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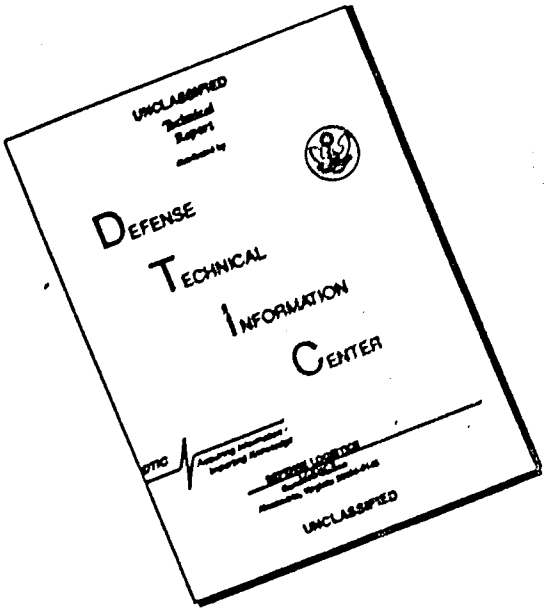

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IN REPLY REFER TO
DAAG-PAP-A (M) (4 Apr 73) DAMO-ODU

20 April 1973

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: COL Henry H. Gerecke, Commander, 18th MP Brigade, US Army Gp & Provost Marshal, USARV/MACV Support Command, 11 June 72 - 11 March 73 (U)

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25 APR 1973

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1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Report (U), 2 July 1971.

2. Transmitted herewith is the report of COL Henry H. Gerecke, subject as above.

3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 525-14; however, it should not be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or of any agency of the Department of the Army.

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AVBGD

21 FEB 1973

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report (Gerecke), RCS CSFOR-74

Commander
USARV/MACV Support Command
ATTN: AVHDO-DO
APO 96375

Debriefing Report by: Colonel Henry H. Gerecke

Duty Assignment: Commander, 18th Military Police Brigade (US Army Military Police Group, Vietnam (Provisional)) and Provost Marshal, USARV/MACV Support Command

Inclusive Dates: 11 June 1972 to 11 March 1973

Date of Report: 21 February 1973

1. Introduction. This report will address those significant matters pertaining to military police/provost marshal activities conducted in a counterinsurgency environment. Observations and recommendations presented herein will, in some cases, pertain to situations and conditions which existed prior to the inclusive dates shown above; however, comment is deemed appropriate based on the impact that these situations had on the drawdown effort during this period. For the most part, comments are geared to address those problems which arose as a direct result of attempts to reduce US involvement in the Republic of Vietnam. This period of force reductions presented many problem areas which would merit further study as pertains to military police doctrine and planning. It is my overall impression that military police/provost marshal doctrine for the support of counterinsurgency operations is sound, and that the application of the existing basic principles resulted in service and support to the commander that was both responsive and efficient. This is not an attempt to minimize the nature of the problem areas detected, nor to say that improvements are not necessary. Rather, this report will attempt to emphasize those problem areas, and make recommendations for correction or further study.

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2. Command Relationships. The designation of the 18th Military Police Brigade (18th MP Bde) as a major command of USARV (a field army), and the later designation of the US Army Military Police Group, Vietnam (Provisional) (USA MP Gp, V (Prov)) under the newly formed USARV/MACV Support Command (USARV/MACV SUPCOM), was in keeping with current Army doctrine. During the period that US Forces were conducting ground operations, the centralized command over virtually all military police assets (less those assigned to tactical units) was absolutely essential. During the period of time immediately preceding the cease-fire, however, a study was made of the feasibility of decentralizing command of all military police resources in country. As the total strength level of US Forces in this theatre continued to decline, the need for centralized command and control of military police resources diminished considerably. With fewer and fewer resources available, it was felt that the Area Commander had an ever increasing need for more direct control over those personnel in his area of responsibility. This was particularly true in view of the limited security forces remaining in country. In order for the Area Commander to fulfill his redeployment responsibilities in the most efficient manner, command and control over all units in his particular area should have been vested in him.

At the time of consideration of this proposal, there were nine military police units, including HHD, 18th MP Bde, under the centralized command of the USA MP Gp, V (Prov). Two of these units, the 90th MP Det (PM) and the 716th MP Bn, were under the operational control of the Cdr, MACV Special Troops (MACST). Implementation of the decentralized concept would have retained the best aspects of the old system, specifically:

a. By retaining special staff supervision over all existing military police functions at the USARV/MACV SUPCOM PM level, including current military police reporting procedures, this action would have insured that the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM was kept aware of all aspects of military police activities in Vietnam.

b. Would have provided continued confinement services for all of Vietnam on a centralized basis by retaining the 284th MP Company as a subordinate unit of USARV/MACV SUPCOM. The USARV/MACV SUPCOM PM would have retained his responsibility as Installation Commander of USARVIS. Further, within the 284th MP Co, it would have insured continued security and escort guard services for the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Drug Treatment Center under USARV/MACV SUPCOM PM supervision.

c. Would have permitted continued centralized coordination on matters of criminal investigative interest between the Vietnam Field Office, USACIDC, and the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal.

Additionally, the following advantages would have been gained by such an action:

a. Would have permitted inactivation of HHD, 18th MP Bde, and the disestablishment of the USA MP Gp, V (Prov). The concurrent organization of the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal Office of thirteen personnel would have resulted in a savings of six spaces over the then current manning level of the combined Group Headquarters/Provost Marshal Office.

b. Giving Area Commanders control of "stove pipe" units would have provided them the freedom to trade off spaces not required in order to increase support (spaces) in other units in consonance with the needs peculiar to each area. This would also have allowed all MP resources to remain under the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM, the Commander charged with the primary law enforcement mission in Vietnam through the Army Support Element (ASE) Commanders.

c. With command of the 90th MP Det (PM) and the 716th MP Bn placed directly under the Cdr, USARV/MACV Support Command, the added advantage of one general officer dealing with another on matters involving commitments of these two units would have resulted.

d. Would reduce problems associated with centralized control of redeploying units in widely divergent military regions subsequent to cease-fire, and enable ASE Commanders to more readily adjust their redeployment priorities according to mission requirements during a highly turbulent period.

e. Would have permitted a more objective, valid and accurate evaluation of Area Provost Marshal's performance under the Officer Evaluation Reporting System, as the ASE Commander would have been included in the officer's rating scheme.

The primary disadvantage of this concept is the fact that it would have reduced the extent of direct control that the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM exercised over military police operations in each military region. Also, this concept would have placed additional responsibility for administrative and logistical support of assigned units on Area Commanders.

In spite of the disadvantages of the system, I strongly feel that we reached the point, during the July-August 1972 time frame, when this concept should have been implemented. Ideally, its inception should have come soon after implementation of the ASE Concept which was adopted in May 1972. I am convinced that, for the reasons presented above, this plan would have provided for the most efficient method of reducing

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countrywide strength, while still providing enough flexibility to continue to perform the required military police missions. I would strongly recommend that consideration be given to such a solution in future operations of this nature.

It should be noted that my predecessor, BG Timmerberg, had envisioned decentralization of military police assets. Upon my arrival in country it was made abundantly clear to me that the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM was responsible for discipline, law and order throughout the country, and that as such he looked to the Provost Marshal to see that this mission was carried out with the requisite professionalism required. The question of centralization vs. decentralization of military police resources revolved around the issue of who the Commander held responsible for discipline, law and order matters within the country. It was my feeling then and it is now my feeling that if I am to be charged with the responsibility I must have the authority to implement and carry out the Commander's desires and wishes, also.

As a consequence, I personally was not sympathetic to the decentralization concept. In retrospect, I must admit in all candor that I was in error. The concept that the Provost Marshal as the principal advisor to the Commander on law and order matters was the overriding factor in causing me to make this decision and recommendation for the continuance of centralization. Later decentralization in the stand-down of the USA MP Gp, V (Prov) was recommended by myself on two separate occasions based on the aforementioned advantages of decentralization but in each case the recommendation was overcome by events because of the impending cease-fire. Future evaluation of the time period noted during this report by disinterested agencies will determine the validity of the course of action adopted.

Another problem which deserves mention is that revolving around the operational control exercised by the Cdr, MACST, over the 90th MP Det and the 716th MP Bn. Since introduction of these two units into Vietnam in 1965, OPCON has been vested in the Area Commander for the Saigon area. The rationale behind this decision cannot be argued; however, certain problems did arise which warrant mentioning. The Cdr, MACST, was tasked with operational control; and the Cdr, 18th MP Bde (and more recently, USA MP Gp, V (Prov)), performed the command function; thus any USARV/MACV SUPCOM requests for support from the 716th MP Bn had to be coordinated through the Chief of Staff, MACV. This policy often led to differences of opinion in the utilization of 716th MP Bn assets.

The proposed decentralization concept mentioned above might have assisted in ironing out the wrinkles in this relationship. By placing

the two units directly under the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM, it would have been easier for that Commander to control his assets. Operational Control would still have been vested in the Cdr, MACST; however, a more tenable relationship would have been established. To a certain degree, this situation was improved in December 1972 when the Cdr, 716th MP Bn, assumed the additional duty of Provost Marshal, MACST. Aside from the obvious advantages in operational planning in such an arrangement, this also added to the degree of control which the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM, through the USA MP Gp, V (Prov) Commander, exercised over the Saigon area MP assets.

It should be mentioned in passing that the decision to organize the USA MP Gp, V (Prov) was a significant step in streamlining the command and control of military police assets under the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM. The need for maintaining a brigade-sized unit headquarters for the limited number of police forces remaining in country had diminished. Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 18th MP Bde, was retained on the force structure documents in country both as a carrier unit for Group personnel, and in anticipation of the eventual transfer of the unit colors to an appropriate CONUS installation. By combining the USA MP Gp, V (Prov) headquarters element with the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal Office, a significant personnel savings was realized, and those few areas where duplication of workload existed were eliminated. This action also served to reduce the span of control of the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal/Group Commander, and thus facilitated his overall control of military police functions in country.

With the relocation of the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Headquarters to the Saigon area in November 1972, a recommendation was made that the USARV and MACV Provost Marshal Offices be combined. It was felt that the combined offices could more readily handle the discipline, law and order mission, thus effecting further personnel savings. It was also proposed that the PW mission be transferred to the MACV J-1 (Director of Personnel). In light of the political implications of the anticipated cease-fire, it was felt that this mission could more appropriately be handled by that office. Numerous areas of overlapping and complementing functions were identified in the two offices; and I strongly feel that the climate was right for such a consolidation. The proposal, however, was not adopted, and the organizations continued to function idependently of one another. The primary objection voiced at that time was that, due to the politically oriented mission of the MACV Office, consolidation was not feasible. It is felt that certain concessions could have been made to allow for the continuing political relationships and, at the same time, the streamlining of the country-wide discipline, law and order mission. The overall scope of operations in this theatre simply did not justify the continued existence of two separate Provost Marshal elements. Their continued separation caused duplication of effort and prevented a possible significant manpower savings.

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3. Experiences in Command. a. Concept of Operation. In conjunction with a drawdown such as that experienced during my tenure as Group Commander, I am sure that every major commander felt that troop reductions in his particular area of operations were detrimental to the accomplishment of the mission with which he was still tasked. I would be less than candid if I did not say that this was my feeling with respect to the reductions in military police resources. Although patrolling requirements may have been reduced somewhat, there is a certain practicable limit below which the provost marshal cannot function with the requisite degree of skill. Suffice it to say that the military police mission diminished at a slower rate than did that of some of our service branches. The most notable effect of the troop reductions was the resultant elimination of "Special Mission" units as discussed below.

I strongly feel that the elimination of the Joint Customs Group (JCG) on 15 August 1972 was a premature action. Because of the fact that we still had joint service representation in country, we should have continued to maintain joint control over the coordinated efforts of the various services in conducting the customs operation. At the present time, we have Air Force customs personnel operating in Army facilities, performing customs inspections for all passenger processing. Technically, we still have joint operations (i.e., Army and Air Force hold baggage inspectors in Da Nang), but we do not have joint control over their operations. Through the dissolution of the JCG, we lost the uniform enforcement necessary to insure an effective country-wide customs program.

One of the major areas affected by the dissolution of the JCG was in the area of mails inspection. The United States Bureau of Customs (USBC) recognized the credibility and integrity of the JCG and, in doing so, accepted the 2d, 3d & 4th Class mail inspection results performed by that organization without question. With the standdown of the JCG, inspection of the mails was turned over to the US Army Postal Group. Inspections by the Postal Group are not recognized by the USBC; consequently, all such mail is being reinspected upon arrival in San Francisco. If the USBC has the capability of doing this, the question that arises is why was it necessary for the JCG to accomplish this mission. It must be understood that there are definite advantages in detecting these customs violations in country before contraband such as narcotics reaches CONUS. By policing our own, we have the advantage of treating the violation as a military violation; whereas that same violation will be treated as a Federal offense when detected by the USBC. Additionally, expeditious disposition of offenders can be accomplished when they are detected in country. By policing our own, we are also afforded the intelligence value of understanding the various methods being used to attempt to smuggle contraband out of country. Also, because of the fact that JCG inspectors were inspecting 100% of all mail, and the fact that this was well publicized, their actions served as a great deterrent to those

attempting or contemplating shipment of unauthorized material out of country, especially narcotics.

Another area of customs interest that suffered through the dissolution of the JCG was that of customs operations at the water ports. With the severe reduction of customs personnel experienced circa April 1972, US Army customs activities at water ports was discontinued. As a consequence, customs inspections had to be conducted by USBC representatives at ports of debarkation. This resulted in a severe loss of control in an area that had heretofore warranted DA interest. With the expected increase in such port activities as a result of accelerated force reductions, continued monitorship of these ports by US Army customs inspectors would have been preferred.

Because of the problems which developed after dissolution of the JCG, I strongly feel that this efficient organization should have been retained, if only at reduced strength, through the period of redeployment. This would have provided one central headquarters to handle the myriad of problems that surfaced during the period of redeployment with regard to the customs mission. It would have provided uniformity of operations at a time when uniformity was severely needed. Additionally, this action would have freed local provost marshals and commanders from the additional burden of conducting customs operations at a time when they could ill afford to assume greater responsibilities. Overall, the little additional expenditure required to maintain this separate headquarters would have been justified by the benefits accrued from maintaining such an operation.

Troop reductions also had a debilitating effect on the command drug suppression program. The Joint Narcotics Investigation Detachment (JNID), a triservice organization which was organized in December 1971 to work overtly and covertly with GVN authorities to combat the drug abuse problem, was probably the most effective tool that we had in the war against drugs. Upon reorganization of the CID element in country in July 1972, troop reductions of that element necessitated the elimination of JNID. As a result, the role of drug suppression and intelligence gathering was relegated to a secondary objective of the CID. With the reduced manning level, this meant that only one investigator in each of the operating resident agencies in country was designated as the primary investigator/coordinator for the drug suppression program in that particular area. In most cases, this man also had the regular schedule of cases (non drug-related) to be worked and, as a result, was not a full-time drug investigator. As we progressed further down the road toward total disengagement, the case load of these investigators did not reduce in proportion to the number of available investigators. These people had all that they could handle in reacting to those incidents that were referred

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to them for formal investigation, much less get deeply involved in the business of suppressing crime. Further, due to the reorganization of the CID element into a separate command, overhead for the headquarters operations had to come out of the manning level already established for the CID element. None of the above is intended to cast doubt on the ability of those personnel, as it was felt throughout my tenure that the CID personnel in country were among the most capable within the Corps. The problem, however, is one that should have been foreseen, and effective measures should have been taken to insure that adequate manning levels were authorized to permit the continuance of the crime prevention/suppression mission.

During the latter half of calendar year 1972, there appeared to be a decline in the number of US Forces personnel using drugs in this Command. The statistics maintained by this office, however, are based on apprehension rates, and there are certain factors which have to be considered before giving any credibility to these statistics. Admittedly, with the drawdown, we became more of a headquarters oriented command, with fewer troop units in the field. This meant that there was a higher percentage of career soldiers among our ranks, and the average age of the soldier in country increased accordingly. We know through experience that the average drug user is a caucasian male, E-4, age about 20 years. Based on this information, we would naturally expect that the rate would drop. The other factor that must be taken into consideration is that, with the reduction of military police and CID assets in country, we were not doing everything that we should have been doing to detect drug abuse. Since October 1972, a majority of the drugs confiscated by police agencies were accidentally found during inspections, at accident scenes, on the person of deceased or unconscious persons, or during routine gate checks at US Installations. No longer were we aggressively pursuing the policy of making controlled purchases of drugs in order to attempt to deny access to drugs, and identify the pushers in our midst. Consequently, we must assume that we did not have the handle on the drug abuse problem that we had during the big push on drugs in 1971-1972. It could well be that the rate only appeared to decline because of the fact that we were not aware of the degree of drug abuse within the command.

b. Command and Control. With the increased workload placed on headquarters personnel as a result of the drawdown of personnel, staff visits to outlying areas were severely curtailed. This situation continued through the latter half of 1972 and into 1973. As these outlying units were themselves suffering from the adverse effects of personnel turbulence, deficiencies developed in technical areas, to include operations, logistics, and personnel management. Pre-IG inspections conducted by the Group headquarters during the latter part of 1972 clearly revealed

that existing vacancies in key positions had adversely affected continuity of function in the above mentioned areas. Also, because of the anticipated redeployment, it may well be that we were lulled into complacency, hoping that it would all be buried in the roll-up. With the continued drawdown, however, certain unique situations arose which dictated a tighter control on the operational aspect country-wide. Unfortunately, this capability had been lost.

I strongly feel that staff visits such as those mentioned above had to be continued at all costs in order for the major headquarters to meet its commitment to the units in the field. Future planning for operations during drawdown of forces should definitely include provisions for increased monitorship of subordinate elements to insure maintenance of a high standard of mission accomplishment.

c. Operations. (1) Physical Security. As has been mentioned in the reports of my predecessors, the area of physical security did not receive requisite emphasis in this active theatre of operations. This problem became glaringly apparent during the critical phase of drawdown and redeployment. The level of staffing maintained in the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal Physical Security Section was inadequate to meet the needs dictated by this rather unique situation. As more logistics activities were transferred to contractors for operation, it became obvious that existing contracts, and even new contracts being awarded, did not contain adequate provisions to meet security requirements.

For the most part, government contracts in Vietnam were written at a time when US military personnel were providing much of the security for government furnished equipment, both in transit and in storage areas. Consequently, contractors were ill equipped to assume responsibility for security upon disengagement of US troops. In retrospect, I may have been somewhat remiss by failing to form a team whose primary function would be to evaluate contractor security, develop security specifications for incorporation in contracts, and conduct follow-up visits to insure that the provisions of the contracts were being complied with.

In most cases, the contractors did not possess the in-house resources needed to evaluate their own security requirements. Due to across-the-board force reductions, supporting provost marshals in the respective areas were not equipped with sufficient manpower or expertise to perform the needed physical security surveys for each of these sites/activities. It became incumbent upon this office to provide some expertise in this field, and a task force was created from other assets to perform this function. The findings and recommendations emanating from these surveys are being used as a basis for modifying existing contracts to insure that they provide for adequate residual internal

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security. Hopefully, this will help reduce the larceny of government furnished property, and facilitate the transfer of security functions and responsibilities to the Defense Attache Office in the near future.

The fact remains, however, that thought should have been given to forming this specialized team at a point much earlier during the period of our involvement in Vietnam. In an active theatre of operations such as this, such a team would be composed of representatives from the Provost Marshal and the contracting office, in this manner providing expertise in the areas of physical security and contracting procedures respectively. To insure uniformity of procedures, this team should be organized at the major command level.

The larceny of vehicular equipment is and has been a major problem in the Republic of Vietnam. During the period 15 July 1972 to 11 January 1973, there were 72 incidents involving theft of some 86 US Government vehicles reported to the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Serious Incident Report Section. Thirty-three of these vehicles were reportedly secured when they were stolen, and nineteen of the vehicles were stolen from guarded or secured parking areas. Twelve of the incidents involved hijackings, eight of which were engineered by Vietnamese males wearing ARVN uniforms. These larcenies, committed over a brief six month period, represent a net loss to the US Government in excess of $659,000.00.

The primary objects of such larcenies have been the ¼ ton and 5 ton trucks, the majority of the latter being contractor operated vehicles. The 5 ton vehicle is particularly attractive among the Vietnamese because of its versatility and the availability of repair parts in country. Likewise, the ¼ ton is very serviceable and easy to conceal in the ARVN inventory or, for that matter, in the civilian community. The majority of these larcenies occurred in the Third Military Region or, more specifically, in the Long Binh/Saigon area. These, of course, are the most heavily populated areas, and are therefore more conducive to theft.

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem during the early part of my tenure as USARV/MACV SUPCOM Provost Marshal, I held a series of meetings with contractor representatives and interested staff agencies, during which preventive measures were proposed and contractor security personnel urged to implement them. However, all too often these suggestions received only token support, and it was difficult to arouse a great deal of interest on the part of the contractors concerned. I am firmly convinced that had these contractor personnel been compelled to implement recommendations of the proposed security team, vehicle larcenies could have been significantly reduced.

(2) Military Police Investigations. Military Police Investigator personnel (MPI) have been utilized in this Command since early 1971;

however, this program was always without official sanction. With the world-wide emphasis that was placed on creating an accredited MPI force, a proposed AR 190-30 (Military Police Investigations) was distributed to the field for comment during the Spring of 1972. This program was welcomed by operational provost marshal elements, and it was hoped that implementation of the program would be swift. Unfortunately, this was not the case. At the time of our redeployment from Vietnam, we still do not boast a single accredited Military Police Investigator in our ranks.

Much of the problem can be attributed to administrative tie-ups. In June of 1972, guidance was received from USARPAC concerning controls for the certification of MPI. Uniform procedures for application for entry into the program were quickly developed by this Command, and were distributed to the field during the first week of July 1972. Concurrently, a USARV Form was developed to be used as an identification credential for all MPI within the Command. In August 1972, a final draft of AR 190-30 was distributed, and it was found that local procedures were well within the guidelines set forth in the draft regulation. On 1 September 1972, recommendations were furnished by this Command for implementation into the forthcoming USARPAC Supplement to AR 190-30. One of these recommendations was that, until the time of issue of the proposed DA Form 3837/3837-1 (Credential), the USARV/MACV SUPCOM Form be used to provide uniform identification within this Command for MPI personnel. Shortly thereafter, however, information was received that issue of the DA Form was imminent, and that issuance of the local form would not be required. The DA Form was not received in this Command until 10 December 1972 and, at that time, we were informed that the credentials could not be issued until carriers for the credentials had been received from DA. As of the writing of this report, the carriers have not been received; consequently, none of the credentials have been issued.

Because of the fluid situation in this theatre of operations, efforts should have been made to provide school trained/accredited MPI personnel through the personnel pipeline. This Command was afforded an opportunity to send personnel through the training program established at Fort Gordon, Georgia; however, this was not considered feasible due to the fact that personnel turbulence was at a peak within this Command, and many enlisted personnel were given accelerated rotation dates. The net result would have been a great expenditure of man-hours and money with little utilization during the MPI's tour. Hopefully reassignment personnel would have been programmed to attend the training course in a TDY enroute status prior to shipment to this Command. This would have been of great value to the in-country MPI program. Due to the reduced MP assets in-country throughout the period of formation of the MPI program, it was not possible for this Command to form a formal training course for MPI personnel; consequently, a majority of those personnel performing such

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duties in RVN were OJT personnel. This is not to detract from their professionalism as these personnel were carefully selected, and were a definite asset to the overall law enforcement/investigative mission. Hopefully, however, sufficient numbers of trained personnel will have been integrated into the personnel replacement system to permit smooth operations of MPI cells world-wide.

As we progressed further in the implementation of the MPI Program within this Command, inconsistencies were discovered between current directives regarding the processing of evidence. In accordance with the instructions contained in AR 190-30, MPI evidence was to be handled IAW the provisions contained in AR 195-5, a CID oriented Regulation. The latter was a more detailed regulation, and provided guidance in many ways superior to that contained in AR 190-45. The problem revolved around the fact that the two regulations were contradictory in several areas, thus forcing the endurance of two incompatible systems of processing evidence.

As interim guidance, MPI in RVN were directed to comply with the provisions of AR 195-5. The applicability of the provisions of AR 190-45 to other types of military police evidence remained questionable, and in the absence of DA guidance to the contrary, items of evidence not acquired by MPI continued to be processed IAW AR 190-45. Any transfer of evidence from the routine patrol force to MPI or CID personnel then involved these two conflicting systems, and was potentially inefficient. There was also the possibility that the integrity and admissability of the evidence could be endangered.

It is my position that all conflicts between the two regulations can be resolved in favor of the provisions of AR 195-5, with no danger to the quality of evidence processing. In view of the many CID related references contained in AR 195-5, it may be advisable to consider a major revision of AR 190-45 to bring its provisions more in line with those of the CID Regulation. Interim guidance could be published which would clarify the application of responsibility (i.e., charging the local PM with the same responsibilities as the CID detachment commander) involved in the control of military police evidence.

(3) Confinement Operations. During the month of September 1972, a study was formalized concerning the relocation of the USARV Installation Stockade (USARVIS) from Long Binh Post. Because of the impending release of Long Binh Post to the Government of Vietnam, and the continuing withdrawal program for US Forces, it was determined that it was uneconomical to continue operation of the existing facility at Long Binh. Several sites were considered for the relocation of USARVIS, and the decision was ultimately reached that the most appropriate place for the relocation was that of Camp DeBeau at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. This site

contained ample space, buildings, and plumbing, and required the least expenditure of funds needed to upgrade and modify it to meet the confinement facility configuration requirements. The plan was approved by the Cdr, USARV/MACV SUPCOM, and construction was initiated at the Camp DeBeau facility.

With the announcement that a cease-fire was imminent, construction at the Camp DeBeau facility was suspended pending a reevaluation of confinement requirements in the light of complete withdrawal. Since redeployment planning at that time called for closure of the existing confinement facility 30 days prior to complete withdrawal, a solution also had to be determined for the handling of military prisoners generated within the command after that date. It was determined that a confinement facility should be constructed at the 90th MP Det in Saigon to act as a temporary facility only until secure transportation could be arranged for prisoners out of country. In light of the fact that the estimated cost of modifying the Camp DeBeau facility was in excess of $62,000, it was determined that continued utilization of the Long Binh Post facility would be in the best interests of the US Government. It should also be mentioned that at the time of the announcement of the impending cease-fire, it was thought that all US Forces personnel would be out of country by December 1972.

As it turned out, the Long Binh Post facility remained in operation until 17 February 1973. There were no particular hardships incurred in leaving the confinement facility at that location, as the existing facilities were far superior to anything that could have been constructed at the Camp DeBeau site. Security at Long Binh Post was provided by ARVN, and a reaction force was available from HQ, USASE MR III at Plantation Post, in the event that the Stockade cadre should require assistance in handling prisoner disturbances. The only negative aspect of this arrangement was that the facility was under-utilized. It appears that we reached a stage during the latter half of 1972 when we no longer required the extensive facility maintained at Long Binh. In August 1972, the average prisoner population reached a figure in the 30's, clearly insufficient to justify the retention of such a sophisticated facility with its requisite custodial staff. Had the Camp DeBeau proposal been initiated earlier in the drawdown, considerable savings could have accrued both in personnel and maintenance costs. The Saigon area location would have been preferable from the standpoint of administrative, legal and logistical support.

The comments presented above may justify study of the feasibility of maintaining any confinement capability at all when troop strengths in an active theatre of operations reach the level that was experienced in

this Command circa October 1972 (30,000). Alternatives such as the Area Confinement Facility Concept should be studied as to their impact on future operations of this nature.

(4) Deserter Processing. The question of how many deserters remained in Vietnam posed, during the final months of withdrawal, a particularly difficult problem in planning for procedures required to process such personnel once redeployment was initiated. Initially, this headquarters listed in excess of 1,600 deserters reported to have deserted from Vietnam. Due to the administrative procedures utilized in reporting deserters, however, it was virtually impossible to ascertain whether the individual had absented himself from within the geographical limits of Vietnam, or if his absence occurred while out of country (i.e., intransit, on leave, R&R, 7&7, etc.). Consequently, a major coordinating effort with the US Army Deserter Information Point (USADIP), at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana was initiated to purify existing deserter rosters and obtain a clearer picture of the probable magnitude of the problem. This action resulted in an immediate 50% reduction in the length of the deserter rosters. There was, however, still no way to determine how many deserters definitely remained in country, although the number was believed to be small, probably under 100. Consequently, worst-case planning was required and procedures were developed for the expeditious processing of large numbers of deserters. The system implemented worked very effectively, although the large influx of deserters anticipated by some agencies never materialized.

Deserters who were apprehended and for whom pretrial confinement was approved by the Staff Judge Advocate were either tried in country, if records were available, or transferred to CONUS confinement facilities nearest their home of record. Those deserters who turned themselves in voluntarily were expeditiously evacuated from the country by assigning them to the Replacement Battalion responsible for processing all personnel for return to CONUS. Consequently, none of the deserters remained in country for more than a few days subsequent to their return to military control.

To provide for continued control of the deserter problem after withdrawal of all US Forces from the Republic of Vietnam, the American Embassy, the Defense Attache Office, and the Joint Casualty Resolution Center were provided with up to date deserter rosters and oriented on procedures for verifying the status of any individuals who claimed to be deserters subsequent to redeployment.

To preclude recurrence of a problem of this nature, it is strongly recommended that deserter reporting, particularly in overseas commands, include the location from which the individual absented himself. The

effort required to obtain this information at the local level would be minimal, and the benefits derived from such action would be invaluable in planning for operations of the magnitude that were conducted in this theatre of operations.

4. Conclusions. In conclusion, I feel that existing military police doctrine proved sound throughout our period of involvement in Vietnam. The problems experienced concomitant with drawdown and redeployment activities certainly merit further study. The contractor relationships discussed in the body of this report are unique in the history of Armed Forces engagement, and presented many situations which had to be studied and coped with on an individual basis. The constantly changing command relationships, based on conceptual changes in mission assignments, dictated periodic revisions in support requirements. The lessons learned from these experiences should provide an excellent springboard for further contingency planning.

I am particularly pleased with the caliber of personnel that have characterized the military police presence in the Republic of Vietnam. Those junior officers under my command exhibited a rare degree of innovative thinking, coupled with a respect for established doctrine. It is obvious that their predecessors have done well to share the knowledge gained through the Vietnam experience, and upgraded Branch instruction accordingly. We would be remiss if we did not charge them with this same responsibility. By the same token, those field-grade officers charged with critical missions met the challenge with characteristic enthusiasm and professionalism. I feel that these observations directly support the validity of current doctrine and instructional methods.

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Commanding

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