards of adequacy in providing potable water, adequate electric power, and sanitation facilities.

In the hearings budgetary appropriations of the Government of Vietnam for health were revealed to be less than 1% of the national budget; in contrast, it was pointed out, the World Health Organization recommended a 10% allocation for a developing nation not at war. Proposed budgetary cuts by USAID were made public, and it was revealed that the agency had not fully used monies previously budgeted (11). Widespread corruption throughout the entire Vietnamese medical construction, supply, and health care delivery system was documented. Contention, non-cooperation, and difficulties between Vietnamese and American medical personnel were disclosed.

The Medical Appraisal Team, however, devoted almost 90% of its report to recommendations for public health and preventive medicine measures, especially through long-range planning proposals. The team generally favored a phased improvement of the medical care system within the capabilities of the Vietnamese economy, medical resources, and social structures. They opposed the development of the three Department of Defense hospitals for civilian care as a parallel system that would apply a double standard of medical care to civilian casualties (6, 11).

Senator Kennedy, however, continued to challenge such judgments as a dilution of the urgency of immediate needs. He persistently stressed the acute crisis among war-injured civilians, for whom treatment facilities were judged grossly inadequate by the Medical Appraisal Team’s report. He continued to press for the construction of Department of Defense hospitals to be used exclusively for civilian war casualties, and for the provision of many more U.S. military physicians to serve civilian medical needs (6, 11).

Further Evidence of Inadequacies

Inadequate appraisal of the numbers of civilians being war-injured recurred as a problem throughout the hearings. What came to be called the “numbers game” had begun in 1965 with Kennedy’s charges of a lack of realism in appraising the magnitude of an exploding refugee population and a lack of urgency in coping with it. After USAID had discounted his allegation he had launched the first GAO investigation, which reported “serious deficiencies in the attitudes and actions of both the South Vietnamese and American government agencies involved” (6), leading to USAID’s admission that “we were caught short... the health problem is so enormous that everything we have done to date is not much more than a drop in the bucket” (80).

In the public press civilian casualty statistics had been reported to be secret (5) until the Subcommittee released an estimate of 100,000 casualties for 1967 (61). USAID countered with an immediate reassessment insisting casualties would not exceed 50,000 (6), but the Agency’s own medical director in Vietnam, Col. William Moncrief, in the first official estimate made in December, corroborated 100,000 as the projected rate. He further estimated that, of these, 24,000 would either have been killed outright or have died seeking medical aid (62).
Health budgets were reported to be totally inadequate by Dr. John H. Knowles of the Medical Appraisal Team (63). USAID's total medical budget for fiscal year 1967 was roughly \( \frac{1}{3} \) of 1% of the total U.S. expenditures in South Vietnam (64), "an allocation for an entire year equal to one-half day's war effort" (55).

Air evacuation was rarely available to civilians, in contrast to the air ambulances being provided for 99% of American combat casualties. USAID's medical director, Dr. Ingram, requested both fixed-wing and helicopter ambulances in early 1968, but none had ever been approved or provided (20).

Construction delays and deficiencies were severe. There was a 2-year delay in providing housing for medical personnel (20), and the provision of nursing personnel and health teams in each province was delayed because no housing was available (11). The General Accounting Office reported that improvement in provincial hospitals had been marginal because of poor construction and maintenance, with rapid deterioration of even the renovated facilities (57).

Regarding the renovation program, Dr. Ingram of the Medical Appraisal Team testified that despite "a considerable amount of money spent ... [one] cannot see the end results ... potable water, dependable electricity, sanitation, sewage disposal, adequate supplies, and very importantly, adequate maintenance and crowding, those basic problems have not been grappled with" (58).

An absence of urgency was repeatedly charged. Although the GAO reported that USAID claimed the civilian casualty problem as the single most important aspect of the public health program, it held in contrast a briefing document prepared by USAID for President Johnson's use at the Guam Conference. That memo said in part (58):

Neither the U.S. Mission in Saigon nor the GVN [Government of Vietnam] advocate a radical acceleration in the presently planned steady expansion of the civilian medical assistance effort. They do not consider the present overcrowding of hospitals or limited access to medical treatment in remote areas critical to our success in the political-psychological side of the war effort.

**CONTINUING CONCERN BY THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE**

The 1968 Investigations

Shortly after the open hearings were concluded, the Subcommittee again toured refugee and health facilities in Vietnam just before the Tet hostilities multiplied the numbers of both refugees and casualties. Already overburdened medical facilities were overwhelmed, many were destroyed, and the medical school at Hue succumbed entirely.

After the Subcommittee's return it issued its first published report in May 1968, in which it made seven specific recommendations: [1] that the United States assume a far greater role in medical programs, including a large-scale build-up of medical personnel; [2] that an immediate rehabilitation program be instituted for the provincial hospitals; [3] that the entire medical logistics system be revamped under total control by U.S. military personnel; [4] that MILPHAP teams be increased and assigned to high-casualty areas; [5] that massive inoculation and immunization programs be instituted; [6] that health and sanitation facilities in the cities be given top priority; and [7] that a manpower commission be established in Vietnam to mobilize and provide competitive remuneration to Vietnamese medical personnel (6).

The 1969 Investigations and Hearings

In 1969 the Subcommittee again dispatched investigators to Vietnam in April and May. The two chief investigating consultants for the Subcommittee were John M. Levinson, M.D., and Thomas Durant, M.D. Levinson, who made the first of six trips to Vietnam in 1968, had subsequently founded the Agency for International Development. Durant, Assistant Director for the Massachusetts General Hospital, had served in Saigon from 1966 to 1968 in the Public Health Section of the United States mission. On 24 and 25 June 1969 their report was made to the Subcommittee and indicated severe and persisting deficiencies in the provincial hospitals (21). Except for sweeping improvements in the medical supplies system, brought about by the assumption of all logistics operations by the Department of Defense, the Subcommittee investigated noted persisting shortcomings in provisions for civilian health. They found that civilian health needs had far outstripped resources and facilities. Vietnamese health programs still had not alleviated the disproportionate allocation of physicians
whole new populations of refugees and civilian war casualties developed. Resources to meet such needs—medical, refugee, rehabilitation, and economic—were described as primitive even by Vietnamese standards (50).

Commissioned by the Subcommittee, a new field study was conducted during the summer and reported familiar findings of devastation and despair. In Laos, 253,291 refugees were officially recognized by USAID in a July report, with 60% of the number generated since February; serious food shortages, inadequate health and housing facilities, and minimal resources were described. Of an estimated 1990 population of 400,000 Meo tribesmen, 40% to 50% of the men had been killed, and 25% of the women and children had fallen as casualties of war by 1970. From the onset of American involvement in Laos, the report charges, USAID has acted as a paramilitary organization—simply a euphemism to cover American assistance to persons, mostly hill tribesmen, who agreed to take up arms and support efforts against the Pathet Lao" (60). In Cambodia the tidal wave of refugees—both ethnic Vietnamese and Khmers—were described as sweeping rootless through the country. In less than 6 months of war it was estimated that more than 400,000 Vietnamese ethnics and 1,000,000 Khmer were made refugees; by early August the population of Phnom Penh had more than doubled, from 700,000 to 1,500,000; and provincial capitals throughout the country were described as "bulging" with new arrivals. "Although U.S. officials were obviously aware of the widespread displacement of...
people, there was little evidence to suggest they were much concerned about the situation, its tragic potential if the war in Cambodia continued, or the impact of U.S. military activities on the civilian population" (69).

In Vietnam the problems of civilians were found to be as overwhelming as they had ever been in the past. The rate of casualty admissions to GVN (Government of Vietnam) and U.S. hospitals was found to be little changed from previous years, although higher in certain sections, and still not reflective of the larger number of casualties who die or are treated elsewhere or not at all. Although 500,000 refugees remain on official counts (with thousands more being generated each month), the report states that at least 3,000,000 remain in camps and urban slums as “statistically resettled,” classified out of existence while remaining in unalleviated conditions. A threatened 25% budget cut in the USAID medical support program was disclosed. “Under the banner of Vietnamization,” a plethora of new terms and slogans have been created in Saigon to describe, and hide, old problems and unchanged programs,” the report charges (60).

1970 General Accounting Office Investigation

Turning again to the General Accounting Office, the fiscal “watchdog” of the Congress, the Subcommittee requested a new investigation into the use of American expenditures for civilian health programs in Vietnam. In a report published in December 1970 the GAO found that USAID had still established no specific priority designation for the treatment of war-related casualties. A new USAID recommendation had been made, however, “that the project associated with civilian war-related casualties be placed in the lowest category, and that top priority be accorded longer term assistance projects” (33).

Continuing inadequacies in counting civilian war casualties were again reported, with USAID estimates still based solely on admissions to Ministry of Health and U.S. military hospitals. Although such admissions show no significant decrease from previous years (Table 1), GAO found cut-back in resources allocated for the care of civilian war casualties.

Funds for all health assistance programs, the report shows, have a relatively high priority. Of civil aid fund allocations, 20% are budgeted for health assistance programs. Yet within such programs amounts allocated for civilian war casualties decreased from 40% of the Public Health Budget in fiscal year 1968 to less than 20% in fiscal year 1971. USAID’s total budget for the Public Health program itself was decreased by 10% (Table 7).

None of the three Department of Defense hospitals initially constructed “for the exclusive treatment of civilian war-related casualties” had, in fact, been so used. Since April 1968 U.S. policy had been to treat both U.S. military and Vietnamese civilian casualties in U.S. hospitals “as available beds space permits.” Although beds were held in reserve for military casualty contingencies, GAO found that no such beds were ever reserved for civilian war-related casualties.

Because of U.S. troop withdrawals and redeployment nine U.S. military hospitals have been closed. Only one of these will be turned over to the Government of Vietnam under present plans. GVN surveys of other U.S. military hospitals have been made, but officials have expressed an interest in no more than nine of these, “because of a shortage of GVN manpower, lack of maintenance capabilities, undesirable locations and high operating costs” (33).

Maintenance capabilities were found to be seriously deficient at all GVN hospitals investigated, with deterioration spreading rapidly. Only six tenths of 1% of the Ministry of Health budget was allocated for maintenance, although the Ministry felt that 10% was needed. Construction deficiencies were reported among the nine Impact Hospitals that had been constructed by USAID.

Severe medical manpower shortages were found to persist. Seventy-one percent of Vietnamese physicians remain on military duty, with almost all graduates still being drafted each year. The civilian health program according to a statement attributed to a USAID Washington official, was “not performing effectively, mainly because of deficiencies in skilled manpower . . . and an organization with authority concentrated too heavily at the national level” (88).

An Appeal to the United Nations

Steeped in 5 years’ evidence of both widespread medical need and persisting official neglect, the Senate Subcommittee’s staff added a new and urgent recommendation to the 1970 Staff Report, that “the highest priority should be
given to involving the United Nations in the relief effort to receive and channel relief contributions, and to supervise and coordinate general relief operations." Such an appeal was based on the judgment that both the current and long-term needs of the people of Indochina can never be met through existing mechanisms or the political authorities now involved (60).

**DISCUSSION:**

The agony of Vietnam stands in stark relief as the simple, overwhelming reality of the war. Massive destruction of a land and a people has caused massive suffering—on a scale that is proportionately proximate to that sustained by any nation during World War II.

Also clear is the fact that skilled and sympathetic response to such suffering has been provided by numerous individuals and organizations—at local levels. Under the AMA-USAID contract, more than 700 American physicians have served in Vietnam, many heroically under most trying circumstances. Voluntary agencies—supported by churches and other charitable organizations—have maintained dedicated efforts to help civilians even as warfare engulfed their outposts. Military units have both built and staffed medical facilities on a volunteer basis, and thousands of civilians have been treated by U.S. military physicians under the government-sponsored MILPHAP program.

Yet little public or professional attention, apart from the Senate Subcommittee, has been paid to the obvious inadequacies of government actions and policies in the medical sector. Although USAID has responded with reluctance to public scrutiny, numerous investigations and hearings have revealed severely cursory data regarding both its activities and policies.

Levels of government assistance to civilians have in no way been proportionately related to the enormity of injury, death, and destruction. Official indifference and neglection have repeatedly been attributed to American efforts; wholesale corruption has persistently been charged to Vietnamese officials.

Over the past 2 decades, disaster research has provided fairly reliable methods for disaster planning. Yet USAID has apparently undertaken no such efforts regarding civilian war casualties; on the contrary, it has repeatedly discounted all casualty estimates as "mere speculation" (4). The attempts by the Senate Subcommittee to determine a reliable casualty projection and a base for rational action (Table 2) are dismissed as "having no valid basis or methodology" (4). Paradoxically, USAID continues to publicize detailed statistics regarding Vietcong terrorism, without reservations about their accuracy, although such figures are collated from "incidents reported daily to the National Military Physicians' under the Government-sponsored MILPHAP program."

**Sharp criticism of the Government of Vietnam's feeble response to the plight of its people has also been heavily documented. Lack of medical manpower mobilization, its maldistribution both for military purposes and private practice in coastal cities, and the long-delayed and still barely implemented assignment of Vietnamese military physicians to civilian hospitals have been clearly revealed by Subcommittee investigations. Abuse of medical facilities, authority, and professional prerogatives were widely observed by investigational teams.**

One question is both obvious and paramount: Why do some situations of disaster generate large-scale public sympathy and generous relief response, whereas others do not? Stated more specifically, why have both the American and Vietnamese peoples remained quiescent despite the manifest need and the inadequate efforts of both governments? Several hypotheses have been offered. Zifferstein describes American response to the Vietnamese war generally as a result of a policy of psychological habitation to war and to its effects. Through a process of incremental escalation of military acts, the American public has found itself deeply committed to a large-scale war and its attendant devastation. Such commitment reinforces self-censorship; citizens yield policy decisions to government experts and minimize for themselves the discomfitting and difficult knowledge of civilian suffering (62). Enlarging upon this hypothesis, Bourne describes a psychological need to reduce tension-producing dissonance and the subsequent process of rationalizing, minimizing, or denying information that conflicts with the citizen's trust in the righteousness of his country. Rededication to the "other war" becomes an element of such a process, with attention repeatedly directed toward "humanitarian acts of reconstruction which remain trivial next to the enormity of destruction" (63).
Opton and Sanford attribute the failure of responsibility to a will to disbelieve, reluctance to know the truth. Indifference, and ethical shortsightedness: "we have yet to learn that the greatest evils occur when social systems give average men the task of 'rationalizing evil'" (69). From his study of the Hiroshima Bombing Lifton (65, 66) described the effect of "psychic numbing" in the face of disaster as the loss of a capacity to feel and sympathetic identification may reach a virtual zero point." (67):

Each of these hypotheses seems to bear some operative relevance to Vietnam, but one other factor is obvious as well. It can be termed ideological triage, for it involves the pollution of both medical priorities and professional ethics by political principles and strategy. Not suffering or need but a political goal becomes the standard to decide whether medical aid will be given or withheld.

United States medical assistance efforts were minimal until a National Security Council directive of 1962 urged increased aid as part of the counter-insurgency program of our foreign policy in Indochina. From that time onward there are repeated exhortations to "the other war," to "winning the hearts and minds of the people." According to USAID's consequent policy principles as described by Humphreys, medical aid would be delivered through the Ministry of Health except in rare instances, and priority would be given to such aid as created the sharpest impact upon the people to win their loyalty (28). Thus, of Health except in rare instances, and priority would be given, to such aid described by USAID's consequent policy to all military purposes (16, 68).

MEDCAP is forthrightly termed "a psychological warfare program" (19, 69). In General Neel's words: "Medical-stability operations concentrate on the preinsurgency phase of operations in order to produce maximum results with minimum resource investment" (32). Clearly enunciated, such a policy of ideological triage has permeated official medical assistance programs; it has also engendered an accepted and officially acceptable policy of neglect.

Other military physicians corroborate and defend such policies without questioning the contradictions involved, halting medical care as the universal language of altruism and, at the same time, as a powerful psychological tool for military purposes (16, 68). MEDCAP is forthrightly termed "a psychological warfare program" (19, 69). In General Neel's words: "Medical-stability operations concentrate on the preinsurgency phase of operations in order to produce maximum results with minimum resource investment" (32). Clearly enunciated, such a policy of ideological triage has permeated official medical assistance programs; it has also engendered an accepted and officially acceptable policy of neglect.

Response to human suffering and to human illness has been the dominant principle of medicine since its history began. Diminution of that principle in any way has been regarded as a fundamental threat to the profession itself. Such ethical principles "are not a luxury; the essence of ethics occurs for the value of man—is indispensable for the survival of medicine as a profession and doubtless also for the survival of mankind as a species" (70). The agony of Vietnam is the agony of innocence—of noncombatant civilians, mostly women, children and, whether or not we choose to acknowledge such suffering, it is the agony of the American people as well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Received 8 January 1971; revision accepted 1 February 1971.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to D. A. Vastyan, B.D., Department of Humanities, College of Medicine, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, The Pennsylvania State University, Hershey, Pa. 17033.

REFERENCES

4. PHILLIPS ME (Director, Office of Public Health, Bureau for Vietnam, Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of State): Letter to the author (1967) with six enclosures: (1) Answers to specific questions; (2) Excerpt from USAID Mission Report to the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam; (3) Table—U.S. dollar contributions to support of the health sector; (4) Table—counterpartpler fund allocations; (5) Table—hospital beds and health personnel, Ministry of Health, South Vietnam; (6) Fact sheet—civilian war casualties


13. Levinson J: Testimony. Published in Reference 11 cited above, p. 35.


27. Phelps MB: Enclosure 2 described in Reference 4, cited above.


THE MEDICAL COSTS OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The traditional and time-honored role of the physician in time of war is to heal and comfort the wounded, to treat the sick, to prevent the occurrence and spread of disease, and to rehabilitate the victims of the war without regard to political allegiance or military versus civilian status. In the turmoil that was Vietnam and now is much of Southeast Asia, the medical profession has found it difficult to fulfill this role. Physicians and indeed all Americans, whatever their political opinions, need to inform themselves about the disastrous medical situation in those unhappy lands. In so assessing the medical needs, we perceive must weigh the human costs of this war; costs that even yet do not seem to be fully comprehended in this country.

All of us are aware of the sad costs in military lives and casualties; the television screen literally brings them home to us every evening. All of us know that more than 44,000 young American soldiers have died in combat and many times that number have been temporarily wounded or injured despite the best military medical care in history. Most of us know that even greater numbers of Asian soldiers on both sides have been killed or wounded. Yet the casualties in military personnel are only the beginning. The civilian populations of Vietnam (South and North), and now of Laos and Cambodia, are paying an appalling price in death and wounds from military action and bombing and in the malnutrition and infectious diseases that inevitably stem from the creation of large numbers of refugees and from the severe disruption of the social fabric. It is this tragic consequence of the war that in this issue of the ANNALS is the subject of a special article on "Civilian War Casualties and Medical Care in South Vietnam." In this article E. A. Vastyan presents an analysis of the magnitude, the nature, and the evolution of public knowledge of the desperate medical needs of the Vietnamese civilian population.

Reliable statistics on the number of civilian casualties and refugees are not easy to obtain; in the same war hawks see one picture and doves see another. Nevertheless, the general outlines have emerged. There were a number of enlightening professional medical reports on the 1967 situation in South Vietnam, such as those by Dr. Howard Rusk (3), by the Australian physician, Dr. Allister Brass (2, 3), and by the AMA medical team under the chairmanship of Dr. F. J. L. Blasingame (4, 5); this team was sent out in the summer of 1967 by the Administration and the State Department to appraise the total health needs of South Vietnam. These reports showed that no more than 90,000 Vietnames physicians were available to care for a population of 17 million and that programs of public health and preventive medicine, hospitals, and medical personnel, which had become completely inadequate under the strain of a long war, were overwhelmed by the rapidly-swelling load of sick and wounded civilians. Additional glimpses of this appalling medical situation are to be found in various published accounts of American doctors who had volunteered for personal service in Vietnam (6-9) and especially in the books by Drs. Brass (10), Eccles Smith (11), and Bourne (12).

In addition, there has been, since 1968, another source of information concerning civilian casualties in South Vietnam, namely, the Subcommittee (of the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary) to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees. This Subcommittee, through its hearings and investigations each year, has brought to light the enormous needs for civilian medical care in South Vietnam, as well as the achievements and deficiencies of the official U.S. and Republic of Vietnam programs designed to meet them. In the Subcommittee's staff report of 28 September 1970 (13) it was estimated that out of a population of approximately 18 million, more than 1 million South Vietnamese had become casualties since 1965, and about 6 million had become refugees; with the spread of the war a similar situation was rapidly developing in Laos and Cambodia.

The medical professions in our country and in others have responded to this tremendous civilian need and have been carrying out many humanitarian programs as well as assisting in the improvement and expansion of medical education in South Vietnam. The American military services and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in conjunction with the South Vietnam Ministry of Health, have been conducting programs of medical assistance,
including the Military Provincial Hospital Assistance Program (MILPHAP); many doctors in the armed services have given dedicated care to civilian victims of the war, and military hospitals have been opened to civilian patients; however, three new hospitals promised by the Department of Defense for wounded civilians have been opened in part by military patients. Civilian agencies include the AMA Volunteer Physicians for Vietnam, Catholic Relief Service, Children's Medical Relief International (CMRI), CARE/MEDICO, International Rescue Committee, Vietnam Christian Service (Church World Service) Lutheran World Relief, and Mennonite Central Committee, American Friends Service Committee, and many others. The American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons working through CMRI, is providing plastic surgery for hundreds of Vietnamese patients and, with CARE/ MEDICO, is training Vietnamese plastic surgeons. The Committee of Responsibility has instituted a program for helping burned children by flying them to centers in the United States for treatment. The medical rehabilitation unit established in Quang Ngai in 1967 by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) stemmed from the recognition that while there were many efforts being made to provide acute medical and surgical care for wounded civilians in Vietnam, there were very few services for follow-up physiotherapy and rehabilitation for these pitiful casualties of the war. During the 6 months of May to November 1970, 231 patients were admitted to the Quang Ngai Quaker Unit, about one fourth of whom were children under the age of 16 and 84% of whom were suffering from war injuries caused by mines, artillery, rockets, and gunshot, inflicted by both sides (14). This unit was the only center providing such services to civilians in addition to three Vietnam Government rehabilitation centers in Saigon, Da Nang, and Can Tho and one operated by the Canadian Government in Quinhon. But in 1970 there were estimated to be more than 79,000 civilian-paraplegics and amputees in the country (15). These are cold statistics, but each digit represents a suffering human being, a man or a woman, a boy or a girl. Despite the pacification and Vietnamization programs, the need for civilian medical services in South Vietnam and the rest of Indochina is enormous and in Cambodia and Laos appears to be growing rapidly (16).

At the end of his article Vastyan asks some very penetrating questions. Why has professional and public attention been so little relative to the enormity of the war-engendered medical disaster in South Vietnam? Why the relatively high degree of official American and South Vietnamese indifference to attempting to relieve the disaster effectively? Why the official use of ideological triage that ties what should be altruistic medical aid to a political goal rather than to suffering or need? Answers to these questions are not easy, but they are imperative and to obtain the tangle of medicine with politics will have to be unravelled.

In his fascinating account of his trip to South Vietnam in 1967 with the AMA appraisal team, published in diary form (5), Dr. John Knowles repeatedly wrestled with the problem of the intertwining of medicine and politics. At the start of the mission he asked:

Were we to recommend policy in respect to the medical care and public health problems of the Vietnamese civilians, should we not also review these in the larger framework of the means and ends of why the United States was there in the first place, for how long, for what ultimate purposes, and whether ends justify means when measured in financial and human cost?

And at the conclusion he comments again:

One wonders how to relate the cost to long-term effectiveness in the present struggle. Do our ends really justify the means and the cost involved in terms of human misery and billions of dollars diverted away from more pressing needs?

These questions are as relevant in 1971 as they were in 1967, and the political answers are almost as controversial now as they were then. But the need for medical action to alleviate the increased misery and suffering now is much greater.

What can American physicians do? We can try to keep ourselves better informed about the situation. We can support medical relief programs already in action in the area. We can urge official support for better programs. We can continue to help improve medical education in South Vietnam. And, most
importantly, we can ask our government and ourselves whether the best treatment for the medical woes of Vietnam and Indochina is not the preventive treatment of a political settlement that would stop the fighting of Asians as well as of Americans. Once the war is ended, a massive task of medical, as well as social, reconstruction will lie before us, a task to which our profession, American and international, will need to respond with great effort. In the name of humanity, we must meet the medical and political realities of this war. (J.R.E.)

REFERENCES


6. FAZEKAS JF: Medicine in Saigon. JAMA 198:300-301, 1966


11. ECCLES SMITH P: Letters from a Vietnam Hospital. Wellington, New Zealand, AH and AW Reed, 1969


14. AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (PHILADELPHIA): personal communication from staff of the Quaker Rehabilitation Center, Quang Ngai, 18 November 1970

15. REFERENCES 18: p. 14

SELECTED PRESS REPORTS ON VIETNAM

[From The New York Times; May 17, 1974.]

ON THE SINKING BOAT

(By Nguyen Cao Ky)

Saigon, South Vietnam—South Vietnam is like a sinking boat with a deceptively good coat of paint outside, and a helmsman who is unfaithful, disloyal, and dishonest. A whirl of wind and the boat will sink to the bottom.

It is clear that the people have lost faith in the Government. The old have become weary and disillusioned, and the young are disoriented. Unless we take urgent and radical measures to redress the situation, I am afraid the danger will become more and more serious.

Corruption is rampaging. It is so widespread that corrupt officials have a price list for every transaction, big or small, requiring their services. Jungle law rules in all government echelons. Corruption has become public, open, and as it were, an incurable disease.

Today, not only are the people writhing under social injustices, but they are also becoming more and more miserable because of the harsh economic measures decreed in the name of national necessity, for the sake of so-called efforts toward self-sufficiency. But that is not defensible in a situation of continued injustices with the people being required to accept restrictions to the point of being miserable and near starvation, while powerful and rich people continue to evade taxes and corruption continues to spread.

Although we are in a democratic society within which there is no class division, a new class of profiteers has emerged: made up of those in positions of power and authority. They are everywhere and they would seize on any opportunities to unscrupulously grab money, even if they had to tread underfoot the sacrifices the combatants have made in blood and bones. These people have been able to achieve for themselves a life of luxury, while other people are living in misery.

In the meantime, our soldiers, who are directly contributing to the national struggle by sacrificing their lives to maintain security for the people living in the rear, are being given the lowest standard of living. Their salaries are not enough for many and many have to try to scrape up additional money by working part time as janitors or drivers. Many a tragic and heart-breaking incident has happened to the families of those soldiers who have died for the fatherland, for example to war widows who have had to take up indecent professions to live.

The civil servants do not have a better lot than the soldiers. We have seen that the more honest, the more diligent they are, the poorer and more under-privileged they become. Their miserable situation makes us think that honest civil servants are a forgotten class.

The peasantry, which makes up the greater part of our society, is supposed to be given special help through our land reform program, but in reality they are still being exploited by intermediaries. With the support of some people in power, rice dealers are free to exploit both peasants and consumers, so much so that a high Government official has had to admit recently the incapacity of the Government to put an end to this situation.

We can see by these things that the poorer classes and those who are directly sacrificing in the struggle for national defense, and contributing to the work of national reconstruction, are being forgotten while a minority of irresponsible people in positions of power think only of grabbing money and consolidating their power to continue to exploit the people.
This situation leads to more social injustices and to many a case of corruption. Since this class of profiteers must protect their own interests, they are ready to tolerate all illegal acts. It is not surprising that the poor are still paying more taxes than the rich, as shown in national budget documents.

[Nguyen Cao Ky is the Vice President of South Vietnam. This article is excerpted from a speech he made at the School of Social Welfare in Saigon. The speech was translated from Vietnamese by the Saigon Bureau of The New York Times.]

VIETNAM PEASANTS RETURN TO A HAMLET HUNGRY AND BITTER TOWARD REGIME

Phuquí, South Vietnam—The peasants of this hamlet have returned home two years after having been forced from their huts during an American military sweep, but their lives are disrupted and many are bitter and hostile toward the Government.

In January, 1969, the people of Phuquí, along with nearly 12,000 other rice farmers and fishermen, were swept up by American helicopters to separate them from suspected enemy forces on the Batangan Peninsula in central Vietnam; 130 miles southeast of Hue. Centers were set up where the peasants were interrogated while their villages became battlegrounds.

According to official military statistics, North Vietnamese and Vietcong losses amounted to 158 killed and 268 wounded at the end of the six-month campaign, known as Russel Beach.

Today, the peninsula is peaceful though the Government is still suspicious of the peasants who have moved back.

DIKE STILL RUINED

A dike, blasted by American jets to deprive the North Vietnamese of a food supply, is still in disrepair. As a result, the salt water of the South China Sea continues to submerge the fields where rice once grew. The Vietnamese police limit the rice the peasants may carry back from the market. Work, which depended upon rice paddies, is also balked.

"I have one big problem," a black-toothed mother of five said as she walked to market, three miles away. "Just too poor to feed my children, just too poor."

Of the 12,000 peasants who were removed from the Batangan Peninsula during the first few weeks of the 1969 operation, 4,000 have returned to begin life anew. No one is certain where the others have gone. Many wandered to Danang, 50 miles away.

Phuquí is a "C" hamlet on the Government evaluation scale, meaning that security is still wanting though the hamlet is considered pacified. Phuquí, which has 1,500 people now, is not typical of most resettled hamlets, but its problems are shared by many that face the order of reconstruction.

TWO BAMBOO FENCES

The cluster of tin-roofed, straw huts that make up Phuquí is surrounded by two 10-foot rows of bamboo for security purposes. No one is allowed to enter or leave after 6 o'clock in the afternoon or before 5 o'clock in the morning. All must pass a guard at the single gate from the hilly fields.

The hills that overlook the flooded paddies, once scattered with huts, are "ironed"—a word used by the peasants to mean filled with bomb fragments, mines and unexploded artillery shells.

B-52 bomb craters nearly 20 feet deep pok the hills. Flowers grow at the bottom of some.

The peasants here have received all that is allotted under the "return to village" program since they resettled, about a year and a half ago.

"I asked the province chief twice already to rebuild the dike, but he said he didn't have the money," Pham Binh, the hamlet chief, said. "As long as we cannot grow rice, my people will stay hungry.

American province officials say that estimates on rebuilding the dike have been made but that no action has yet been taken. Security and the isolation of the peninsula are cited as reasons.
One American, intimating another reason when he said: “You know, two years ago the people on the peninsula were written off as Communists. I would not be surprised if the attitudes still linger among the Vietnamese today.”

Families that have sons in the Popular Forces, a local extension of the South Vietnamese Army—about one-fifth of those in the hamlet—are allowed to bring in enough rice to feed themselves. No one else, the peasants assert, can carry back to Phuqul more than 10 pounds of rice—enough to last an average family two or three days—when they make their weekly trip to the market. As a result, most go without their basic food most of the time.

Ba Chau, a mother of six, said: “My husband and I eat the maooc plants instead of rice.” When food is very short she cuts the stalks off banana trees to feed her family, although ordinarily only pigs eat the stalks.

“Provincial officials neither affirm nor deny police action to limit the peasants’ rice, saying they have no knowledge that rice supplies are being limited.

“On has long been a practice to control the supply of South Vietnam’s food, however, to insure that the Vietcong cannot eat excess peasant food.

Most of the peasants of Phuqul continue to look upon the Government with notions varying from suspicion to antipathy. The children of Phuqul continue to look upon the Government with notions varying from suspicion to antipathy.

Life in Phuqul, however, is a long way from returning to the “days when my son rode the buffalo home,” as one man put it.

One American in the province said: “You might say that Phuqul has been forgotten.”

[FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, APR. 7, 1971]

BIG NEW PACIFICATION PROGRAM STARTS

(By Tad Szule)

Washington, April 6—The most ambitious and costly pacification program yet planned for South Vietnam has been put into effect by Saigon and Washington.

Reportedly costing the United States considerably more than $1-billion and Saigon an undisclosed sum, the 1971 “Community Defense and Local Development Plan” would greatly expand pacification activities, which are aimed at destroying Communist subversive forces and widening self-government and development.

The 304-page plan, a copy of which was made available to The New York Times, lists as the “top priority” for the year the “neutralization” of the entrenched Vietcong political apparatus.

AUTHENTICITY CONFIRMED

The authenticity of the document was confirmed by Administration sources who declined to discuss the contents because of the plan’s confidential character.

Already in operation since March 1, and endorsed by the American command in Saigon, the new plan is reportedly the subject of wide controversy among United States officials, some of whom term it unrealistic and artificial.

Administration officials were unable to provide cost figures to the United States for previous pacification programs, but they said that the current plan, financed almost entirely in its military, security and civilian aspects by the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, was much more costly because of its increased scope.

Acknowledging for the first time that the activities of the Vietcong apparatus remain a major problem in 8 of South Vietnam’s 44 provinces, including four in the allegedly pacified Mekong River Delta, and that South Vietnamese forces often prefer to “accommodate, rather than resist, the enemy,” the plan provides for:

*Expansion of the People’s Self-Defense Force—the civilian antiguerilla combat organization in rural areas—from 500,000 to four million. Women
would be enlisted in combat units and children of both sexes over the age of 7 in supporting units.

Establishment of an elaborate "people's intelligence network" to inform on enemy activities.

Elimination in the year starting last month, through killing or capture, of 14,400 Vietcong agents under expansion of the three-year-old Operation Phoenix, an intelligence-gathering program that is supported by the United States military.

WIDER SOCIAL BENEFITS

The new pacification plan, which went into effect March 1, also seeks to complete the program of holding elections in all villages and hamlets; spur land reform by setting a goal of distributing nearly a million acres of land to farmers, and widen social benefits. This would be done by providing new assistance to 216,000 war veterans and increasing aid to 43,002 disabled soldiers, 33,743 parents of dead servicemen, 71,006 war widows, and 284,000 war orphans. In addition, the plan hopes to resettle 480,000 war refugees in new homes.

Other innovations in the 1971 pacification plan include programs for ethnic minorities and for cities where crime is increasing.

ENDORSED BY ABRAMS

Elaborated upon by the South Vietnamese Government, approved by President Nguyen Van Thieu and his Cabinet and fully endorsed by Gen. Creflghton W. Abrams, the United States Commander in Vietnam, the plan is designed to dovetail with the Nixon Administration's policy of "Vietnamization," under which combat responsibilities are being gradually assumed by the South Vietnamese forces.

While the Administration here and the Saigon Government report success for pacification programs that began in 1969, some American experts question their effectiveness so far and are skeptical about the soundness of the new plan.

Their main criticism is that the whole pacification effort depends too much on the 8,000 United States officials and advisers in the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support programs, an agency known as CORDS.

The agency, which supervises projects from Operation Phoenix to rural economic programs, is chiefly made up of Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency employees, although it includes officials of the State Department, the Agency for International Development and the United States Information Agency.

Reports from the field indicate that CORDS officials are frequently not aware of the true state of affairs in districts and villages and that their colleagues in civilian government and the police fail to carry out their tasks.

Critics of the pacification program point to this statement in the 1971 plan: "In some areas, the people are reluctant to associate with the Government of Vietnam for fear of retaliation by the enemy. Civil officials often become the target of enemy terrorism and assassination, and thus are reluctant to perform their government tasks.

Some police hesitate to conduct operations against the V.C. because they fear retaliation, and local security forces, under the threat of terrorism, often accommodates, rather than resists, the enemy.

The critics raise the question of what will happen if CORDS is phased out and ask whether, as an alternative, the agency may not have to be maintained in South Vietnam indefinitely.

THREE MAJOR OBJECTIVES

As expressed in the 1971 plan, the overall concept of pacification consists of the three objectives of "local self-defense, local self-government and local self-development."

The philosophy of the program is stated as follows in the plan:

"In its efforts to achieve political control of the Republic of Vietnam, the enemy attempts to demonstrate that the Government of Vietnam is not capable of governing the country or of providing credible security to the people. His offensive operations, the resultant reaction operations by friendly forces produce adverse effects on security of the people. The most effective way of assuring security of the Vietnamese people is to keep enemy forces away from
them and by neutralizing the Vietcong infrastructure. Without the V.C.I., enemy main forces cannot obtain intelligence, manpower and food, nor will they be able to procure ammunition or ordnance.

The plan emphasizes that the "strategic concept of national security" is not dependent on the presence of American forces and "has the way for the transfer of the responsibility for security from military agencies to civilian ones."

To assist this proposed transfer and supervise the new police functions the South Vietnamese and United States Governments have turned to Sir Robert Thompson, the British counterinsurgency expert.

Sir Robert, who carried out two confidential missions for President Nixon in Vietnam in 1968 and 1970, has been in Saigon since February. In an interview published in the current issue of U.S. News & World Report, Sir Robert said that Saigon's ability to counter subversion "has steadily improved all the time."

The pacification plan emphasized that among the 1971 targets is the reduction of "enemy terrorist incidents" to 6,000. The document did not report how many such incidents occurred in 1970, but said that the current target was to reduce them by 75 percent in "secure areas" and by 50 percent in areas "still undergoing pacification."

Statistics included in the plan showed that the military region that includes 15 provinces south of Saigon and in the Mekong Delta poses the most serious security problems.

The delta has been declared by the Saigon Government to be virtually pacified, except for U Minh Forest area, and all American troops left the area in 1969. But the plan reports serious problems with an entrenched Vietcong apparatus in the provinces of Vinh Long, Dinh Tu Long, Kien Hoa and An Quyen. Similar problems are reported in Binh Thuan province in the central part of the country and in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces in the northern part, adjoining the demilitarized zone.

The plan urges that special police units be assigned to these provinces.

To deal with the Vietcong apparatus the plan provides for 700,000 weapons to be issued this year to the People's Self-Defense Forces and for the establishment of an intelligence operation reaching into all of South Vietnam's villages and hamlets. The "people's intelligence net" is designed to keep track of Vietcong families, build up Vietcong dossiers and blacklists, and offer rewards to informers.

---

[From The New York Times, Apr. 15, 1971]

(BY GRIORAM EMMERSON)

Pacification: It's Bringing A Lot of W ~alk Down a Road Safely.

Saigon—"Pacification" will be fully realized not when we will have occupied each inch of earth but when we will have conquered all the hearts and won all the minds."

These words were written in French by Commandant A. M. Savuti, head of the Deuxieme Bureau, the French intelligence apparatus, during France's long bitter war with the Vietminh. He wrote them in September, 1954.

The words have been neatly printed on a card pasted on one of the partition walls that hem in the desk of a bright young American who daily works on the hamlet evaluation system (H.E.S.). This is the American method of rating security in South Vietnam which is based on American advisers' reports and, in its final stages, comes out of a computer. The young man is not without a sense of irony.

It is not unusual to remember what Commandant Savuti so hoped for when one reads a long, pontifical document called the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan. This means pacification, a network of programs engineered by the United States agency in Saigon called Civil Operations and Rural Development Support, or CORDS.

The programs involve a wide range of activities, from improvement of economic conditions to administrative training to strengthening security in the hamlets. A key element is the enlargement of the national police to cope with the Vietcong.

The Saigon Government and the United States have put great stock in the pacification program as a means of spreading their influence in the country.
Ambassador William Egan Colby, who heads CORDS, flew to Washington this weekend to testify before Congressional committees.

The crucial goal of pacification is to separate the South Vietnamese, psychologically and ideologically, from the Communists, to pull the South Vietnamese to the side of the Saigon Government, and to get and keep their allegiance and trust so they will stay on that side.

But measuring this allegiance and trust is not as simple as taking the temperature of a feverish man every day and then deciding whether he is cured. There is no way of knowing the final results of pacification because the methods by which the Americans and Saigon Government officials assess their success is often neither honest nor realistic. Sometimes they cannot know but are not permitted to say this.

In too many villages and hamlets, pacification simply means more painful pressures on a people that have already been obliged to bend down too low and too long. While the plans may look perfectly drawn up by the American experts, the men in the small hamlets or villages who carry them out are often greedy bullies, or slowed and fearful people. The loveliest plan in the world cannot cure them.

The great weakness—an almost fatal one in South Vietnam where corruption now flourishes in greater variety than a decade ago—is that pacification is only as good as the people obliged to carry it out.

If, as in one delta village, the national police collect money by threatening to arrest people as Vietcong suspects, then pacification here is an ugly joke. The people pay for they know that under the Phoenix Program, designed to weed out Vietcong in the Vietnamese population, there is very little way of proving what you are not when the police point their finger.

If, for example, pacification means providing security but the old men and young boys in the Peoples' Self-Defense Force in another village can pay to get off one night from guarding a road, then pacification here does not work. For it depends on spirit not the cash and, if in still another village, the people are forced to clear an area mined by the Vietcong in order to deprive the Vietcong of a hiding place, then the people who are frightened or hurt will feel that pacification is worse than anything else. You cannot pacify most Vietnamese, of course, by expecting them to put their lives on the line. Only soldiers accept that.

The intensified, accelerated pacification program for 1971 calls for even more organization of the people "in order to develop unity of will and action in the entire nation." It may be far too late for anyone to expect that now just as it was too late in 1955 for Commandant Savant and France to win the same hearts and the same minds.

This is a tired nation, perhaps the most tired in the world, and the Americans here, working with the Vietnamese, seem a little dimmed, a little less hopeful, too. The great and grand goals of pacification still shine brightly for some courageous, committed Americans; but there is still one small thing that four years of pacification, billions of dollars, and thousands of United States advisers have sadly enough not yet brought about:

It is being able to walk down a country road at night, or drive on a highway, without risking your life.

(From The New York Times, Apr. 14, 1971)

SOUTH VIETNAM’S FORCE FORCING NEIGHBORS TO SUPPORT PACIFICATION

BY THOMAS G. FOX

Saigon, South Vietnam, April 13—The South Vietnamese national police force is quickly expanding in size and influence here, largely because of increased American financial support and an organizational change that moved the police command to the highest levels of the Government.

The South Vietnamese police have long been rated as one of the weakest forces in the pacification program. Corruption among the police is considered to be widespread, and morale, because of low wages, is not good.

An independent report submitted to President Nixon last year cited South
Vietnamese police ineffectiveness as a threat to the long-range stability of the Saigon Government.

United States officials continually stress that the national police must play a vital role in the program designed to track down and kill or capture Vietcong political officials. As the Americans leave, the American officials say, more and more of the security programs will fall to the police, and they are being equipped with highly advanced technical devices with which they will attempt to track down Vietcong agents.

INCREASE IN FUNDS

American funds funneled into the national police through the military-civilian advisory agency known as CORDS have been increased this year by more than 25 per cent—from $20.9-million in 1970 to $27.3-million.

To coordinate police activities with the security work of the armed forces and civilian defense forces, President Nguyen Van Thieu recently signed a decree establishing the office of National Police Command and then appointed Maj. Gen. Tran Thanh Phong to the post. It is considered by the South Vietnamese Government to be at a level equivalent to Secretary of State, according to a communique.

The change allows President Thieu to assume more direct control of the police.

General Phong, a former minister in the pacification program, is said by American officials to be aggressive and competent.

STEADY GROWTH IN SIZE

The national police have grown steadily in size during the last decade but never so fast as today. Strength in 1960 was 16,000; and now is 97,000; by the end of next year it is expected to be 120,000.

A goal of 147,000 is projected, but the number will decrease once the war ends, police safety officials say.

To train and lead the expanding organization, about 35,000 South Vietnamese Army officers are being transferred to the national police.

The United States advisory program to the national police has a staff of 225 men, more than half of them American Army officers attached to CORDS. This American agency, the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support program, supervises various pacification projects aimed at destroying the Vietcong and promoting self-government and development.

TANKS AND ARTILLERY

One department in the police, the national police field forces, is expected to operate increasingly in rural areas as security allows the army to pull out. The field forces are being equipped with tanks and artillery.

The shift of military officers into the police and the supply of heavy armor have led some South Vietnamese critics of the war to write newspaper editorials on the “militarization of the police.”

A clause of the South Vietnamese Constitution allows the police to act against those who are considered a threat to national security. Critics of the war here already charge that the police interpret the clause too liberally and help to break up demonstrations by students and veterans.

Among the less-controversial programs of the national police is the identification one, introduced late in 1968, with American help. All South Vietnamese who reach the age of 15 are required to carry plastic identification cards, which are considered by American advisers to be part of the “most foolproof classification system yet developed.”

According to one high-ranking public safety adviser, more than 18,000 South Vietnamese are employed in the computerized classification program, which is based on Federal Bureau of Investigation techniques.

The South Vietnamese police also carefully control the movement of people and resources throughout the country. Hundreds of police checkpoints are set up on the main arteries of the countryside and on city streets.

The checkpoints, some of which are permanent, while others are mobile, annoy most Vietnamese. But as one public safety adviser said, “We are well
aware that the Vietnamese dislike being checked so much, but we are still fighting a war here."
The major problem for the national police, aside from public criticism and enemy activities, is corruption.
The policeman's basic monthly salary is not enough to allow him to live without working at another job or taking bribes. A policeman without a family earns the equivalent of $12 a month in real buying power; a policeman with a family of four earns $18.

WAR RUINS PACIFICATION IN A HIGHLAND AREA

(From The New York Times, Apr. 13, 1971)

Phunhon, South Vietnam, April 10—Three weeks of heavy fighting in the highlands south of Pleiku has left the pacification program and a score of hamlets in this district of refugee settlements in ruins, according to American advisers who endure a 12-hour siege of the district headquarters compound. They say that another attack could come at any time.

Some 2,200 North Vietnamese army regulars have withdrawn into the mountains west of here for resupply. Eighty miles to the north 5,000 other enemy troops have been pressing intense attacks on a hilltop artillery position, Fire Base 6.

American advisers and Vietnamese officials in Phunhon and in the military headquarters in Pleiku believe that both areas of attack are part of a single North Vietnamese campaign to show that they have not been hurt by the American-supported South Vietnamese operation against the Ho Chi Minh supply trail network in Laos. They believe the campaign is also aimed at thwarting Government efforts to extend control over the montagnard villagers.

In that, they have been successful. American officials here believe that the pacification program, a campaign to end enemy subversion, has been crippled in this sparsely populated district. They feel it has been set back at least a year by the enemy attacks and South Vietnamese counterattacks that devastated the hamlets last week and in mid-March.

ACTION AROUND FIRE BASE 6

Most of the action in the last few days has been to the north around Fire Base 6. In this area 35 miles south of Pleiku, the North Vietnamese forces are thought to be coming from a large staging area west of here, at one of the principal infiltration outlets of the Ho Chi Minh trail.

"They'll be back," said the acting senior American adviser to the South Vietnamese 45th Regiment, Maj. Walter J. Gabrylski of Greenwich, Conn. "Those guys have been planning this for a long time." The 45th Regiment now has headquarters at an artillery base just outside Phunhon.

One reason for the setback to pacification is clear in Pleitbch, a montagnard village of grass shacks on stilts about a mile west of Phunhon. Enemy troops established a command post in it during the first phase of their attacks last March 15.

The village is still a shambles. How much of it was destroyed by an enemy mortar attack and how much by the allied counterattack—including air strikes directed at the hamlet by American helicopters—is hard to tell. Nineteen other villages, clustered along a nine-mile strip on route 14 between Phunhon and the southernmost American base in the area at Landing Zone Lonely were also badly damaged.

2,000 PEOPLE HOMELESS

In all, 2,000 people were without homes. One of their sources of livelihood—a saw mill—was destroyed in the fighting.

The Pleitbch village chief, Suu Chong, a dark-skinned man dressed in a breechclout, a faded army fatigue jacket, and a dusty pair of combat boots, said, through a Vietnamese translator, "V.C. shot back at helicopters and helicopters shoot back with bombs." He looked at the litter and ruins around him and then toward the sky and made a forceful gesture to show how the destruction rained down.
The Phunhon district chief, Mad. Mal. Thu Thien, said that the helicopters fired back because the North Vietnamese had installed antiaircraft positions in Plei Choh, but that three days before the air strikes, the villagers were warned by loudspeakers in planes that hovered above that they should get out of the way—and that most of them had done so.

The hamlet chief, indicated that despite the warning many Montagnards had been unable to flee. Many were wandering around the village a few days ago, carrying babies and sticks of firewood on their backs and trying to start all over again. The South Vietnamese Government provided them with a limited amount of food.

American advisors here say that nine villagers were killed and 188 wounded in the fighting around Phunhon last month and that hundreds of houses were destroyed and more than 100 persons were missing. There were more battles last week, wrecking several hamlets south of Phunhon.

"It's a sorry and a sad thing to see," said the American district senior adviser, a major who asked that his name be withheld so that his wife would not find out what he had been through.

"There's been extensive damage to pacification. There's been damage to the military situation, to just about anything you can name in Phunhon," he added.

The worst part of the current campaign, for him and for the 45 other Americans—advisers and artillerymen—in the Phunhon district compound came at midnight on March 15, when the North Vietnamese shell the compound and sent demolition men sweeping through its rings of barbed wire. The enemy destroyed about one-quarter of the bunkers and buildings in fighting that lasted until 2 P.M. the next day. One American adviser was killed and an undetermined number were wounded.

The defenders, mostly from a Vietnamese Popular Forces company of lightly trained irregulars, drove out the attackers, but suffered an important psychological defeat nevertheless.

**REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE**

The enemy broke off the attack around Phunhon on March 22, when South Vietnamese reinforcements fought their way up Route 14 from Ban Mhtyt.

But for some reasons unfathomable to the Americans, the 45th Regiment was ordered back to Ban Mhtyt after the enemy withdrew. In the last week in March, leaving the area poorly defended in the face of a serious threat.

"On April 1 it started again," said an American officer at the Phunhon district compound. "Lonely, was taking fire and there were attacks on three hamlets from the south. Some NVA [North Vietnamese Army] troops got down into the family bunkers inside their homes and caused extensive damage. Then the 45th started coming back on April 2. One of those hamlets, Pletoucher, was 100 percent destroyed.

Both the North and the South Vietnamese have traditionally regarded the Montagnards as an interior people and treated them with contempt. The North Vietnamese in this area use them as cooles. To get them out of the enemy's reach the South Vietnamese and Americans took the Montagnards from the countryside to resettlement hamlets along Route 14.

**A WRECKED HAMLET**

A few days ago an American lieutenant at Landing Zone Lonely pointed to a jumble of tin roofs in the hamlet of Plei Poe and said that the North Vietnamese had fired eight mortar shells into the town.

The landing zone has been quiet since it came under an extensive mortar attack on April 2 and 3, when one American was killed and 13 were wounded.

The allies are trying to fight the enemy in the highlands by conducting ground probes, finding his trenches and bunkers, then falling back and using American helicopter gunsights and artillery to blast him out. Colonel Cha and Major Gabrystak are proud of the technique and think it is working, although a foray over Chudon Mountain where two North Vietnamese generals are supposed to be leading Regiment 96B, was fruitless.

The South Vietnamese say they have killed 210 North Vietnamese here since April 2 while suffering 21 dead and 29 wounded. But as an American adviser in the district headquarters said, "This stand-off business—air strikes, artillery—is fine, but the man on the ground has to get in."
DATLY, South Vietnam, April 25—The midwife of this neat and prosperous Central Highlands village was startled and frightened one night last week when a handful of Vietcong appeared at her dispensary door just as she was delivering a baby.

“They took all the medicine we had,” she said the next afternoon, displaying a list of the stolen items, even the material for delivering babies.” Fortunately, she added, she was able to finish delivering the baby successfully.

Seizing medicine was only part of the Vietcong’s apparently well-thought-out plan for Datly—a mixed Catholic and Buddhist farming village only a few miles from the provincial capital of Bannemoth.

In a swift succession of moves carried out seemingly without a hitch, the Vietcong made a mockery of Datly’s security rating, which Nguyen Hiep, the village chief, said was “secure.”

The guerrillas destroyed one village administration building, damaged another, cut through a barbed wire fence without resistance from the men guarding the village, and escaped unscathed.

The attack on Datly was a minor incident in the context of the major battles and bloody assaults of the Vietnam war. No civilians were harmed, no homes destroyed. By the next afternoon, life in the village seemed to be going on as usual.

S. VIETNAM’S ENCAMPMENTS

And yet what happened in Datly is significant because South Vietnam’s encampments of Regional Forces, Popular Forces and People’s Self-Defense Forces—the three branches of the national militia—are attacked even more frequently and occasionally overrun.

But it is a part of the war that Americans outside Vietnam do not think about much, perhaps because American soldiers in any significant numbers—and South Vietnamese regulars for that matter—are so rarely involved.

For the same reason it is a part of the war that is not likely to be affected greatly by the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces. Barring settlement of the Vietnam war, this guerrilla-style conflict could go on for years.

The attack on Datly began about 10:45 p.m. on a Tuesday. The enemy announced its arrival with a single B-40 round aimed at the village administration building, a small one-story structure set in a compound surrounded by barbed wire.

The blast wounded one of the platoon of Popular Forces militiamen guarding the compound, and the rest fled toward the village school. As they went by, a shell landed atop the school, wounding five more of the militiamen. (A platoon has about 25 men.)

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Meanwhile, the administration building was levelled by a few more well-placed mortar rounds. Then, the Vietcong made their call on the dispensary and also cleared out a second headquarters building—desks, papers and all.

After surveying the scene the next day, members of the U.S. advisory team for Darlac Province said that the Popular Forces, whose primary task throughout Vietnam is village defense, had never fired a gun. “We didn’t find any cartridges,” one of the advisers reported.

Nguyen Hiep explained that security in the vicinity had been good for so long that the militiamen had let down their guard. Among other things, he said, they neglected to have a broken radio-fixed, which they might have used to call for help when the shelling began.

Hiep, a thin, business-like man who said he had been village chief for 13 years, stood in the completely-baren and shell-scoured administration building that was left standing.

“A lot of the families here were Vietcong at one time,” he said, “but most of them left. We still have some families with Vietcong connections, but they are not active. Anyway, we know who they are.”

He added that he did not believe that the militia guarding the village had been infiltrated by the enemy—one common explanation for situations where the defenders put up no resistance.
"Lt. Col. Wayne R. Smith Jr., the senior American adviser in Danang, said that overall, the province is one of the quietest in the generally troublesome Central Highland region. "Danang has very little enemy," he said, "we have no hard-core NVA. You can drive to any one of the districts."
That may be so, but Americans (and most Vietnamese) stay on the roads after 6 o'clock. Inteligent officers sizing up enemy strength conclude they have the capability to attack anywhere in the province. Nguyen Hiep said Danang has in the past been attacked in his tenure as chief. But from the looks of the rubble left behind and the tattered flag flying from the surviving headquarters building, one attack was all that was necessary.

---

[From The Boston Globe, May 10, 17, 1972]

VIETNAM... INESCAPABLE BURDEN—

UNITED STATES MUST REMAIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

(By Matthew V. Storm)

(Matthew V. Storm of The Globe Washington Bureau, has just completed a three-week tour of Southeast Asia. The following dispatch, written in Saigon, is the first of three summary reports.)

SAIGON—There is no escape.
The United States in the past 30 years has adopted what now becomes an unwanted child in Indochina.
Many Americans, particularly younger ones, believe there is a total solution available. They think there is a way that, with some courage, the United States can wash its bloodied hands of this violent, unpredictable, remote part of the world.
Facts dictate otherwise.
Those who feed on new ideas and feel themselves unshackled by cold war principles will probably have to recognize this now if they hope to influence future American policies here.
This is a conclusion born out of a three-week tour of South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.
It is not possible in such a brief period to attempt a total understanding of the problems in Southeast Asia.
It is, however, time enough to learn that many impressions of this part of the globe and of America's role here, are distorted by the emotional climate which the Vietnam war has wrought at home.
This is not to say that the United States should not get "out" of Vietnam in the sense that it is normally meant—total withdrawal of US forces.
But an end to active military involvement should not be construed as the first step toward shutting off a major American interest here.
There are at least two important conditions here that will undoubtedly tie the United States to Indochina interminably:
The United States is a signatory of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty of Sept. 8, 1964, which constitutes a firm commitment for the protection of neighboring Thailand against Communist aggression.
The United States has undertaken such an immense part in sustaining the South Vietnamese government that it will be many years before it could morally free itself of support for that country's economic and social survival.
The United States could abrogate its treaty commitment with one year's notice. But this could be done at only an immense cost to its relations with Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, all of which are signatories.
As for South Vietnam, there are millions of people here who have put their lives in the trust of the war effort which was advanced by US cold war perceptions, propaganda and military might.
Notwithstanding the tragedy of that decision for the United States, it leaves America with a responsibility to ease the burden of military disengagement.
This may mean the granting of asylum in the United States to thousands of prominent Vietnamese.
Within this context, these other impressions about America's present and future here linger on:

---

From The Boston Globe, May 10, 17, 1972

VIETNAM... INESCAPABLE BURDEN—

UNITED STATES MUST REMAIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

(By Matthew V. Storm)

(Matthew V. Storm of The Globe Washington Bureau, has just completed a three-week tour of Southeast Asia. The following dispatch, written in Saigon, is the first of three summary reports.)

SAIGON—There is no escape.
The United States in the past 30 years has adopted what now becomes an unwanted child in Indochina.
Many Americans, particularly younger ones, believe there is a total solution available. They think there is a way that, with some courage, the United States can wash its bloodied hands of this violent, unpredictable, remote part of the world.
Facts dictate otherwise.
Those who feed on new ideas and feel themselves unshackled by cold war principles will probably have to recognize this now if they hope to influence future American policies here.
This is a conclusion born out of a three-week tour of South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.
It is not possible in such a brief period to attempt a total understanding of the problems in Southeast Asia.
It is, however, time enough to learn that many impressions of this part of the globe and of America's role here, are distorted by the emotional climate which the Vietnam war has wrought at home.
This is not to say that the United States should not get "out" of Vietnam in the sense that it is normally meant—total withdrawal of US forces.
But an end to active military involvement should not be construed as the first step toward shutting off a major American interest here.
There are at least two important conditions here that will undoubtedly tie the United States to Indochina interminably:
The United States is a signatory of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty of Sept. 8, 1964, which constitutes a firm commitment for the protection of neighboring Thailand against Communist aggression.
The United States has undertaken such an immense part in sustaining the South Vietnamese government that it will be many years before it could morally free itself of support for that country's economic and social survival.
The United States could abrogate its treaty commitment with one year's notice. But this could be done at only an immense cost to its relations with Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, all of which are signatories.
As for South Vietnam, there are millions of people here who have put their lives in the trust of the war effort which was advanced by US cold war perceptions, propaganda and military might.
Notwithstanding the tragedy of that decision for the United States, it leaves America with a responsibility to ease the burden of military disengagement.
This may mean the granting of asylum in the United States to thousands of prominent Vietnamese.
Within this context, these other impressions about America's present and future here linger on:
The United States Army has become religiously dedicated to getting out of here. Walking through a village in one of the northern provinces, a lieutenant-colonel said: "The United States still needs an army and this war isn't worth losing the army to. You'll find most of the senior officers have become pretty damn dovish."

What concerns the US most are its own internal problems. Estimates of the use of heroin, which the GI's usually take by "snorting," rather than the more dangerous injection method, are put at 20 per cent among United States troops. These are the estimates from Army doctors and GIs who were interviewed.

Today the Army must make risky decisions, like putting the city of Da Nang back on limits after several years. Despite intense anti-American feeling in the crowded city, the Army made the decision because troop morale was seen nearing the danger level.

A number of moderate Vietnamese leaders want the American troops to leave. Nguyen Van Bong, chairman of the Progressive National Movement political party and head of the National Institute of Administration, told me: "It is good for the Americans and good for the South Vietnamese. We have always heard the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong say South Vietnam could not survive without the presence of American troops, that South Vietnam is unable to govern and that South Vietnam's government will break down the day American troops leave."

Now Bong said, "we should demonstrate to the North-Vietnamese that we can survive without American troops. I think we could survive."

Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, who provokes a wide range of sentiment among both Vietnamese and Americans, told J.T. Wolterscorffer of the Associated Press last month: "I am a nationalist. I want South Vietnam to be free—free from Communism domination and influence and free from American domination and influence."

Ky also said there could no longer be a "military solution" to the war and that above all, the people want "the end to a war that has gone on too long."

The Viet Cong, whose image with some people in the United States is probably better than Ky's, come across in closer study as a mean breed of people.

On April 18, for example, they booby-trapped a bicycle parked in front of an ice cream store. One child was killed and five adults wounded in the incident.

Several children are killed each week by the VC. Most are indirect victims of mortar fire and the like. But some, like those in the village of Duc Duc, are targeted. Few of these incidents are reported in the US anymore.

Many American officials, particularly those in the northern provinces, predict that the terrorism will go on indefinitely.

Dr. Gerald Hickey is a 46-year-old anthropologist for the RAND Corp. He has been in South Vietnam for eight years and will testify May 18 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"I'm just depressed," he told the Boston Globe. "I've been saying the same thing since 1965. Vietnamization will never end the war. It will simply go on and on. The only way to end it is for the Vietnamese to negotiate among themselves."

Hickey's view reminded me of a story I heard in the Mekong Delta about the village of Dong My near the Cambodian border.

The Viet Cong told the Buddhist leader of Dong My they were going to blow up his school and a new bridge.

All night the Buddhist leader argued that the school was only for the children and the bridge was used only for the school. They compromised. The VC only blew up the bridge and the Buddhist slept in the school for several nights just to make sure it was safe.

Like most Vietnamese, the VC would not harm a Buddhist priest.

One facet of the American presence here says something about how and why the United States became so heavily involved for so long. The middle and high-ecllon Americans live in Vietnam, few of them are anxious to leave.

Many civilians, some of them ex-military officers who served here, stay in the country for years. They live in a villa, have a maid and cook and enjoy the luxury of a car and a driver. No small number have left their families in the United States, and a few have found South Vietnamese girl friends.
Without a doubt, many of these officials could not live on a similar high level at home. They represent colonialism at its worst.

There are, of course, other Americans who put in seven dedicated days of work each week and count the days until their next trip to Hong Kong, Bangkok, or the United States to see their families.

But John Doe and other non-government people with long experience here point to the "colonialists" as a significant weakness in the process by which Washington gets an accurate reading on how soon all Americans could be out of here.

Another problem is the way in which individual careers and lives become tied to the correctness and success of the American role here. Presidents can suffer from that, too.

On principle alone, a legislative restriction to the war, such as the Hatfield-McGovern amendment, seems crucially important. The relatively disinterested arm of Congress must assert a judgment on future foreign policy expeditions.

Nearly all interested observers now concede the Oct. 3 election to President Thieu, though some think Lam Son 719, the Laos operation, hurt the President's political standing.

A leading Vietnamese intellectual told me he feels the country must "stomach" Thieu for one more term because he is the only man strong enough to hold South Vietnam together, despite his weaknesses.

Duong Van Minh, known as "Big Minh," is given a chance by some. He is popular with the peace-minded Buddhists and many people in the Central Highlands and northern provinces. Prosperity in the Mekong Delta is expected to swing votes to the Thieu camp, however.

Minh has an image as a peace candidate. In fact, he has stopped short of advocating a coalition government, and Ky has come much closer to doing so.

Minh was nominal leader of the November 1963 coup against Ngo Dinh Diem. He was later overthrown himself.

Many leading Vietnamese consider Minh a poor administrator and no improvement on Thieu. Both men are colorless.

Nguyen Van Bong of the Progressive National Movement, whose party has not taken sides yet, gives Thieu and Minh a "50-50" breakdown now.

US Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and the huge US information apparatus are in open support of Thieu.

One senior American official who is not personally partial toward Thieu said he still wants the president to win re-election, "because if Minh won I think there would almost certainly be a coup—the generals wouldn't let him take office—and then the roof would blow off in the States."

The US Air Force is the one military element clearly preparing for an indefinite stay. They are the one "chip" that President Nixon is betting to free the Americans held as prisoners of war.

Some State Department officials feel, however, that the Communists will hold the prisoners for their own chip, hoping for political control of South Vietnam.

This war of nerves holds all the potential for escalation that began the massive US involvement six years ago.

The same situation prevails in northern Laos where American bombers from Thailand bases support Royal Lao troops against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. Again great potential for escalation—and civilian casualties.

The most impressive accomplishment in South Vietnam are usually accompanied by the presence of a strong local leader. Col. Nguyen Minh Dang in Thang Binh District, Quang Tin Province, is one of them.

Riding on the back of Col. Dang's Honda as he checks his local sentries during the night is a memorable experience. Hundreds of villagers, some of them teen-age girls, spend the night on guard to protect their families.

In Thang Binh District the American advisers are almost literally under Dang's control. The US team there will pull out by next March at the latest.

Thang Binh is in I Corps, a tough part of South Vietnam. Other Col. Dangs will have to emerge if this country is going to save itself.

The only way to develop them, to find the local leadership, is obviously to remove the American domination.

But at the same time Americans cannot become deluded into thinking they are free of the Asian burden. The future should be dedicated instead to changing the approach towards that burden so that tomorrow's young Americans are not fighting and dying in this part of the world.
PART XI

"Americans have lived a century without a war at home. An American visiting Vietnam finds much of what he learns is in observing people, Americans and Vietnamese, who are living in this war.

Some are courageous and resourceful and some are pathetic victims of events. Some tell a story without saying a word.

These are some of the people this reporter remembers from a month's tour of Southeast Asia.

Maj. John Renner, a tall, blond University of Arizona graduate, 26 years old. He was nearly killed in an ambush in February when a bullet stopped just short of severing his spinal cord.

Renner, who has Eagle Scout manners, is a district adviser in Kien Giang Province. He goes this month to a new district being set up in the U Minh forest, where the ambush took place. Although an American colonel was killed in the incident, some Americans think Renner, with his bland help, may have been the target because he was better known in the area.

A marked man, Renner takes events matter of factly. "I'm a professional soldier," he said.

Col. Nguyen Minh Dang, 38, is the proud chief of Thang Binh district in Quang Tin Province. A reader of philosophy and history, he learned English during military training at Ft. Sill, Ok.

Though a fierce fighter, he embodies the nationalism of many Vietnamese. He himself was born in North Vietnam says:

"When I kill Communists, I cry. I say to Communists, if you invade us, we fight. I kill some of you. But I not want to. We need Vietnamese. You are Vietnamese."

John Paul Vann, 47, deputy senior American adviser for the Mekong Delta, is a former lieutenant colonel who stayed in Vietnam as a civilian. He has been there now for nine years. Often critical of US military action in the past he now believes the country has a chance for survival.

Vann is one of the most candid Americans in Vietnam. He says it is "incredible that having spent $120 billion in Vietnam the American government has never sent with the exception of the military "its really top level people here."

That covers a lot of people, including ambassadors.

Vann also said: "Had we waited for the Vietnamese to take over, they would take forever." But he feels they have made "fantastic" progress since being faced with the prospect of US withdrawal.

Maj. Harry (Buzz) Johnson of Medway, Mass., the US liaison to Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem, is a believer with religious fervor in the American policy.

Except for one year, Johnson has been in South Vietnam since 1968. Understanding his commitment is an important part of understanding why Americans have stayed in Vietnam so long.

When he talks of South Vietnam, tears come to the eyes of this rugged former football player at the University of Massachusetts. He says: "For the first time in history, we have saved a country by building it up instead of destroying it."

Capt. Brad Bradford, 21, of Baton Rouge, La., saw heavy combat during the Tet offensive of 1968.

He believes the United States should get out at about the Nixon rate of withdrawal. But he is bitter about Mr. Nixon's intervention in the Calley case.

"Calley should get the death penalty," he said. Over beers he lectures fellow officers about care of civilians:

"War has evolved. It isn't fought the way it once was. I'm telling you, for your own good, you better realize that now. In 1967-68, the body count was everything. There were more atrocities than you or I will ever know about."

The next day Bradford headed for assignment as one of the handful of Americans on a mobile advisory team deep in the U Minh forest, where until last December the Viet Cong had total control.

Many other people had something to say, but one war victim, a boy about seven years old, is the most memorable of all. And he never said a word.

The boy was at the LaSalle School for the Blind in Saigon. His face had literally been blown off by some sort of blast. His nose was simply two nostrils, no bones. His eyes, presumably damaged irreparably, were covered by gauze.
Wearing short pants, a jersey and rubber sandals, the boy was sitting on his cot, trying to fold a handkerchief.

He was humming to himself. The melody was cheerful. He was keeping time with his foot.

Seeing someone whose body is ruined but who can still be happy is a lesson to what it means to be a human being.

Similarly, meeting people on the plains of Laos whose homes have been destroyed, by American bombs and who have lost relatives to those insane bombs, is a lesson of how a policy of righteousness can turn to disaster.

For a reporter who has covered words about war for several years in Washington, the people of war are now real.

PART III

Enjoying good Vietnamese food in a restaurant built over an inlet of the South China Sea in Da Nang, the war seems far removed.

There are pleasures, boats passing close by and a refreshing breeze is coming in off the water. Only the helicopters chopping the air and the incongruous sounds of Armed Forces radio ("... when we fell in love down at Palisades Park.") distinguish it from Jimmy's Harborside in Boston.

In South Vietnam now, there are vast areas of security which two years ago there was fighting.

In a recently concluded month's tour of Southeast Asia, this reporter rode with Vietnamese district chief on his Honda while he checked on his local forces spending the night on watch. Riding a Honda across rice paddies in the black of night about 100 miles south of the DMZ would have been suicide two years ago.

From a helicopter flying over the Mekong Delta in early evening darkness, I saw the headlights of tractors working the fields. This, too, would have been unthinkable two years ago.

One cannot travel through Vietnam at this juncture without being intrigued by the question of how safe these areas will be in a year, or in five years.

If the Americans are not leaving altogether—there certainly is no indication that the Air Force is getting out—the fact remains that the South Vietnamese face a tougher military task ahead.

One is reminded of a story about a late summer evening in 1940 when Ho Chi Minh was in Paris trying to strike a deal for Vietnamese independence.

When he realized that his mission was doomed to failure, he confided to two sympathetic Frenchmen, "If we have to fight we will fight. You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours and in the end it will be you who will tire of it."

The French did fight and they did tire. They were defeated 17 years ago this month.

Now the US, having repeated France's errors in seeking a military solution, has also run out of time.

The Communists' whatever damage they suffered in Laos this year, have persevered.

During the time I was in South Vietnam, the Communists were managing up to 800 terrorist incidents a week. The calm in Saigon, Danang and the Mekong Delta can be Illusory.

Americans in the Delta are confident about military security there for the next three years, but farther north one encounters growing uncertainty, the crowded cities, where grave economic problems will only be exacerbated by the declining American presence, are ripe targets for unrest and terrorism.

Vietnamization, the policy that President Nixon committed himself to in mid-1969, is neither a military nor political solution to this war, "It is a military solution to the domestic political problem of US combat casualties.

If there were evidence that the South Vietnamese Army was becoming a superior military force, there would be a prospect of at least a military stand-off that might lead to political accommodation. But the debate about the progress of Vietnamization, particularly after the abortive Laos "incur" centers only on the ability of the South Vietnamese, In President Nixon's words, to "defend themselves" and have at least a chance to prevent a Communist takeover... This is election year in South Vietnam. Election day is October 3. This is perhaps the last year in which the US could be a catalyst.
for a political settlement of the war, either by negotiation of a total withdrawal date or at least by abandoning the efforts that will insure President Thieu's re-election.

After that it will be a US residual force versus North Vietnam's hold on American POWs. Even then Communist perseverance may prevail.

An American pilot who flies missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail was talking the other day about the North Vietnamese who carry supplies for miles on foot.

He spoke apologetically of these people he tries to kill. "You have to admire them. I wonder how many Americans would do it if we had a war in our country."

These are the people of Ho Chi Minh.


SOUTH VIETNAM—SCABBED, STORICAL, BEAUTIFUL

(By James Wieghart)

Saigon, February 24.—No nation can be at war for 25 years without bearing the indelible imprints of prolonged conflict on its land, its institutions and the faces of its people. South Vietnam is no exception.

But what first strikes the visitor forcibly is that despite the long, bitter battle—first for freedom from French colonial rule after World War II, then the continuing struggle with the North Vietnamese, South Vietnam remains an incredibly beautiful country.

From Saigon down, the southern third of the country is flat, marshy lowlands dominated by the Mekong River system. The Mekong Delta area, similar to the Louisiana coastal region, is one of the richest rice-growing areas in the world and normally provides more than enough to feed the 60% of the nation's people who live there.

LIKE FLAWS ON A CANVAS

To the north, along the coast, white sandy beaches, set off by sharply rising green hills provide a natural resortlike setting that in more peaceful times could rival Hawaii as a tourist attraction.

To the north and west, over the steep rising Annamite Mountain chain covered by dense tropical rain forest, are a series of plateaus along the Cambodian and Laotian borders that resemble in appearance and beauty the area around Denver, Colo.

But even from the air the signs of war—gaping bomb craters, black, burned-over vegetation, ruins of buildings—dot the landscape like flaws on an impressionistic canvas.

The scars are least noticeable in the mountains where the dense jungle growth, spurred by steaming tropical heat and six-month-long monsoon rains, quickly obliterates the works of man.

Some of the war's devastation has also been erased along the fertile coastal plain and in the rich Mekong Delta by the intensive agricultural practices by stoical South Vietnamese peasant farmers. They appear to view the war mainly as an unwanted interruption of their labors and any outcome, so long as it is quick, would apparently be satisfactory to them.

DESTRUCTION, CONSTRUCTION

The destruction looks worst around the imperial city of Hue, overrun and held by the Communists for almost a month during the 1968 Tet offensive, and in the northwestern border area around Khe Sanh, not far from Laos.

Once a prosperous tea-producing area, the region around Khe Sanh is a wasteland. Heavy allied bombings and constant Communist artillery bombardment during the 77-day siege of the Marine garrison there in the summer of 1968 destroyed virtually every building, denuded the terrain and drove the inhabitants into already swelling refugee camps.

Even more impressive than the destruction wrought by the war, however, is the massive construction it generated, particularly during the six years of
heavy U.S. involvement. Among the hundreds of military construction projects scattered across the countryside are:

- Scores of heavily sandbagged fire bases, perched on bulldozed mountain tops or alongside strategic roads or waterways. The fire bases, complete with underground concrete-and-steel-reinforced command bunkers, are armed with long-range artillery and usually have helicopter landing pads.

- Complete military communities housing thousands of men, like Camp Eagle near Hue, headquarters for the U.S. 16th Airborne Division, or Camp Baldy, south of Danang, headquarters for the 25th Infantry Division.

- Dozens of military airstrips, ranging from small landing strips for helicopters and light observation planes, to full-fledged airports capable of handling huge four- to five-engine cargo planes.

- Hundreds of miles of roads and countless bridges built by U.S. military construction battalions equipped with trucks, road graders, dirt movers, bulldozers, and cranes.

- Extensive seaport and docking facilities at coastal cities like Da Nang, Cam Ranh Bay and Saigon, to handle the millions of tons of food, ammunition and other supplies fanned into South Vietnam from the United States over the last six years.

- Elaborate, fully stocked supply depots with fuel tanks, acres of motor vehicles, ammunition dumps, equipment repair shops and warehouses crammed with food, clothing and medical supplies.

**ECONOMY GRIEVED TO WAR**

But military fortifications don't end at hamlet, village or city limits in a guerrilla war like South Vietnam's. Since the entire nation is the battlefield, the whole country has become, of necessity, an armed camp and the war is institutionalized—a fact of daily life for every citizen.

In every hamlet, village and city in the country, barbed wire, machine-gun emplacements, sandbagged bunkers and guard outposts ring government buildings, police stations and the homes of important local and national officials.

In fact, so pervasive are such encroachments in the civilian sector that they now attract no more notice from residents than a tree or a post or a garbage can. The same is true for the daily sight of large numbers of armed men walking down busy city streets—only visitors take notice.

Such relative invisibility is no mean feat when one considers that in a nation the size of Florida there are now a million South Vietnamese servicemen and a million more armed civilian defense forces—about 12% of the nation's total 17.9 million population—plus about 325,000 American military personnel roaming about.

As could be expected, in a prolonged war with no end yet in sight, the conduct of the war and the war's aftermath has become the chief preoccupation of the central government. It also dominates an economy, which is geared to war and dependent on its continuation and if it is the single, most important fact of life for every South Vietnamese citizen.

The corrosive effect of the war on society's fabric is everywhere visible in South Vietnam, particularly in the large cities of Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue.

The streets there are alive, with the casualties of war—armless and legless veterans, napalm-burned men, women, and children. The hate, the blame and the blind—women and children, some with noses, ears or jaws blown away—creep or crawl or simply lie on crowded downtown sidewalks begging for just enough money to stay alive another day.

**INACCURATE ON LEFT SIDE**

The official 1970 caseload figures of the South Vietnamese ministry of Social Welfare and Assistance lists 51,000 disabled veterans, 150,000 disabled citizens, 235,000 war orphans and 151,000 war widows, but officials agree the actual figures are many times higher.

The Ministry, short of manpower and funds, has a long waiting list for assistance and is forced to turn away thousands of victims, not even aware of the program, have simply fled to the cities in hopes of somehow finding the means to sustain life.

Similarly, government statistics on refugees—victims whose homes and villages have been destroyed by allied bombs or Communist shelling or a combination of the two—have proved to be consistently inaccurate on the low side.
No one really knows how many people have been displaced by the war, but it is generally agreed that the figure may be as high as four million, almost 25% of the population. The government reported last year resettling 785,000 refugees in their former homes and began 1971 with an estimated 250,000 backlog.

But the government's count does not include enormous flow of refugees from rural, to urban areas over the past few years. As a result of that flow, the populations of the major cities have doubled, tripled and even quadrupled over the last decade while the nation's population increased by about 10%.

For instance, Saigon's population, estimated at 409,000 in 1962, is approaching the three million mark. During the same period, Da Nang's population soared from 120,000 to 415,000, while Hue grew from 104,000 to 170,000.

Having been victimized by the war, many of these people are now dependent on the war's economic dislocations to save them. Many who are able find work primarily in the wide variety of service industries that inevitably spring up around military bases—laundries, restaurants, taverns, shops, taxi companies and showbusiness parlors. Others are directly employed by the military for mess service, cleanup work, maintenance and minor clerical duties.

But an alarming number, especially the young, have turned to vice and crime for their livelihood. Day or night, the downtown streets of the major cities are lined with youthful pickpockets, purse snatchers, black marketeers, dope peddlers, panderers, prostitutes, illegal money changers and con artists. The police, seemingly overwhelmed by the problem, appear more interested in getting their cut than in stopping the illegal traffic.

Graft and official corruption, often a problem in South Vietnam and every other Far Eastern country except Japan, has been intensified by the enormous pressure of inflation, which has made it virtually impossible for low-paid government employees to live on their salaries.

**PRICE INDEX OF 700 PERCENT**

Last year alone, the cost of living went up 29.8% here and this was on the heels of an over greater 32.1% jump in 1969. Between 1965 and 1970, the retail price index in Saigon rose an unbelievable 700.

Although the economic pressure on civil servants was eased somewhat by a recent 17% general wage increase and by stepped-up government efforts to slow inflation, government workers and servicemen continue the kind of hand-to-mouth existence that breeds corruption.

The difficulties of the South Vietnamese economy are easily traceable to the war and to the massive infusion of American dollars into a small, relatively underdeveloped nation.

During the high point of the U.S. buildup in 1968, the United States was spending about $2.5 billion a month to support the war, more than half the nation's gross national product for the year. Although the Nixon administration does not separate out Vietnam war costs in its budget, informed estimates set this year's cost at about $15 billion or about four times greater than South Vietnam's GNP.

Over all, American officials have estimated that the United States has spent more than $100 billion on the war and has pumped another $4.2 billion in economic assistance into South Vietnam. American nonmilitary aid to the Saigon government continues to rise at a rate of about $700 million a year.

When viewed in the context of the current U.S. withdrawal program, under which President Nixon hopes to have all U.S. personnel out by the end of 1972, South Vietnam's already difficult economic problems will become clearly unmanageable.

**AIR MUST GO ON AND ON**

American officials agree privately that the United States will have to continue massive economic aid to South Vietnam for years after the last U.S. troops are gone.

Obviously, there can be no meaningful solution to the tremendous physical, social and economic problems confronting South Vietnam until peace is restored.

No nation with limited resources and a population of 17.9 million can support two million men under arms in a widespread modern war without eventually collapsing under the strain. The same of course can be said for the Hand
government, whose own war effort is increasingly reliant on outside help from Red China, the Soviet Union and other Communist countries.

But still, the war has gone on for 22 years and it seems to have developed a curious momentum of its own that defies ordinary logic. Perhaps it can only be ground to a halt when the outside forces helping to sustain it are finally gone.

[From the New York News, Feb. 26, 1971]

BRASS DIDN'T THINK REDS WOULD STAND IN LAOS

(By James Wiegand)

SAIGON, February 25.—Although they considered it a possibility, few of Gen. Creighton W. Abrams’ top planners actually believed the North Vietnamese would “stand and fight” a bloody battle of attrition to defend the Ho Chi Minh Trail against South Vietnamese raiders in Laos.

Yet, 17 days after the border crossing, the spearhead of 18,000 crack South Vietnamese troops has been stopped in its tracks 15 miles inside Laos, far short of the original goal of severing the vital supply link through which North Vietnamese infiltrates and men into Cambodia and South Vietnam.

Despite assurances by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird in Washington that the operation is proceeding on schedule, it is not, according to advance briefings given to reporters in Saigon early this month.

Likewise, the Nixon administration claims that the incursion has seriously disrupted the flow of supplies down the trail at variance with the contention of Air Force sources that electronic monitoring devices along the trail indicate that stepped-up movements on the western branches have partly compensated for the incursion on the eastern side.

BUT THE BUILDUP IS HURT

This is not to say that the Laotian operation, dubbed Lamson 730, has been a failure. There has been a disruption on part of North Vietnam’s only supply network to the south.

This means that the dry season buildup, planned by the North Vietnamese will fall below expectations, perhaps enough so to cause them to scale down, if not postpone, a summer offensive.

But in light of the stiff Communist resistance, it is surprising that the conventional military wisdom among Abrams’ advisers before the operation began was that the bulk of the 60,000 North Vietnamese defending the trail would “melt” into the rugged, jungle-covered mountains, leaving behind only small units to fight a rear guard action.

Abrams was less sanguine about the prospects of a bloodless victory. Too old a Vietnam hand to be confident of any prediction on how the wily Communists would react, the 56-year-old veteran tank commander was supremely confident before the action that the allies would inflict a defeat on the enemy no matter how he reacted.

In a far-ranging, hourlong interview on the eve of the border crossing, Abrams praised the South Vietnam forces. He made it plain that he believed the South Vietnamese, backed by overwhelming U.S. air power, could handle anything the Communists might throw at them in Laos.

Abrams attributed the improvement in the South Vietnamese army to their successful Cambodian invasion last May, saying:

“The generals I deal with now are not the same people I was dealing with a year ago. Their men are better equipped and better trained. It is a formidable military force—a fine military organization, tactically and logistically. The South Vietnamese have grown in maturity and have gained the confidence that they can, in fact, handle their problems.”

Still, despite Abrams’ caution, there was strong circumstantial evidence to support the viewpoint that the North Vietnamese would sidestep a full-scale battle in Laos. For almost two years, they have generally avoided major actions in an apparent return to a protracted war posture of small-unit hit-and-run guerrilla warfare.

This posture was encouraged by the phased withdrawal of American troops, under which more than 200,000 U.S. servicemen have been pulled out of Viet-
nam since President Nixon announced the Vietnamization program in mid-
1969.

Even May's daring U.S.-South Vietnamese invasion of the Cambodian
sanctuary areas at the foot of the Ho Chi Minh Trail did not prod the North
Vietnamese into a major fight.

Therefore, most senior American military officials concluded that the North
Vietnamese were seeking to build up their forces, strengthening their supply
and infiltration routes through Laos, preferring to wait until the bulk of U.S.
combat troops are withdrawn before launching any major attack.

HEAVY TOLL OF COPTERS

It was precisely this conviction that prompted Abrams last month to seek
White House approval for the invasion by 20,000 Vietnamese troops, backed by
9,000 American troops used to support the vital Highway 9 supply route
from Quang Tri through Khe Sanh and up to the Laotian border.

As the complex operation swung into motion three weeks ago, the first stages
went as smoothly as a textbook military exercise, undetected by any enemy re-
sistance, making the initial optimism seem justified.

But the enemy reaction since then has been intense and costly to the allies.
Unexpectedly heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire has taken a heavy toll of
U.S. helicopters—some estimates run as high as 300—surely have seriously limited
their ability to support and resupply men on the ground.

At the same time, the Communists have unleashed withering ground fire
against forward elements and have launched several major ground attacks.

Clearly, the enemy's willingness to "stand and fight" and his ability to do so
have been underestimated by U.S. planners. It also seems likely the effec-
tiveness of American air power in rugged mountain areas, largely obscured
by triple canopy jungle, has been overestimated by the Allied command.

It is also possible, though the evidence on this is not yet in, that the South
Vietnamese—while admittedly improved—are still no match for the North
Vietnamese regulars when not accompanied by U.S. advisers.

Abrams hotly disputes this contention, adding that, in his opinion, many of
the South Vietnamese units are the equal of any American force, however elite.

BELIEVES IT WAS VITAL

Abrams also denied that the operation was running behind schedule. He in-
sisted that the intention never was to "cut off or block" the Ho Chi Minh Trail
permanently and said it should not be measured in terms of such an objective.

But whatever the outcome of Lanson,719 whether it meets the objectives
originally assigned it, or the scaled-down version now ascribed to it by Laird
and Abrams, a bigger question sure to be a matter of controversy in the future
is whether the operation was justified at all.

Abrams believes, the Laotian incursion was absolutely vital, before further
American withdrawals can be made after U.S. troop strength dips to the
284,000 level, May 1. The U.S. commander said the enemy supply buildup in the
Laos panhandle indicated that the Communists planned an offensive this sum-
mer in the northern provinces of South Vietnam that would have made further
American withdrawals from that area hazardous.

He said that the Cambodian incursion last year not only thwarted a planned
Communist offensive in southern South Vietnam but, so weakened the Com-
munist forces cut off in the Mekong Delta area that enemy activity there was
sharply curtailed and the entire region is now considered secure by the Saigon
government.

A successful Laotian incursion, he said, could achieve the same beneficial
effect for the northern provinces.

Naturally, Abrams' view is shared by most of the upper echelons of the
U.S. military and diplomatic establishment here, including U.S. Ambassador
Ellsworth Bunker.

But there are some high-ranking officers in his command, who privately dis-
agree. One ranking diplomatic official said that he felt the South Vietnamese,
had effectively met the challenge in their own country and should now devote
their energies to consolidating their gains by attacking the social and eco-
omic problems at home.
An Army colonel with wide experience as an adviser to South Vietnamese troops agreed with Abrams' assessment that they have improved markedly, but strongly disagreed with his decision to invade Laos.

**COLONEL TAKES DIFFERENT VIEW**

"They (the South Vietnamese now have a million-man army, well armed and most of them well-trained," the colonel said, "I think they should use this force to increase the security within their own borders and not go chasing off to Laos after the enemy. When they do that, they are giving the Communists the advantage of shorter supply lines and favorable terrain for their kind of fighting."

The colonel also favored a substantial speedup in the drawing of U.S. troops, adding that he believed all American ground troops could be safely pulled out of Vietnam by the end of this year. He conceded, however, that the South Vietnamese would need considerable U.S. air support for a much longer time period than that.

While none of them would say so publicly, those American officials critical of the decision to invade Laos pointed out that the logic behind that decision, if carried to its ultimate conclusion, would inevitably lead to a decision to invade North Vietnam sometime in the future.

They agreed that no responsible American official was advocating such a course, but they added that South Vietnamese President Thieu and Vice President Ky have spoken of a possible invasion of North Vietnam recently and that President Nixon pointedly refused to rule out such a possibility in a meeting with reporters last week.

---

From the New York Daily News, Feb. 27, 1971

**SKEPTICS ARE NOW ADVOCATES OF VIET PULLOUT**

(By James Wiegand)

Saigon, February 26.—Perhaps the best measure of the success of President Nixon’s Vietnamization program is the fact that American officials here who were most skeptical of the phased U.S. withdrawal when it was unveiled in mid-1969 are now its strongest supporters. [See below dispatch for opposite view.]

The original skepticism was based on the fear that pulling U.S. troops out at the rate of 15,000 per month would leave dangerous defensive gaps because the South Vietnamese would never be able to train and equip men fast enough to replace the GIs.

But the program has worked—the skeptics have become advocates—and even such cautious men as U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Gen. Grableton W. Abrams are now saying privately that the U.S. troop withdrawal can be safely speeded up.

The main reason for the turnaround in official opinion is the dramatic change in the military situation in South Vietnam brought about by a serious weakening of the Communist forces and a startling improvement in South Vietnamese army (ARVN), particularly since last May’s successful Cambodian invasion.

**LARGEST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Indeed, a visitor cannot help but be impressed at the size of the ARVN force—1 million men under arms, well equipped and fairly well trained, backed up by another 1 million civilian-soldiers being armed and trained to defend their own hamlets and villages.

In addition, the South Vietnamese air force and navy, both equipped with modern U.S. planes and ships, are the largest in Southeast Asia.

The up surge in military power and the attrition suffered by Communist forces in the South, have permitted the Saigon government to expand remarkably its control over the countryside. The latest survey by the American pacification team indicates that 95% of the population lives in relatively secure areas, compared with 65% registered in 1968.

Just as every silver lining has its cloud, there are soft spots in the South Vietnamese military posture that concern American advisers.
The ARVN have serious maintenance problems. Many of their troops have a cavalier "easy come, easy go" attitude about their expensive American hardware which prompts them to abuse it rather than care for it properly. Riding in an ARVN convoy, for instance, can be an ear-shattering experience—what with grinding gears, racing motors and squealing brakes—and it only slightly less dangerous than going into actual combat.

And although many South Vietnamese are skillful screwdriver mechanics—capable of somehow keeping in operation the enormous number of 20-year-old cars, trucks and taxi cabs seen daily on city streets here—there is a serious shortage of trained technicians needed to keep their new, highly sophisticated war machinery operative.

The South Vietnamese are also short on pilots, management personnel, engineers, electronic specialists and competent senior noncommissioned and field grade officers.

Some critics feel there is a tendency among the South Vietnamese and American government officials here to use these shortcomings as a crutch to prolong U.S. involvement in the war. The critics contend the question is not really whether the South Vietnamese can operate as effectively without American presence, but whether they can operate effectively enough to do the job without American help.

**ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING**

There are other less positive but perhaps equally persuasive reasons for speeding the U.S. withdrawal. As the South Vietnamese assume more of the burden for the war—they already are carrying on a lion's share of the combat load—and the American presence becomes less vital, the natural frictions between the two cultures becomes less tolerable to the South Vietnamese.

In short, incipient anti-American feeling is certain to grow as the U.S. winds down its participation in the war. Such sentiment is clearly on the rise and has reached potentially dangerous levels in some areas.

For instance, Americans involved in traffic accidents, with a South Vietnamese, regardless of whose fault it is, often find themselves surrounded by crowds of angry, fist-waving Vietnamese. Frequently the crowds refuse to permit the American to proceed, even after the police arrive at the scene, until an American official shows up to make an on-the-spot 'compensation payment,' actually a form of ransom.

Worse yet, there have been numerous anti-American demonstrations, sometimes bordering on riot, in some of the major South Vietnamese cities during the past year.

More than 2,000 student demonstrators hurled rocks and fire bombs at American compounds in the coastal city of Qui Nhon earlier this month to protest the accidental slaying of two Vietnamese citizens by an American soldier. One U.S. building, two buses and five vehicles were burned and 15 other vehicles were damaged by rocks in the ensuing daylong riot.

The city, South Vietnam's fourth largest, has been off limits to U.S. personnel since last December when smaller scale rioting broke out after a high school student was shot and killed by a G.I.

Not surprisingly, anti-American demonstrations in turn anger the GIs, especially those who did not choose to come here in the first place, thus contributing to the so-called "morale problem."

**BEHAVIOR PATTERNS**

The rash of "morale problem" stories, which have appeared over the last six months usually center on three behavior patterns—disciplinary problems, including fragg ing and refusal to obey orders; increased drug use by GIs, and racial problems.

Thus far, the U.S. military command concedes that while there are some morale problems, they exist mostly in rear areas away from combat zones and are no more widespread in Vietnam than they have been in any other war.

A Marine colonel at the U.S. Military Command Headquarters who holds this view said: "Any military unit anywhere has to work hard to keep rank morale. The threat of lagging morale always comes up in a withdrawal situa-
It happened after World War II and after the Korean War—everyone wants to be the first on the list to go home.

The colonel said that attitude is now developing here and is complicated by the fact that the Vietnamese withdrawal is underway while the war is still going on. No one wants to be the last American killed in Vietnam, he explained.

He discounted the significance of the recent widely-publicized cases of enlisted men who attempted to kill superiors they felt were too gun-ho. This practice has been called "fragging" because fragmentation grenades were used in several of the cases. The colonel said such things happened, with probably the same frequency, in previous wars.

He agreed that in two areas—racial friction and excessive drug use—the Vietnam experience differs from the past. "But keep in mind," the colonel added, "that we did not originate these problems in the service, they came to us from society outside and we're doing the best we can to cope with them."

**Morale Problems Probed**

Although the U.S. command denies a serious morale problem exists among the troops, it was learned that under orders from Abrams, an in-depth study of morale problems was begun here quietly two months ago. The study, still several months from completion, is designed to find the extent of any morale slippage and the underlying causes for it.

My own observation is that the morale is generally high among U.S. combat troops and among those engaged in simulating work, such as serving as advisers to ARVN forces. At the same time, there appears to be a serious morale problem in rear echelon units. This is particularly true where the GIs have little useful or interesting work to do and where they are stationed in areas near big cities which have been placed off limits.

When discussing the American withdrawal rate with reporters on the record, military commanders insist their judgment is based primarily on military criteria. Yet, in private informal discussion these same officials repeatedly refer to the morale problem and the growth of anti-military feeling at home as reasons why "we should get the hell out of here." And again in informal discussions only, American commanders from all services increasingly cite what they consider a growing Soviet military threat to justify a quicker withdrawal from the war. They express concern that unless the United States can spend more of its defense money on new weapons systems "we will fall behind the Russians."

**The Red Chinese Threat**

Thus far, few in the military establishment here seem to attach much importance to what many Senate doves feel is the most compelling reason for a speedy withdrawal—the danger that the spreading war, already sapped over into Cambodia and Laos, will draw in Communist China and precipitate a nuclear showdown.

There is, in fact, a worrisome lack of concern among U.S. officials that Communist China would intervene in the war, however widespread it becomes. But important diplomats representing countries friendly to the United States do not share this complacency.

One pro-American ambassador said privately that in view of the menacing statements emanating from Peking following the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, he does not see how the possibility of Chinese intervention can ruled out.

---

**From The Washington Post**

**New Moon of Gloom Developing in Saigon**

(By Peter Osnos)

Saigon—It may be nothing more than Saigon's stifling 100 degree April heat or weariness after weeks of tension over the Laotian invasion, but there has been a discernible shift in the way Americans here talk about the war.

It is not tangible change that is likely to be reflected in official statements or public reports, but there is a new measure of gloom among many Americans in Saigon.
Nor is the change easily documented since it is largely atmospheric, sometimes nothing more than a quip or a casual remark in informal conversations with Americans both in and outside the U.S. establishment.

What has gone, by and large, is the generally upbeat assessment of the Vietnam military and political situation to which even the most hardened journalistic cynics here subscribed last fall.

"When the President made his big speech in October," recalled one correspondent, "we sat around and talked seriously about the prospects for a ceasefire. The debate was whether they [the Communists] were just lying low until we left or had really been put down."

Skepticism is a way of life here, but the mood was such that a major American newspaper ran a series by one of its experienced Asian correspondents telling how the war had been won.

COMMUNIST EFFECTIVENESS

Now—and it is especially noticeable returning to Saigon after a brief vacation—the talk is once again of how effective the Communists can still be when they choose and how hollow our claims of success and accomplishment so often seem.

More often than before, the fate of South Vietnam is spoken of, even by some U.S. diplomats with no record of peevishness, with resignation rather than hope. "I expect we'll have an embassy here after the troops are gone," one ranking official said, half in jest the other night, "at least for a while."

Another diplomat was said to have startled his colleagues at a U.S. Embassy work session Wednesday morning when he began to tell them how discouraged he had become.

According to someone who attended the session, the thrust of the diplomat's remarks was, "All anybody at home can think about is how the United States gets out. We're over here working our butts off to see that the thing works in the end and nobody seems to give a damn."

"A lot of us are coming to the same emotional realization," said the onlooker, a thoughtful young embassy official.

"Certainly, the main reason for the change in mood here is what happened to the situation Lam Son 719, the drive to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. More and more American civilians, including some of the more candid officials, are describing the operation in general conversation as a defeat."

Or, when they want to be more precise, they may say at the very least it was counterproductive. Summing up, one U.S. diplomat who just returned from a trip to the States said, "We simply lost more than we possibly gained."

ARMY'S IMAGE

The South Vietnamese army, especially since the Cambodian invasion last spring, had managed to grind down a good part of its image of mediocrity now the same old note is being sounded.

"What we're likely to leave behind," a U.S. major commented to a visiting journalist the other day, "is a well-equipped military corpse."

The insistent claims at the highest levels here and in Washington that Lam Son was a success are regarded, with derision, especially in light of the markedly stepped up rate of Communist attacks.


The charge is hardly a new one in Vietnam. A respected American academic who has been doing research here for years took an even grimmer view: "The trouble with our side is that nobody is telling the truth."

The statement is overdrawn, but it reflects a frame of mind that is not unusual.

Journalists often tend to be the most pessimistic observers of developments in Vietnam. But the kinds of things being said these days are tougher than usual.

A serious European correspondent who knows Vietnam very well said, "Lam Son is the end of the Americanization of the South Vietnamese army."

So, for the moment, the tenor of talk is decidedly down. But then, as Vietnam old-timers are fond of pointing out, it so often is.
Appendix III

BACKGROUND MATERIALS ON DEFOLIATION IN VIETNAM

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF HERBICIDE ASSESSMENT COMMISSION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

(By Matthew S. Meselson, Professor of Biology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Arthur H. Westing, Professor of Biology, Windham College, Putney, Vermont; John D. Constable, Professor of Surgery, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.; and Robert E. Cook, Department of Biology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut)

INTRODUCTION

The Council and the Board of Directors of the AAAS have for several years sought to encourage scientific study of the effects of the large-scale military use of chemical herbicides on the ecology and on human welfare in South Vietnam. In December 1969 the AAAS Board appointed Matthew S. Meselson, Professor of Biology at Harvard University, to develop a plan for such a study, authorizing an expenditure of $80,000 for the purpose. Meselson appointed Arthur H. Westing, Professor of Botany at Windham College in Vermont, to direct the Herbicide Assessment Commission, the title under which this AAAS activity is known.

In the first phase of its work the Commission reviewed the pertinent literature and solicited information and advice from numerous experts in the U.S., Vietnam and elsewhere. This was followed by a conference in June, which brought together twenty-three experts in various fields for an intensive week of study and planning.

During August and September of this year, Meselson and Westing, together with Dr. John D. Constable, Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School, and Mr. Robert E. Cook, graduate student in ecology at Yale University, conducted a study tour in South Vietnam. The purpose of the tour was to identify the chief problems and to determine facilities, methods, and locations most suitable for future studies. What follows is a preliminary report of their findings and recommendations. A detailed report will be published at a later date.

1. Mangrove forests.—Much of the coastal area of the Mekong Delta region is occupied by mangrove forests. As a rough approximation, half of these forests, some 1,400 square kilometers, have been sprayed with herbicides. For as yet undetermined reasons, mangrove species have proved to be particularly sensitive. Essentially all vegetation is killed. Preliminary aerial and ground inspection by the Commission showed little or no recolonization by mangrove tree species after three or more years. However there is scattered growth of the fern Acrostichum aureum, the shrub Wedelia bifida, and a few other species. Without vegetation, the area obviously cannot support most of the bird and ground animal species associated with the previously existing mangrove forests. A possibly important exception are crabs, large numbers of which were observed in barren areas. By devouring seedlings, crabs may be retarding revegetation. There are signs of erosion along the denuded coastlines but as yet they are slight. Major typhoons, which on the average strike the mangroves about every five years, have not occurred since herbicide was sprayed.

Studies aimed at reclamation of this land could be started immediately. Mangrove forests once provided a major source of fuel-wood and charcoal. Mangroves also play an important role in providing food and nursing grounds for fish and crustaceans, although the magnitude of this contribution is not known. An attempt to estimate the impact that the permanent loss of mangrove forests would have on the fishing industry should be made before deciding how much of the former mangrove area should be replanted to tidal forests and how
much devoted to other purposes. The urgency of replanting depends on the pace of erosion and soil deterioration and on the time scale of possible overgrowth of undesirable and hard to eradicate species such as Acerosithum. These time factors may well allow several years, but they could and should be studied more closely.

2. Tropical Hardwood Forest.—Approximately one-fifth of South Vietnam's merchantable hardwood forests have been sprayed, including many of the oldest and most valuable stands. Aerial inspection of forests in a wide area north of Saigon extending from the Cambodian frontier, in the west to the South China Sea on the east showed more than half of the forest to be very severely damaged. Over large areas, most of the trees appeared dead and bamboo had spread over the ground. A danger in this is that the invading species may be essentially worthless and very expensive to eradicate. Bamboo will retard the reestablishment of forest trees, at least for many decades. A further hazard is that large amounts of nutrient minerals previously tied up in forest vegetation may have been released and leached out of sprayed forests by the heavy tropical rains. Whether or not this process, which may be called nutrient dumping, has occurred on a scale large enough to seriously reduce soil fertility can be determined by relatively simple ground measurements. Intelligent planning of forestry policy, including reforestation, should provide attention to forest health when selecting species for reforestation.

Aeriel inspection of forests in these and other possible severely damaged areas, most of the trees appeared dead and bamboo had spread over the ground. A danger in this is that the invading species may be essentially worthless and very expensive to eradicate. Bamboo will retard the reestablishment of forest trees, at least for many decades. A further hazard is that large amounts of nutrient minerals previously tied up in forest vegetation may have been released and leached out of sprayed forests by the heavy tropical rains. Whether or not this process, which may be called nutrient dumping, has occurred on a scale large enough to seriously reduce soil fertility can be determined by relatively simple ground measurements. Intelligent planning of forestry policy, including reforestation, should provide attention to forest health when selecting species for reforestation.

3. Contamination of Food Chains.—The Commission collected samples of shrimp, fish, human milk, and other materials for analysis for the presence of herbicides, their impurities, and their breakdown products. As yet, we are developing methods for the required analyses. Emphasis is being given to improved methods for the analysis of 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, Dioxin, as this material is called, occurs as an impurity in Orange, the principal herbicide used in Vietnam. Its potential importance lies in the fact that it is exceedingly toxic, may be quite stable in the environment, and, being fat soluble, may be concentrated as it moved up the food chain into the human diet. Very rough model calculations suggest that it is not impossible that significant amounts of dioxin are entering the Vietnamese diet. This is certainly not to say this is occurring, but it should not be very difficult to make an accurate study of the question. The main obstacle at present is the lack of sufficiently sensitive and reliable methods for the analysis of dioxin.

4. Health Effects.—A principal concern here has been the possibility of the induction of birth anomalies by 2,4,5-T, dioxin, or both. Such effects have been found in laboratory experiments with animals and led to an order last April stopping the use of agent Orange. The U.S. Army and the South Vietnamese Ministry of Health have recently published a survey of still-births, hydathoidal malformations (placental tumors), and malformations, based on South Vietnamese hospital records for the past ten years. A slight but encouraging downward trend is reported in all three categories. Unfortunately most of the data come from Saigon, which has, of course, not been treated with herbicides. Indeed, probably no more than five or ten percent of the South Vietnamese population has been directly sprayed and we have essentially no data on this group. They would be very under-represented in Ministry of Health records. However, persons living outside of Saigon have been more heavily exposed to herbicides than those living in the Capital. This could occur not only by occasional direct exposure but also by exposure to drift and to herbicide residues in food and water. Upon subtracting the Saigon data, the Army study does, in fact, show a decided upward trend in stillbirths, moles, and deformities in the rest of the country. However, it would be totally incorrect to consider this as proof of an effect of herbicides. More complete recording and increased referral of difficult pregnancies from the countryside to the provincial hospitals could easily account for the observed trends. More thorough surveying in selected provinces might help to settle this question. Although the Commission could only study limited areas, we did evaluate in detail the birth records in Tay Ninh, a very heavily defoliated province. We found that for the years 1968 and 1969, the Tay Ninh provincial hospital showed a higher rate of stillbirth than any of those reported in the Army study.

Another approach would be to look for strikingly unusual deformities in heavily sprayed areas although the Commission found none reported within