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AREA SECURITY

F. J. West, Jr.

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F. J. West, Jr.*
The RAND Corporation

I

As American troops begin to withdraw from South Vietnam, much public attention and military planning have been given to the buildup of ARVN regular forces. This is only proper, since it is the ARVN battalions and their supporting arms who must eventually stand up on their own against the conventional military proficiency of the North Vietnamese. Were this the only task the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) faced, it would be formidable enough. But in addition, the GVN must cope with the political and diplomatic skills of the Lao Dong (People's Communist) Party which controls both the NVA and the Viet Cong, and also cope with the Viet Cong countryside campaign of population control by terror, coercion and persuasion.

This paper is concerned with the security aspect of the ~~third~~ task of the GVN: That of gaining control of the rural population. A succession of pacification failures and a spate of bad publicity have seemingly combined to focus attention in the withdrawal plans mainly on the regular units. An anecdote may illustrate what I mean.

In November of 1967 two officers from an American division visited the senior adviser to the district which abutted their division headquarters in order to be briefed on the local situation. The adviser said the situation was terrible, with the VC in control and the GVN unsure even of the district town. So bitter was the adviser that the visiting officers grumbled about his "negativism", pointing out that their division had the NVA units in the hills on the run and had killed over 500 of them in the past month. The adviser replied: "Colonel, that's your war, not mine."

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The officers returned to their headquarters for dinner and that same night a team of enemy sappers from a local force unit leveled the district headquarters and killed the adviser.

Several months ago I revisited that district and both the assistant district chief for security and the senior subsector adviser told me that the situation had not improved, that the VC still controlled the district, and that the division was still out in the hills bringing them security.

This reluctance to become involved in area security is understandable, since the American forces have proven most capable in containing the conventional threat and in developing techniques and equipment which can be transferred to the ARVN, with some measure of success. The 1st ARVN Division, for instance, which has fought so long and so well in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces of I Corps, is generally rated as the best South Vietnamese division and is held up as a model and an example to be copied by the other nine ARVN divisions.

But in the field of area security, there is no area or program which can be held up as such a model. This lack could be critical, since there cannot be a true non-Communist South Vietnamese body polity without rural as well as urban participation. But there cannot be local rural government with ties to the central government on the one hand and to the villagers on the other unless the local leaders stand a fair chance of staying alive. And they will not have this chance until a competent, long-run area security system is established.

Short-run systems such as the Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAP) are necessary but not sufficient. No program is sufficient until and unless it is run solely by the South Vietnamese. This does not mean, however, that Americans cannot help in the institution of an area security system by means such as CAPs; it just means that provisions should be made for de-Americanization once the system is firmly established. As of the summer of 1969, the question remains moot whether there are guidelines or principles for area security which would have to them the same practical soundness certain tactical techniques do in training ARVN or American troops for large-unit combat in South Vietnam.

This paper is written with two purposes; First, it is in an effort to point out the need for development of an area security system before withdrawing from the country. Second, it is an effort to identify certain salient tactical components of area security and to suggest a more rapid buildup of the CAP program not by Americans, but by ARVN performing in keeping with the CAP tactical principles which have been developed and proven to work over the past three years.

II

The Viet Cong still hold the psychological offensive in much of the countryside because they have an organization which permits their power to appear ubiquitous. Left on their own, RF and PF units naturally concentrate their efforts on those hamlets which are "theirs" (where their families live), and concede the VC other, often contiguous hamlets, which are sanctuaries, save for occasional token sweeps. Often local GVN units, having no ties in VC hamlets, simply do not see it as their business to undertake any sort of holding operations on a 24-hour basis in enemy territory. American large units can prowl around to thwart main force gatherings. This does not permanently influence the local balance of power, save by attrition; rather things are held in a state of suspended animation. Revoultionary Development (RD) teams mainly work only where the GVN presence is fairly strong, being protected, not protecting; following, not leading.

The Viet Cong have the stronger organizational cement in the countryside and the main reason it has not hardened and held has been the jarring efforts of American armed forces. But this defensive sparring has not destroyed the enemy. The order of battle for the Viet Cong shows their infrastructure and local forces to be relatively intact (with their main forces heavily reliant on inputs from the NVA resource pool). Still, they are not without their difficulties. An aggressive PF leader in a district in Quang Ngai told me: "If when you first worked here in 1966 I told you that the VC were 100 percent, now in 1969 I say they are 50 percent."

While the Viet Cong do seem to their local GVN adversaries as weaker and less disciplined than a year ago, there is little evidence that the GVN in rural Vietnam has increased correspondingly in efficiency or responsibility as the Viet Cong strength has sagged. On a trip to Vietnam several months ago, commonly told to me in rural Vietnam were reports of two Viet Cong threats: "We'll be back (in force)"; and "The Americans are going home." Of the first, most local Vietnamese seemed to believe and thereby it often deprived local forces of increased confidence following defensive victories such as when the VC would fail in an attack upon a PF outpost; of the second, local officials seemed most afraid, believing they would then have lost the war--(and themselves lost no opportunity to lecture me on why the U.S. could not leave.)

American strategic thought has inadequately addressed some hard questions about the nature of the Vietnam war. The tautology that "The destruction of the enemy would bring security to the countryside" neglected to define who and where the enemy was. Worse still, its resources and time frame for implementation have proven politically unacceptable, resulting in what A. J. Wohlstetter has called "a minibrute force policy," or escalation without accomplishment. The rationale that ceaseless U.S. operations in the hills could keep the enemy from the people was an operational denial of the fact that in large measure the war was a revolution which started in the hamlets and that therefore the Viet Cong were already among the people when we went to the hills. The belief that American units would provide a shield ("support for pacification") behind which the rural GVN structure could rebuild itself assumed that the hills threatened the hamlets.

Lest I seem to be pessimistic (which I am), but perhaps overly so, let us turn the evaluation of the strategy around and thereby conclude that its goals have been attained: The VC main forces are fractured and the NVA units have been defeated and consequently have withdrawn, at least temporarily. The strategy has been successful; yet has it attained the stated U.S. objective of insuring a responsive and responsible GVN? If not, what remains to be done?

Not "Pacification" as we understand (or misunderstand) it: Pacification is generally construed to mean that a substantial majority of the non-combatant population clearly prefers the victory of one side, a preference attributable to political and moral beliefs rather than physical force. According to this definition, the West Bank of the Jordan River is still pacified by Jordan, although it is firmly under the control of Israel. Yet in South Vietnam in one week during the TET offensive of 1968, pacification was officially reported as drastically set back. My objection is not with the official reporting of this phenomenon. It is with the confusion between pacification and control. Having returned to several districts time after time over the years, and seeing the evaluations thereof from a source of advisors, I feel that the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) does give a fairly accurate picture of a district. What is being measured, however, is not pacification--not if pacification is defined as hearts and minds (allegiances) belonging to the GVN. When the people of Jordan fell under the control of Israel, they were not pacified in a week; indeed, they may never be pacified (shift their allegiances to the Israelis). HES, then, measures control. Area security as I use it is concerned with control. The pacification of most of rural Vietnam will be the major task for either the VC or the GVN in the reconstruction phase, not now.

Another unspecified bromide which should be closely defined is the phrase: "Security for the people." To protect the homogenous population is neither feasible nor necessary. The plain fact of the matter is that the Vietnamese people most often are not the military target of the Viet Cong. This is a point often ignored by decisionmakers, who assume that the VC are the enemies of the people and that, under provocation, the people would stand against them. Perhaps this would be true if they had no choice. But the VC do offer the people a choice: The active enmity of the VC versus noncooperation with the GVN. Most of their attacks are calculated to achieve desired effects, as punishment for anti-VC or pro-GVN activity, and as examples to others. The question then becomes: Why should a person risk death if there is a less drastic and still acceptable alternative? People are rarely heros, either in New York City or in Vietnamese hamlets.

A villager risks death when he openly cooperates with the GVN, because in most hamlets there are Viet Cong agents or sympathizers--popularly called infrastructure--who will betray him. The fear of death hangs over the hamlets and lingers on, long after the VC have gone. Even when GVN forces are nominally present, the VC infrastructure can control the people by the same techniques that the Mafia rules Sicily. By its invisible and ubiquitous presence, the Big Brother of the VC infrastructure influences the public conduct of the people.

In the short run, the pragmatic justification of "security for the people" rests on a supposed need for intelligence to raise the exposure factor of the guerrillas, so that they can be defeated by U.S. or GVN counterinsurgent forces. Given security, committed to the struggle, and loyal to the GVN, the people as a great whole will hopefully provide the intelligence. (This may be our equivalent of the VC's hoped-for "popular uprising" during TET.)

But the circumstances in Vietnam do not favor personal commitment. The GVN has given the average villager no cause to die for. If that is to change, the GVN would have to change radically for the better,--and the VC for the worse. The VC have made their enemy the GVN, not the people. The GVN has made its own survival its objective. The U.S. military has made the destruction of the enemy its objective, not the improvement of the GVN. Where and why should the people enter into this?

I believe that the GVN has the "loyalty" sufficient for that intelligence task in the existing, nonnegligible minority composed of families of government employees already committed ("loyal"), whether they like it or not, and of those people who either personally or ideologically hate the VC. Under a cloak of anonymity, they pass on information to GVN agents.

The real failure of an area security relates not to the people as a whole but to the rural GVN agents--RFs, PFs, hamlet, village and district officials--as a separate, distinct, and committed class. Despite, (or perhaps because of) our efforts to hunt in the hills, there is still a basic organizational asymetry in rural Vietnam: the Viet Cong have an organization--the GVN does not. The counterbalance are

the American units. But we are not going to be there forever; time is running out. We have hidden this strategic oversight in a metaphysical melange of concepts characterized by slogans such as "support of pacification"--which can justify any action (or inaction) of any American or ARVN unit.

There is little or nothing Americans can directly do about pacification as defined in terms of patriotism. I believe Vietnam, however, is a war of minorities: VC versus GVN (or more precisely, anti-VC), with the majority of the people awaiting the outcome to determine their active allegiances. And Americans can affect the effectiveness of the anti-VC minority in the countryside by aiding in the development of a strategy of area security.

Area security is conceived to unify the GVN and U.S. efforts in the rural areas. Its heart is tactics, not flow charts; and it demands action from advisors, not advice. While its object is the rural population, its focus is the local cadres already committed to the GVN-PF's, RF's local officials, etc. It is not that the GVN lower cadres do not have links to the people; they do. There are strong links between the people and the local government officials--between a PF (or an RF) and his family and his neighbors; the hiatus is between the local officials and higher government, or as one district chief expresses it, between the country and the city. In fact, it is largely because of the intensity of local anti-Viet Cong commitments that the countryside did not collapse during the 1968 TET offensive, which marked the nadir in GVN control. Unfortunately, then the GVN directives of inward response toward the cities showed where the first loyalties of higher officialdom lay.

The objective of an area security would be to wed together into an offensive system what are currently just point defenses. By tactical and organizational changes, the intent of area security is to bring concerted pressure to the level where the VC are now in psychological charge: much of rural Vietnam. Its essence is responsibility down, based on a belief that current GVN and U.S. resources are numerically sufficient but need better utilization, and that on the local level there are sufficient good, capable men--anti-VC (although not necessarily

pro-GVN) in spirit, but lacking support, lacking cohesiveness, lacking any binding spirit, feeling all alone, fighting separate little wars unaided and uncared for. All over the country on a district level and below, there are dedicated men who fight because they hate and fear, and who scorn the idea of some sort of lasting accord provoked by Americans. For these men there can be no compromise and no convenient exile. They fight to hang on to what is theirs, and to stay alive. The GVN does not lack for rural talent, if it will acknowledge, organize and nurture it.

Hopefully, the long-term goal of area security would be the same as all our other programs--a nationalistic attitude on the part of the non-committed majority of villagers. The short-run criterion for the performance of area security, however, is hard, definite action, particularly and especially tactical. For at this stage, it is only through solid, demonstrable, lasting accomplishments that the desired changes in attitudes can be expected. Area security is possible. None of the techniques needed are new, be they tactical, organizational or incentive. All have been tried and proven, but separately, here and there, now and then. The concept of bringing to those already committed proof by action and by aid that the system cares and that the battle will be won is nothing more than the essence of good leadership applied to the essence of the problem. Therefore, area security as a concept and a strategy can be judged by what it produces.

Area security must be structured so as to attack or resist the enemy across his organizational spectrum of infrastructure, local and main forces. The Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) is not in imminent danger of destruction or neutralization. It is a subject where attention is devoted more to concepts than to operations. The emotional satisfaction felt by the eliminators due to their successes has impeded their analysis of the actual rate of depletion over regeneration. The VCI total attrition for 1968 supposedly was 12 percent--that is not high; and replacements probably make it much lower.

The District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Center (DIOCC) seems more often to be a matter of "discovered" personalities than upgraded performances; it is a device which ties an American and a U.S.

reporting system in with the one (sometimes more) good intelligence operator in that district. It does not mean that American presence will change programs or procedures. Would the CIA, FBI, and DIA work together in the same room better than in separate rooms? Have Vietnamese officials performed markedly better for having advisors; or have they learned how to perform for advisors? (Other difficulties besetting the GVN in any VCI elimination effort are: bribes, threats, lack of evidence, poor training, arbitration rather than adjudication, and an outlandish penal code.)

Moreover, quality eliminations (and eliminators, such as SEALs) are few. In VC areas, infrastructure defense by evacuation and the difficulty of night target selectivity render discriminatory strikes on a significant level a dubious undertaking. If a person doesn't sleep at home and travels at night with bodyguards or armed units, his chances of dying are low, perhaps as low as they are for a GVN district or province chief. It happens, but not often enough to be significant, although the real threat of the happening may force some marginal VCI to desist if they can, may make enemy organization and communication more difficult, and does (at least in the delta) make the villagers aware that the VC are not the only ones stalking the night.

If most of the more important VC infrastructure types are in VC areas and are mixed in with the people and with VC arms bearers, the scale required of any elimination endeavor seems to indicate a concentration of resources in selected areas sufficient to do the job in concert with permanent area security, rather than the present shotgun effect. (This has been said perhaps too many times.) What seems to be needed are better tacticians, nor more theories.

An analysis of the operational relevance of the infrastructure (and therefore of the allocation of resources to its elimination) is also lacking. In a rural GVN area, if the infrastructure is active, it will be discovered and eliminated. Otherwise, the area is not truly GVN. A capable local Vietnamese leader does not worry about the covert VCI in his area--they will be exposed by the village gossip system if they become active. He worries about the dedicated VCI who live in continguous areas and just pop in at night to collect taxes and recon

the defenses and tell the people the VC are coming back. Since they cannot be filtered out, their elimination could come about as (and if) there is gradual progress into VC areas.

The main forces are not the central concern for area security, given our mobility and the improving performance of ARVN. This is not to minimize the challenge the NVA and the VC main forces offer to any security attempt in Vietnam; in the final analysis they must be deterred or at least adequately coped with, or the war will be lost. There is no doubt that they have been hit hard; they are not gaining in strength and are relying increasingly on the North Vietnamese, with a consequent heightened visibility factor. The image that it is a standard tactic of enemy units to blend into the population is a myth which insults the collective intelligence of VC, GVN and U.S. military forces. One side would not be stupid enough to do it customarily; the other side would not let him get away with it. When the main forces come into an area occupied by GVN forces, either the signs are there beforehand or the mission is a surprise shock attack-and-withdrawal, or both. Even in the area of Hue, the local officials and the RFs and PFs do not worry about such invasions. They consider them rare aberrations of short duration which have proven highly susceptible to massive counterpressure and firepower by GVN and U.S. forces. Engaging and turning back or destroying them is and should remain the major task of ARVN and a substantial part of U.S. forces. Within any area-security boundaries, the pursuit and the punishment of the enemy by friendly man forces must be sufficient as to cause the enemy to refrain from adopting main-force desruptive attacks as a counterstrategy. This punishment must be demonstrable and convincing not just to the enemy, but to the villagers and local GVN agents, if their confidence in area security is to be forthcoming.

What worries the local GVN officials the most is the local VC forces with their cunning, their killing of selected targets and their dedicated commitment to a win-or-die war, forged from ideology and from the recognition that they are known individually to the other side under circumstances scarcely leading to trust, compromise, and coexistence. The VC local forces are highly trained, relatively intact today, and so

far in the main safe from the pressures brought by U.S. and ARVN battalions against enemy large units on the one hand and the at least verbal pressure exerted against the Viet Cong infrastructure on the other. Enemy local forces, mobile, slippery and offensive, have no real tactical opposition, since the RFs and PFs are usually defensive, fixed and fragmented. Local GVN officials are keenly aware of this disparity, even if higher GVN and allied officials act as if they are not.

In devising a system of area security, then, it is necessary to carefully examine the interaction between the opposing forces, the histories of areas and the patterns of conflict and enemy moves which have emerged, and the countertactics, expected and potential. In keeping with the scale of the war, area security must have a large focus; the old mistake of zooming in on one hamlet and ignoring its surroundings should not be repeated. Area security ought to be approached as a system whose military objectives are to establish GVN control over the population and to retain flexibility in the face of varied enemy reactions. The political objective is to establish intra-GVN responsibility and capability down the line--to bring to those isolated anti-VC fragments already committed a system which cares and to bring a theory of victory to men who fight.

Both the ARVN regular forces and the American military should concern themselves with area security. Direct ARVN involvement is particularly critical. The local forces--especially the PFs--have been the organizational orphans of the war. Whatever help--be it technical, logistical or tactical--they have received has been slow and of secondary priority. And more disturbing, the help has generally been forthcoming because Americans, particularly on a battalion level, recognized the need for assistance to the local forces and supplied it on an ad hoc basis. As American units withdraw, therefore, there will be a vacuum in many echelons of support to the local GVN forces unless the ARVN units fill the gap. ARVN has been reluctant to do so for a combination of political, cultural and command-and-control reasons. Whether this reluctance will continue is moot.

In this matter the CAP program may have a conceptual basis which draws lessons across cultural lines. If an American squad can adapt to, and be accepted by, the people of a village, why could not an ARVN squad? There are three principal reasons for suggesting that area security should include ARVN encadrement of the GVN local forces.

First and foremost, there is no doctrine for area security, although there is an extant, albeit fragmented, body of knowledge and experience about the subject. The primary task at this stage in Vietnam is to develop a system of area security which can stand in the face of enemy pressure. ARVN possess mobility, technology, firepower, a sense of responsibility for the safety of one another, and a (perhaps too highly) structured command-and-control procedure. Considering the scale and flux of the war, these strong points are needed in the critical stage when an area security system is being implemented and ironed out. This combined ARVN/local forces action does not contradict the slogan "ARVN forces in support of pacification", where pacification means allegiances or patriotism desired from the uncommitted; it is to say that the slogan is irrelevant to this task. And especially ARVN can provide some of the needed imputs and impetus to a fresh and concerted effort. The system may not be successful even with ARVN and local forces working together. It certainly will not be successful if the local forces are left on their own.

Second, American casualties and costs have proven substantially lower in combined action units than they are in regular infantry units, even when the missions and the areas are the same. The accompaniment of one American brings confidence to the Vietnamese because he is a hostage whose presence guarantees fire support and reaction forces if and when necessary. Several Americans can bring positive tactical improvement, for by their example they can lead because they are not dependent on the Vietnamese to keep them alive. The Vietnamese like being part of an organization which cares, and they respond well and bravely. In many ways, they are willing to do more, if they are given the chance and have some hope in the outcome and in the future. The GVN suffers more from a lack of cohesion than from a lack of commitment. There are sufficient men who will fight if they know the system is com-

petent and cares. I can see no prior reason why this tactical causality would not apply also to ARVN encadrement.

Third, the morale of the anti-VC minorities in South Vietnam will be boosted. The US/GVN-NVA/VC negotiations are obviously a trying time for the South Vietnamese officials, with the fragile state of the GVN in jeopardy. What is needed is a series of visible morale-building steps designed to balance the negotiating statements and the gradual U.S. withdrawal. Although at first glance it seems contradictory, it may be possible to de-Americanize the war while restructuring our strategy so as not to abandon the South Vietnamese. Part of the method could be a light, temporary ARVN encadrement in selected rural areas within a systems integration of tactics and policies which have been proven to work.

I have asked several PF platoon leaders what they thought of the idea of ARVN squads working and living with their men, with a portion of the ARVN's parent unit at district with a reaction requirement. Their first reactions generally have been instinctive rejections motivated by pride and distrust. Upon reflection, however, most have reconsidered,--contingent upon a satisfactory arrangement of command relationships. The CAP experience has shown that command understandings can be satisfactorily worked out in practice, even when they look a mess on paper. The critical factor in resolving differences between diverse units is the age-old recognition of mutual need trenchantly voiced by Benjamin Franklin when he said: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Yet, while the local GVN forces may recognize their need, ARVN has at times manifested a disquieting tendency to believe in, and work for, an insular self-cohesion, as if there were a distinction between the general future of South Vietnam and its own, perhaps by fighting from a few small enclaves. The historical analogy of Chiang Kai Shek comes to mind. One step toward avoiding such a repetition would be an area security system which tied ARVN more closely to the local forces and the rural population.

III

There are five tactical components which comprise the control of a populated rural area. They are: surveillance, patrolling, defense, reaction, and pursuit.

In terms of the number of forces required, reaction is a district level operation, and pursuit probably belongs to the province or division level. Surveillance, patrolling and defense are components concerned with hamlet and village level operations.

In describing these functions, the size and composition of the various forces is left unspecified. As an example, however, a CAP averages 11 Americans (substitute ARVN?) and 24 PFs per village. The CAP villages average 3500 people, living in five hamlets spread over four square kilometers. A district reaction force should be at least large and competent enough to balance the local VC units. For reasons of size and specialty, pursuit is perhaps best left to certain units within a division.

The first component of area security is surveillance, or local intelligence, and is sometimes exaggerated by observers who have not worked on the lower levels in Vietnam. Number is a condition to surveillance. Surveillance is a condition to exposure, and exposure deprives the enemy interlopers of the tactical advantages of surprise and local superiority of mass. In gauging the ratio of hamlet forces to population, then, careful consideration should be given to the factor of surveillance. A feasible objective should be to ensure that enemy forces of a squad size or larger cannot regularly pass undisclosed through the geographical boundaries of a hamlet, and that individual strangers cannot cohabit in any house unreported for over a week.

This does not require an inordinate number of government troops. Those providing the surveillance may be unarmed (and unaligned) members of the hamlet community, whose surveillance worth is a function of their daily routine. What one villager has seen, many others soon learn through the village gossip system.

Whether the gossip system transmits this surveillance information to the government forces largely determines the number of troops needed

in the community. Where the system does provide the government with such an information flow, the number of troops so stationed may be predominantly determined by the other four tactical components. Where the gossip excludes government informers (either advertent or inadvertent), the surveillance knowledge must be compensated for and supplied by additional government forces conducting heavy patrolling.

Surveillance by gossip takes several forms and provides several benefits, in addition to affecting the number of troops. Tactically, surveillance is sometimes of use in tipping off impending attacks or the location of the enemy. This feature, however, can be overplayed, for geographical specificity is not a strong point of this surveillance technique. Moreover, there is an abundance of such intelligence reports for every actual incident. Sometimes surveillance is of genuine tactical worth, and as a warning indicator it should not be ignored, despite cries of "wolf, wolf" in the past. But the enemy has learned to strike within a time span such that the gossip often is postfact.

Under surveillance would fall other forms of police and intelligence work, such as census taking, rice control, and perhaps even the extremely difficult task of uncovering the stay-behind agents of the Security Section of the VC. Despite the plethora of generalities and the frequency of time lags, villager surveillance should provide the area commander on a district level or above with an additional input by which to judge enemy activity and the allocation of his resources. Of itself, of course, this technique is subject to abuse and enemy diversions; but as an added information channel it is of use.

As specifically related to the CAP experience, villager surveillance has strongly correlated with CAP effectiveness. One CAP near An Hoa, for instance, is virtually surrounded by enemy forces, but has survived and acquitted itself well, largely because the village woodcutters have provided warning whenever the enemy has massed nearby. Most CAPs have to go through a testing period of several months duration subsequent to establishment during which both the PFs and the villagers watch carefully for signs of timidity or quick abandonment. With confidence in the CAPs' capability and staying power comes information, first from the PFs, later from the villagers through the GVN

agents who have relatives or friends in the hamlets. Once this latter stage of information flow has been reached in each hamlet within the village, then a surveillance capability does exist.

Village patrolling and ambushing is no substitute for villager surveillance. (The exception would be a frequency of, and terrain coverage by, patrols of such a density that it would require an inordinate number of troops for countrywide implementation.) As a tactical component of a security system, patrolling is a necessary technique, the importance of which should neither be minimized nor overemphasized.

Doctrinally, there is a danger that emphasis on patrolling will be exaggerated beyond the pale. Random night patrolling will not dissuade the determined enemy, anymore than a police patrol will force the criminal to desist. By a process of attrition in contact after accidental contact, patrolling in the same area can force the enemy to calculate that the long-term costs of continued night encroachments is too high. But this calculation implies a time period of half a year or more. Patrolling deters the more or less casual intruder by virtue of a reputation established over time.

Then the enemy may try to break the patrol routine once and for all by assaulting the patrol base. By destroying one patrol base, the object is to force several other such bases to desist from their activities. This is the real meaning of the phrase "defeat by detail": when one village fort or patrol is hit hard, then other village units button up, and night population control of the district is acceded by default to one VC unit still physically and numerically inferior to the village units, but psychologically superior.

What must distinguish an area security system from past pacification programs is a refusal to be intimidated, as should be manifested by a continuity of patrolling over time, and by a refusal to pull out of a single village.

Patrolling is not proof against penetration. In the long term, it is hoped but not yet proved that it will be a necessary but not sufficient deterrent technique. Patrolling cannot, because of space, geography, darkness and random vectoring often disrupt planned attacks on village incursions. A 35-man village unit with six hamlets spread

over four kilometers to cover and two patrols each night is doing well to send a unit through any given part of a hamlet more than two nights a week. This frequency of patrol is rather low, but any higher frequency would require more troops, and that might be out of scale with the size of the conflict. Patrols have attritional and intelligence value, but seldom can they disrupt planned attacks. Active patrolling does bring confidence to the villagers, however, and, when consistent over time, does deter casual incursions.

To maintain daily contact with the people and to patrol the hamlets nightly, the village force must construct within the village boundaries a post wherein the unit can rest and from which the patrols can go forth. The post becomes the focal point of the unit's activities and often of the village administration. For the CAPs in I Corps these posts have also become the focal point for over half of all enemy ground attacks. It is imperative that post defense be planned well and economically--well for the sake of the lives and morale of the troops involved; economically in terms of manpower so that the number of men involved in the security system does not rise so high that it could not be adopted countrywide.

In deciding to attack a village, the enemy may select between two classes of targets: the "soft" target of the unarmed villagers or the "hard" target of the village armed unit. Usually the enemy targets the armed unit. There again he has two broad options: to strike at members of the unit when they are outside the post, or to attack the post directly. In most CAP cases the enemy has chosen to hit the posts. This is in keeping with the enemy's doctrine and command and control procedures. The alternative of striking at the patrols leaves too much to chance, if the patrols are properly varied and sent out at odd intervals on different vectors. It becomes difficult to predict and plot an engagement against such patrol patterns, and movement into position more than once can be risky for the enemy. Moreover, in ambushing night patrols it is difficult to mass much firepower at any given instance. And allowed more than an instant to recover and react, a patrol so engaged and outgunned can use the darkness to slip away.

The village post, on the other hand, represents a fixed target whose destruction may be carefully planned and whose visibility insures psychological ramifications elsewhere once the destruction is caused.

In the end, it is the defense--the men and the position and the firepower--which defeats attacks. Or, alternatively, the defense can be so strengthened by material aids and reaction capabilities that enemy tactical successes would be disproportionate to sound strategy (assuming no psychological defeat by detail). Thus, for instance, were a VC battalion to be shattered for each village post overpowered, the enemy would soon look elsewhere for better exchange ratios.

The alternative in an area security system to a fixed defensive position is a peripatetic village force which relies on mobility rather than fortifications. This was the basic idea underlying the RD (Revolutionary Development) team deployments starting in 1966. The RDs were supposed to live among the people, and move each dusk to a different section of the hamlet. This was intended to confuse an enemy planning an attack. The concept was based on a belief that the Viet Cong would not assault a position without detailed preplanning, and the nightly moves of the RDs would prevent this planning.

The calculation proved incorrect for two reasons. First, reliance on mobility rather than barbed wire requires a fighting force with a high degree of individual and group confidence. This the RDs were lacking, for it was the sort of confidence which comes only from standing firm and succeeding in combat. Yet the RDs were put to the concept precisely in order to avoid combat and before most of any given group had ever been in combat. They were recruits set to tactics which called for veterans. Second, constant movement goes against a soldier's grain, especially if he is warm and fed and secure in a home with young girls about. With supervisory authority above the hamlet level virtually non-existent after dusk, and with the local RD leaders equally comfortable, the nightly move became a chore which was shunned.

So the RDs ended up with the worst of two worlds--positions which were static and non-fortified. The enemy assaults came and a discomforting pattern emerged throughout Vietnam in 1967,--that of RD teams nightly retiring to the nearest friendly outpost or, if refused admittance, huddling like sheep outside its wire.

Mobile defense seemed permanently disabused. Following the series of savage attacks on outposts near Hue during TET 1968, however, the CAG commander of 30 CAPs resolved to experiment once again, moved by the higher casualties his Vietnamese and Americans suffered in the outposts as compared with their patrols. The kill ratio when a post was attacked averaged 7 to 1, whereas patrols averaged 19 to 1. In large measure this was due to the distinct improvement in the weaponry and firepower of the enemy, especially for stand-off attacks with mortars, recoilless rifles and anti-tank weapons. The construction of the defenses had not kept pace with the quality of the offensive weapons.

The mobile defense concept was dusted off and the individual CAPs destroyed their bunker and barbed wire forts and moved into the center of the hamlets. The CAPs differed from the RDs in several respects. The PFs were often from the hamlets they were to defend; the PFs and Marines were long veterans; supervision was substantial; help was only a radio away; and, perhaps most importantly, the lesson of Hue at TET was fresh and strong and kept the troops from feeling warm and comfortable and secure.

In its first six months, the mobile defense worked very well. The enemy pulled out of many hamlets and the incident rates fell. The enemy found it hard to cope with the night moves and by coming in ran the danger not just of bumping into one of the CAPs small night patrols, but in addition of walking smack into the ambush lines of the CAPs main position.

Hue post-TET 1968 demonstrated that mobile defense in the area security mode has conceptual and operational merit, dependent upon the quality of the troops and their perception of enemy capabilities. In the author's opinion, however, mobile defense is a temporary measure, even if it lasts one or two years. While mobile defense is conducted because the enemy is respected, it is a signal to the villagers that the friendly local forces do not yet have clear and lasting dominance over the foe. And when the local friendly forces do begin to believe in this dominance, then their mobility will have to struggle against their laziness and rationalizations, leading to the trap of static and nonfortified. Sooner or later, then, there must come a return to defense by fortification and to dominance clear enough so that there is a portion of ground

representative of the government where civic and governmental matters may be transacted. But at certain stages of a conflict, the area security step of fixed defense may be temporarily bypassed.

In tactical terms, then, a village force must have the motivation and capability of:

(1) nightly preventing any public rally by the VC in the village

(2) nightly preventing any large, organized take-out of rice or men from the village

(3) maximizing the risk of death for any small (10 or less) part of VC who slip into the village frequently to visit families, plan an attack, rest, etc.

(4) maximizing the risk of disruption, if not defeat, to a district VC company or main force battalion which slips in with the intention of annihilating the village force.

Since (4) implies a defense clearly beyond the capability of a force operating in the village, yet proportionate to a scale possible of countrywide implementation, the threat of the VC large unit is credible only if outside aid is available and capable, another reason for arguing for closer tie-in between ARVN and local forces.

By the very nature of their mission, reaction forces should be viewed from the perspective of the beleagued defenders whose most critical problem is that of existence. Therefore categorization of reaction forces measured in increments of time is an appropriate way to treat this subject.

Assuming the enemy attack falls on the village fort, the first requirement of the defenders is light. They must be able to see to organize their lines and stop the enemy, who have the advantage of attacking from one or more preplanned positions. Illumination may be generated by internal or external sources, or both.

Next to arrive should be indirect firepower, provided it kills neither the villagers nor the defenders. This proviso dictates careful fire support coordination, and obviously favors the use of helicopter gunships and preplanned artillery fire.

Most times it is only after light and firepower have been supplied to the defenders that the troop reaction forces will arrive. The time between the attack and the arrival of ground assistance can, of course, vary, but every effort should be made to cut the time to under one hour. Reading current writings on reaction force techniques is as dangerous as selecting Machiavelli as a primer on American politics. Somewhere--perhaps it relates to the situation in Vietnam in 1964--the idea was born that reaction forces were in themselves the prime enemy target. Therefore, doctrine stressed the need for secrecy, deception and care in the use of reaction forces. What then developed was the phenomenon of defensive-minded reaction forces, a tactical contradiction in terms.

A reaction force has one, and only one, primary mission: to relieve enemy pressure on a beleaguered unit. In professional military journals articles stress the caution and care with which reaction forces should proceed. In Vietnam this translates into action, or rather non-action, so that it is often long hours before a relieving unit comes to the assistance of a friendly group sorely pressed. A balance must be struck between self-protection and mission accomplishment. The luring of reaction forces used to be an important VC tactic. Now ambushes against reaction forces are not intended to destroy but to impede. In determining response, reaction forces should ask themselves a key question:

Who is dying in the meantime?

The single most important point to be made about reaction forces in Vietnam is that they must recognize their mission is not defensive; it is singularly and specially offensive. The mission of a reaction force is not to destroy an enemy or even to engage him. It is to use whatever deployments and methods will cause the enemy to be diverted from his attack. To pull the enemy off his target marks a successful reaction force. Once units charged with relief responsibilities come to recognize and understand this principle, then the real, hard planning for the task can begin.

District reaction forces should not remain idle until others are in trouble. Their other missions should be the hounding and the eventual destruction or dislocation of the VC local forces. This is a task

of extreme difficulty requiring detailed detective work, the close cooperation of a multitude of officials, swift mobility in the rare moments of crisis or contact, and a high degree of determination in the face of repeated failures. The enemy local forces are superb at avoiding contact except at their choosing and at striking at the weak points in any area security scheme.

And lastly, area security should incorporate the tactic of pursuit, which in the framework of a security system might have the highest return in terms of cost-benefit because it serves to dissuade and to reduce an enemy force. Yet for reasons very akin to those working against the employment of reaction forces, the strategic worth of pursuit is largely ignored in Vietnam. Pursuit requires detection and destruction forces; and any such allocation of resources on even the most temporary basis requires the prior approval of operational commanders, whose approval is going to be contingent upon feasibility and opportunity cost. To demonstrate the worth of pursuit, then, would require both careful planning and several tests. Neither requirement has as yet been rigorously fulfilled.

Pursuit (and, to a lesser degree, reaction) would often prove to be manpower intensive for relatively short-time periods (a full day or less). Logistic groups in I Corps, for instance, run nightly combined patrols with Popular Forces, while yet attending to their day-to-day chores. And when a Combined Action Platoon near Chulai was hit hard last September, the next morning a colonel at headquarters in Chulai rousted out clerks, cooks, interpreters and other assorted personnel for a large search in pursuit of the evening assault force and, within a radius of several miles from the CAP, the sweep netted 45 of the enemy, mostly in small groups. The colonel needed manpower to search and pursue, and he needed it in a hurry, but he did not need it for long. The normal headquarters routine was disrupted, and some men had to work overtime that night. The colonel's actions did illustrate, however, that a unit's or an individual's function may alter on occasions while its organization and primary mission remain intact. Pursuit, then, in an area-security context is really the reseizure of the initiative when the enemy is most vulnerable because he is exposed and intent on disengaging.

ARVN has the mobility and skill to integrate these components into an interlaced area-security system which would be flexible and responsive to various enemy attack levels. This does not mean that the enemy cannot penetrate to the cities. It is axiomatic that the guerrillas can mass preponderant force at points of their choosing. But by holding the countryside and expanding outward instead of contracting, maximum possible protection would be given to the cities, since the farther out the interlaced area defense went, the deeper the enemy would have to penetrate and the less would be his chances of success. By their presence with local forces ARVN troops would be hostages and bring confidence to the PFs who thereby know they will receive help in times of peril, provided the ARVN fulfill the concepts of commitment down the line and of tactical organizational links from hamlet to village to district to province. Tactically, the ARVN units assigned to "support" area security would gain in knowledge of the terrain and enemy while the local forces gained in firepower and firefight skill. The people gain shield forces from indiscriminate power.

Americans could help to institutionalize area security, especially by drawing on the tactical principles proven by the CAPs and by Army and Marine MATs. This strategy of building before leaving would not be in contradiction with a negotiating principle of reciprocal exogenous foreclosures (although the reciprocity may be specious on the part of the enemy). In fact, a system of area security would probably increase both our bargaining position and our position vis-a-vis the GVN.

According to this concept, defense of a populated area is undertaken by the integrated development of five component activities: surveillance, patrolling, defense, reaction and pursuit. Economy of force indicates that this system be established so as to incorporate several villages at a time. The area security system incorporating combined action would be designed to do more than just attrit the enemy at less cost. It would include a potential to deter. The deterrent factor builds up over time, as the enemy comes to realize that any attack upon a village unit guarantees that he himself is going to be set on and hounded and attacked in return. The enemy has to know that no village stands alone. By block deployment the enemy's penetration and isolation tactics would be better challenged than by the scattering

of isolated posts. The village forces would thus provide mutual aid and warning through surveillance and patrolling. The tactical definition of reaction and pursuit presupposes the existence of more than one such village unit. Economies of scale increase with larger coverage as area increases proportionately more than does circumference. The accrued knowledge from working with the defense in a systems context should prove more fruitful knowledge than scattered, individual experience.

In Quang Tin Province there is a district chief who is steadily increasing his area of influence. He talks about a philosophical approach, but I knew him in another district before he was relieved by the VNQDD. His method of operating is dynamic, personal and merciless. He is a leader of men and a fanatic against communism. But I saw his spirit matched in few other places by few other men. Although he fights alone, he still pushes forward. This is too much to expect of the many. Most men will just try to hang on, uncertain of the future, when unaided in their present efforts. The current separation of PFs, RFs, RDs, ARVN does not make for area security. They must devise some sort of system; and they must be convinced by actions that it is going to work.

None of this should be new. But years have gone by and the struggle in the countryside has been largely ignored. Area security would require a conceptual change, and change against vested interests is doubtful. In addition, implementation would require bureaucratic and tactical changes. That is even more doubtful. Moreover, since war is a dialectic, there can be no guarantee beforehand. Connected to this is the fact that past unwarranted optimism has created widespread suspicion about the criteria by which "progress" is supposedly measured. So even if the trends were going in the right direction, the press, the public and many decisionmakers might be hard to convince.

A strategy of area security which systematically integrates these tactical components must draw resources by demonstrating that it is of greater value than alternative strategies in leading towards the objective of a stable, responsible GVN. But if this strategy is combined with mobility and responsive command-and-control procedures, its spillover

benefits could satisfy several of the criteria set forth in favor of alternative strategies, both for our posture in Vietnam and at the negotiating table. It is suggested that a comparison between existing procedures in any given area and the system outlined here be considered. A careful listing of goals could allow alternative means of accomplishment to be advocated and tested, while recognizing that rosy forecasts or assured predictions for any scheme are not justified in the face of past military performances and present political uncertainties.