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SOME IMPRESSIONS OF
VIET CONG VULNERABILITIES:
AN INTERIM REPORT

Leon Goure and C. A. H. Thomson

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Leon Goure and C. A. H. Thomson

15-27-65

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FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of Rand studies that examine the organization, operations, motivation, and morale of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that fought in South Vietnam.

Between August 1964 and December 1968 The Rand Corporation conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with the activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. Reports of those interviews, totaling some 62,000 pages, were reviewed and released to the public in June 1972. They can be obtained from the National Technical Information Service of the Department of Commerce.

The release of the interviews has made possible the declassification and release of some of the classified Rand reports derived from them. To remain consistent with the policy followed in reviewing the interviews, information that could lead to the identification of individual interviewees was deleted, along with a few specific references to sources that remain classified. In most cases, it was necessary to drop or to change only a word or two, and in some cases, a footnote. The meaning of a sentence or the intent of the author was not altered.

The reports contain information and interpretations relating to issues that are still being debated. It should be pointed out that there was substantive disagreement among the Rand researchers involved in Vietnam research at the time, and contrary points of view with totally different implications for U.S. operations can be found in the reports. This internal debate mirrored the debate that was then current throughout the nation.

A complete list of the Rand reports that have been released to the public is contained in the bibliography that follows.

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PREFACE

Since July 1964, The RAND Corporation has been conducting a study of Viet Cong motivation and morale, based largely on interrogations of prisoners and defectors. The study is now under the joint sponsorship of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency.

The current phase of the project (Phase II), initiated in December 1964, has focused primarily on the impact of military operations and weapons on the Viet Cong and the civilian population. To make the interviews as useful as possible to various interested U.S. commands and agencies, the authors also gathered information on other aspects of Viet Cong and civilian reactions.

This Memorandum supplants the briefings given by Leon Gore and Charles Thomson in Saigon and in Washington in late June and July 1965, and supersedes RM-4517-ISA of March 1965: Some Impressions of the Effects of Military Operations on Viet Behavior.

Further results will be reported on an interim basis as progress is made in the collection and analysis of data.

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SUMMARY

These impressions of Viet Cong vulnerabilities are derived from a preliminary analysis of 250 extended interviews with Viet Cong prisoners, defectors, and civilian refugees conducted from January to June 1965.

The increased GVN and U.S. military activities during this period, especially in the air, have had a noticeable impact on Viet Cong operations and behavior. They also seem to have had an adverse effect on morale in many Viet Cong units, and have lowered expectations of victory among some elements. Air power, armor, and artillery -- which the Viet Cong cannot match -- are especially feared by many Viet Cong who have actually experienced attacks by these weapons. The increased use of air has forced many Viet Cong units, especially in the delta, to move around much more frequently in order to escape detection. The Viet Cong are also reported to expend more energy now in the construction of shelters and trenches. According to some respondents, the increased pressure of GVN and U.S. air power tends to disrupt Viet Cong attacks, increase losses, and force units to remain under cover during battles, thus interfering with the ability of the Viet Cong unit to exploit successes or to assist other units. Some units were said to have been so exhausted by constant moves, digging, and short rations, that their fighting ability had been impaired. Defoliation and crop spraying have added to Viet Cong difficulties by denying them areas where they can camp or organize ambushes safe from observation, and

by reducing their ability to obtain food. The interviews indicate that operations designed to harass the Viet Cong have considerable effects on their fighting ability and morale and that they should be intensified.

The bombing of North Vietnam has had no major adverse effects on the morale of most interviewees, although there are indications that it worried some of the Viet Cong because they feared the loss of North Vietnamese assistance and because they were disappointed over the failure of the Soviet Union and Communist China to provide effective support to Hanoi.

The interviewees did not express any strong reactions to the introduction of increasing U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam, principally because the deployment of U.S. combat units was very localized as of late spring, and because this deployment did not surprise the indoctrinated respondents who were already convinced of U.S. imperialist intentions in South Vietnam.

The Chieu Hoi (defector) program appears to be better known this spring than formerly among Viet Cong captives and defectors. The interviews indicate that the number of Viet Cong who simply desert to their villages is greater than the number of those who surrender to the government. The Chieu Hoi program needs improvements and greater American support so as to increase Viet Cong desertion and defection and take advantage of existing weaknesses in Viet Cong morale.

The interviews offer strong indications that the tide of sentiment in the villages under partial or complete Viet Cong control is beginning to turn against

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is based primarily on 250 extended interviews with three categories of respondents: captured Viet Cong military and civilian personnel, defectors, and civilian refugees, the great majority of whom came into RVN hands in the period from January 1, 1964 to June 1, 1965. The interviews were conducted in many parts of Vietnam by Vietnamese civilian interrogators hired and trained for the purpose, and by RAND staff members.*

Interviewing continues, and down to the present (August 1965), three questionnaires have been used. A general questionnaire designed to elicit information on the effects of CVN and U.S. military operations and weapons, and on Viet Cong motivations and morale, was used in questioning 215 persons, including 79 Viet Cong military and civilian cadres and 127 military and civilian rank and file. Included in these groups were 19 North Vietnamese and 23 regroupees, i.e., former Viet Minh members who went to North Vietnam in 1954 and were subsequently sent back to infiltrate into South Vietnam. Out of these 215 interviews 99 were defectors to the GVN, called "ralliers" (46 of them defected prior to February 1965, and 53 afterwards). With respect to military assignments, 64 were from the Main Force, 49 from the Local Force, and 44 from the guerrillas. There were 41 party members among the interviewed Viet Cong military

*The interviewing teams were led by Mr. Joseph Carrier, Mr. Anthony Russo, and Mr. David Elliott of The RAND Corporation staff.

and civilian personnel. Efforts were made to interview Viet Cong personnel from each of the four corps areas. We interviewed 36 Viet Cong respondents who had operated in I Corps area, 65 in II Corps, 39 in III Corps, and 75 in IV Corps.

Another questionnaire was used to interview 27 military and civilian defectors from the Dinh Tuong Province, all of whom had rallied after February 1965, for the purpose of developing specific data on local Viet Cong motivation and morale in support of provincial psychological warfare programs. This sample includes 22 military personnel and 5 civilian defectors.

A third questionnaire was used to interrogate 8 refugees. (For a fuller description of the interviews see Appendix A.)

In selecting persons for interview, no attempt was made to obtain a representative or random sample of the Viet Cong, or even of those Viet Cong defectors or captives who had fallen into RVN hands during a given time period. Instead, we tried to select persons with varying experiences, ranks, and types of service. Our aim was to obtain a wide range of information on the motivations and morale of different types of persons and units under different circumstances and at different times. That is, we regarded and used our respondents as informants about the Viet Cong, rather than as members of a scientifically representative sample of the Viet Cong as a whole, or of any sub-group of the Viet Cong. The interviewed personnel consisted primarily of middle and low rank Viet Cong; few officers or high-ranking cadres were available for interview. We are not suggesting, therefore, that the interviews mirror

the morale and attitudes of the Viet Cong as a whole, or of all of its units or types of personnel.*

In evaluating the interviews we are conscious of the possibility that some bias may have been introduced into the answers we obtained by the fact that the respondents were in GVN hands. We noted, however, that the interviewed captives and defectors seemed very often to be remarkably candid in their replies and that many did not hesitate to criticize the GVN or the ARVN or to express approval of the Viet Cong. Many, both captives and defectors, could be classified by their political attitudes as "hard-core" Viet Cong. This hard-core group included individuals who were neither regroupees nor party members. It should be kept in mind, therefore, that many defectors rally for personal reasons and are not necessarily politically disaffected in their attitudes toward the Viet Cong. The majority of the defectors interviewed had joined the Viet Cong voluntarily and had served at least one year. Many had served three or more years.

The interviews do not provide a basis for evaluating the progress of the war in Vietnam. However, they do give some indication of the adverse effects of GVN and U.S. military activities and weapons on some elements of the Viet Cong, and of the effects of changes in Viet Cong military and civil policies on the attitudes of Viet Cong troops and the population under their control. In assessing these adverse effects, it should be remembered that the Viet Cong may offset some of them through the strict

*For a more detailed discussion of the methodology used, see Appendix B.

controls they maintain over soldiers and civilians in their areas, propaganda, threats, and military successes.

Although the interviews do not provide statistical samples that can be used in refined trend analysis, they make it possible to infer some gross trends and directions of change in the motives, morale, and behavior of individuals within those Viet Cong units and civilian groups of which our respondents had first-hand knowledge. Hence we can deduce something concerning the motives, morale, and behavior not only of those interviewed but also of many persons whom the respondents could observe rather closely.

Using the information collected to date (June 1, 1965) this Memorandum attempts to describe our impressions of some Viet Cong vulnerabilities that might offer major opportunities for exploitation through military pressures and psychological warfare programs. It focuses on two sources of Viet Cong vulnerabilities: (1) the effects of increased GVN and U.S. military activities; and (2) the effects of changing Viet Cong policies, activities, and tactics. Finally, it suggests some of the possible approaches to the psychological warfare exploitation of these vulnerabilities.

Reports on the various implications of many aspects of the data collected in this phase of the project will require more thorough and detailed examination and analysis, as well as comparisons with information obtained from other sources. This detailed analysis is now under way.

II: EFFECTS OF GVN AND U.S. OPERATIONS AND WEAPONS

As one would expect, the effects of the intensification of GVN and U.S. military activities were reflected in the interviews. The interviewed Viet Cong soldiers and civilians appeared generally to be especially sensitive to those GVN and U.S. operations and weapons that the Viet Cong cannot match or effectively counter and that, because of their surprise effects, mobility, and fire power, often can negate the Viet Cong tactical advantages of concealment, initiative, good intelligence, and temporary numerical superiority at the point of combat. This sensitivity was marked in relation to aircraft, artillery, armor, and airborne operations, which the interviewees rated as the most frightening and effective weapon systems. GVN ground forces, however, although reported by some respondents to be more aggressive this spring than in the past, were given a lower effectiveness rating, especially by Viet Cong Main Force soldiers, because they were said to be less likely to achieve surprise, because the Viet Cong Main Force units were generally equipped with improved weapons supplied by the Communist countries, and because the Viet Cong were often able to fight under conditions of their choosing.

The interviewees were questioned concerning their personal opinions as to which weapons used against the Viet Cong were most frightening and which were, in their experience, the most effective. In addition the respondents were asked what weapons their superiors and comrades had found most frightening and effective. The response of course depended on the individual's and unit's

experiences. It appeared generally that the interviewees rated weapons primarily in terms of the casualties and damage they had inflicted on the unit or in terms of the probable damage that these weapons would cause if no effective countermeasures were taken, such as taking cover in prepared shelters. The expressed fears of GVN and U.S. air, artillery, and armor appeared to be due in part to a feeling of helplessness resulting from the relative inability of the Viet Cong to deal effectively with such weapons and destroy them.

AIR POWER

Since the largest quantitative and qualitative weapon improvement this spring has been the expansion of GVN and U.S. air activities, it is not surprising that the interviewees reported the air threat as causing their units the biggest concern and as having had a considerable effect on their activities and morale. The great majority of the military Viet Cong personnel who were interviewed reported that they or their units had experienced air attacks. They observed that air activities had become more intensive this spring. Among the majority who gave indications of how they rated GVN and U.S. weapons, approximately two-thirds rated aircraft as the most frightening and effective and as the most difficult to deal with. The remainder mentioned other weapons, either because they had not experienced air attacks or because such attacks had not inflicted as much damage on their units as the other weapons. Among those who identified aircraft as the most frightening weapons were a number of Main Force cadres. For example, an assistant squad leader

and probational party member of one Main Force battalion said, "My unit and I were most afraid of the strafing and bombing by fighter bombers." A squad leader of another battalion Battalion told us, "The people of the Front feared above all the reconnaissance aircraft." Similar views were expressed by rank and file Main Force personnel and by cadres and soldiers of the local and guerrilla forces. For example, a private of one Main Force battalion said, "Usually we were afraid of aircraft and we guarded most against airplane attacks.... Bombs were the only weapons that caused us many casualties... We were most afraid of reconnaissance planes because if they detected us they would radio for the fighter bombers to come and bomb our position." The fear of reconnaissance and fighter-bomber aircraft has markedly increased this spring due to the greater frequency and intensity of air strikes and resulting larger Viet Cong casualties. Several military cadres said that in their opinion or in the opinion of other cadres, air power was primarily responsible for preventing the Viet Cong from meeting the ARVN in open battle and from capturing and holding important objectives. For example, a regroupee and platoon leader of a Main Force battalion said: "Without aircraft the enemy [GVN] would lose." A Local Force squad leader said, "If the government did not have any aircraft the Viet Cong would be prepared to hold on for four or five days in each battle and to deploy for battle even on roads.... I am sure the Viet Cong will never win if they don't have aircraft as the government does."

Those of our interviewees who had experienced jet aircraft attacks indicated that their speed and the noise

of their passage at low altitude added to the fear. A captive veteran Main Force cadre, for example, stated that air activities have increased in effectiveness "especially with the appearance of the B-57s," and the latter have "inflicted a lot of damage" because "they can fly very fast and carry more bombs than ordinary aircraft do." Another interviewee reported that his unit was attacked by surprise because it was unable to hear the jet aircraft approaching. The majority of those in our sample, however, had not experienced jet attacks.

Concerning air ordnance, the great majority of the interviewees who had experienced air attacks or had been told about them by others indicated that the Viet Cong and the men in their units were most afraid of napalm and of large bombs which were said to cause the most damage and losses. Air burst weapons were also mentioned by some interviewees as having inflicted considerable losses, and as having forced the Viet Cong to devise covers for their trenches and foxholes. Two respondents from different Main Force units reported attacks by what may have been CBUs, called by them "butterfly bombs," which apparently caused sufficient casualties and apprehension to force their units to leave their areas. A squad leader of a Main Force battalion, which apparently experienced such an attack, reported: "I have never heard of a means of defense against the 'butterfly bombs.'" Another interviewee mentioned being told by his comrades that bombs which by their description might have been flechettes were considered by his unit to be the most dangerous. Several sources reported that their unit particularly feared long-delayed-fuse bombs and rockets and

that the former forced them to leave the areas where they were dropped. A number of interviewees, however, stated that the air attacks failed to inflict damage on their units.

In general the effectiveness of air munitions appears to depend in large measure on their area coverage and their performance against troops in deep trenches, tunnels, and heavy jungle. The interviewees suggest that the Viet Cong tend to rely mainly on shelters for survival in air and artillery attacks. It would seem desirable to use munitions that would tend to deprive them of their faith in the value of their shelters. Some improvement in air munitions may be desirable to increase their effectiveness against troops in shelter or dense jungle. The interviews appear also to indicate that the intensive seeding of suspected areas of Viet Cong concentration and operations with delayed action weapons may be useful to disrupt the activities, movements and operations of Viet Cong forces.

Strafing by fighter-bombers and jets was rated by many interviewees who had experienced it as relatively ineffective in inflicting casualties, apparently because the rate of fire is insufficient to inflict heavy damage, and the diving angles are frequently too shallow for the fire to reach soldiers in their trenches and foxholes. For example, a Main Force soldier in discussing strafing stated that the A-1s "were harmless because they strafed diagonally" -- i.e., at a shallow angle. The respondent did not mention the value of strafing for the purpose of suppressing Viet Cong fire. Improvements in the rate rather than in the calibre of forward fire power of

aircraft appears desirable in order to increase the effectiveness of strafing attacks.

The interviews indicate that effectiveness of air strikes in inflicting casualties on Viet Cong units is often reduced by the regular flight patterns that usually precede them. The Viet Cong take cover if aircraft circle over an area as they usually do while attempting to locate or mark the target. Variations in prestrike flight patterns of the L-19 (O-1) and of fighter-bombers may increase the number of casualties inflicted by air strikes and may also have a greater harassing effect.

HELICOPTERS

Many interviewees who were exposed to fighter bomber as well as helicopter attacks mentioned that they were afraid of armed helicopters, although they also said these machines were highly vulnerable to ground fire. Their strafing was said to be very effective, often more effective than that by fighter bomber, because they can come close to their target, hover, and fire vertically into Viet Cong trenches and foxholes. For example, a Local Force cadre told us: "The perpendicular strafing of helicopters was more dangerous than the slanting fire of the fighter-bombers." Helicopter rockets, on the other hand, were regarded as not very effective.

ARTILLERY

The interviews indicated that harassing artillery and mortar fire often catches Viet Cong soldiers in the open before they can take cover and is consequently feared

by them. According to some interviewees, air bursts are the most dangerous type of artillery fire. This was reported to be another reason why the Viet Cong try to cover their trenches and foxholes. Artillery fire was also said by a number of respondents to be an important factor in forcing Viet Cong units to move their camp sites or to leave villages.

ARMOR

Armor, in particular the M-113 and amphibious vehicles, was cited by many interviewees as having a major influence on the outcome of combat and on the losses suffered by Viet Cong units, especially those not equipped with anti-armor weapons. Several instances were cited where Viet Cong units had panicked and suffered heavy losses when attacked by tanks or M-113s. The interviews report, however, a steady increase in the availability of anti-tank weapons of Chinese origin.

GROUND FORCES

In the period covered by the interviews we have observed a certain amount of change in the references made by the respondents to the effectiveness and morale of the ARVN. The frequency, before February 1965, of contemptuous references to low ARVN morale and fighting ability have considerably declined in the more recent interviews. Some interviewees, including several captured cadres and regroupees, claimed to have noted improvements in ARVN morale and aggressiveness and said that the ARVN soldiers showed great courage in charging dug-in Viet Cong

troops, and in raiding their camps and concentrations. They expressed respect, in particular, for the morale and aggressiveness of GVN Marines, paratroopers, rangers, and "strike forces." For example a captive platoon leader and party member of the Main Force Battalion said the Vietnamese Marines were "very aggressive." Many interviews also indicated that the Viet Cong fear ARVN ambushes, particularly at night, and surprise airborne and amphibious attacks. According to some interviews the cadres were said to have noted that the attacks on North Vietnam boosted ARVN morale.

The majority of the sources indicated, however, that the Viet Cong often receive several days of advanced warning of planned ARVN operations, especially major ones, and that except when on the move they have relatively little fear of being surprised by an ARVN ground sweep. The interviews do not appear to indicate any significant improvements in ARVN security. Increases in ARVN forces in a given assembly area generally lead the Viet Cong to expect a sweep and they consequently alert all units in the vicinity. The Viet Cong apparently can supplement their network of intelligence agents and commo-liaison men by monitoring some GVN air and ground radio traffic, using captured radios for this purpose. These reports suggest that there may be urgent need to improve the security of ARVN, VNAF, and U.S. radio communications in Vietnam.

Many of the interviewed Main Force soldiers seem to feel that they could successfully fight ARVN forces of equal size as long as air or heavy weapons were not brought into play against them or the ARVN forces were not

reinforced by airborne elements. This sense of self-assurance seems to derive not so much from a feeling of superior morale, although that too is mentioned, as from a belief that they will fight at a time and place of their choosing, that they will usually be entrenched while the ARVN are in the open, and that their armament is not inferior to that of the ARVN. The interviews indicate that in a majority of instances well over half of the armament of Main Force units consists of weapons of from various Communist countries. Such weapons were even reported in the hands of some hamlet guerrilla units. In the more recent interviews there were increased references to Viet Cong possession of heavier weapons, such as 75 mm. pack howitzers, 75 mm. recoilless rifles, 82 mm. mortars, heavy machine guns, and Chinese B-40 anti-tank rockets.

COMBINED OPERATIONS

The interviews indicate that the Viet Cong forces find combined air-airborne-armor or amphibious attacks most difficult to deal with, especially since air and airborne attacks are more difficult for them to anticipate and guard against. Such operations, in the opinion of many interviewees, are most likely to inflict costly defeats on Viet Cong forces.

The effectiveness of other types of operations or attacks also depends on the ability of the Viet Cong to anticipate the probable course of RVNAF actions. To the extent that such actions become set in a pattern, the Viet Cong can take the necessary countermeasures to reduce their effectiveness. For example, a cell leader of a Main Force battalion told us:

Most of the time the ARVN didn't conduct an operation after their artillery shelling. They only did so when there was an artillery barrage. If only 3 to 5 shells were fired, it meant that our position had been detected by the reconnaissance plane. If there was an artillery barrage, it meant that the shelling was designed to clear the way for the ARVN ground forces' operation. Only then would the situation be dangerous.

Similarly, according to a veteran Main Force squad leader:

We know from experience that if we are bombed by planes during the day, we can be sure of being shelled by artillery after the planes are gone. Thus we stay in the trenches for a long time after the planes are gone and leave the village immediately after the pounding by the artillery. On the other hand, if we are shelled by the artillery at night, we leave our positions at once because nearly always planes will come to bomb the area next morning.

DEFOLIATION AND CROP SPRAYING

Most of the interviewees in our sample had heard of the effects of defoliation and crop spraying. Only a minority had actually experienced or seen the effects of spraying, but two out of every three respondents had heard about such operations either from Viet Cong sources, mainly in the form of propaganda or from rumors among the population. In general, the interviews indicate that many Viet Cong seem convinced that the spray is extremely dangerous to their health, and many deaths are attributed to it. This impression is partly due to Viet Cong propaganda which stresses the toxic effect of the spray. The

fear of chemical spray is, however, not uniform throughout the Viet Cong, since some interviewees reported that their units had suffered no serious ill effects from exposure to spray. Some sources report that the Viet Cong use various forms of homemade masks for protection against the spray. Mention is made of "rubber masks with glass eye pieces," of wet cloth to cover the face and/or of a thin sheet of nylon used in a similar manner. According to captured documents, the Viet Cong also recommend various decontamination and treatment procedures -- such as the use of regurgitants, stomach pumps, and the wiping of the skin with crushed garlic mixed with urine. Some of these remedies seem guaranteed to make the patient as sick as the Viet Cong propaganda predicts exposure to the spray would make him. Several interviewees reported that their units had been issued a "medication" which when applied to their face safeguarded them against the effects of the spray.

It is noteworthy that according to some interviewees the Viet Cong have claimed that tear gas was used in the Boi Loi forest area although only chemical spray was actually employed. According to one source, "the villagers coming out from the area said the Viet Cong troops suffered six dead and large numbers asphyxiated." The respondent also stated that "a number of persons were asphyxiated for many hours. They were transported to Bau Don in ox-carts and were treated at the district hospital. They dared not go back, and remained in Bau Don." Whatever the credibility of this particular report may be, the fact remains that a large number of the Viet Cong who

were interviewed were convinced by their own propaganda that the GVN and the United States use poison gas. Viet Cong propaganda seeks to exploit this fear of chemical spray to instill hatred of the GVN among its troops and the population. According to some reports, the people tend to be especially resentful over the loss of their crops.

The Viet Cong may have created an opportunity for the GVN by their failure to explain the true nature of defoliation and crop dusting. The government might take advantage of Viet Cong fear of chemicals by using harmless agents, such as dyes, which might be more easy and economical to deliver than spray, on rice paddies and personnel. Consideration might also be given to the use of harmless spray for direct attacks on Viet Cong units, in order to exploit the belief in the toxic effect of the spray. In conducting such possible operations, however, it will probably be important for the GVN and U.S. cause to avoid giving the impression that they are resorting to chemical warfare.

The respondents indicate that their units often avoid crossing defoliated areas, and would not camp in them. Defoliation was reported to have made operations more difficult, because the Viet Cong have "lost many places where their troops could hide." For example, an Assistant Local Force Company Commander reported that spraying along canals prevented his unit from attacking passing GVN naval sampans. Several interviewees reported that the Viet Cong avoid stopping in the defoliated portions of the Boi Loi forest.

The interviews indicate that intensive crop spraying leads the affected Viet Cong units to increase their demands on the population for food, and may force them to move to a new area. Some units were reported to have gone hungry as a result of the spraying. In other instances, the spraying has forced the population to take refuge in GVN-controlled areas and thus to deprive the Viet Cong of a source of labor and food. Crop spraying seriously aggravates the already difficult food supply problem of the Viet Cong. According to respondents who participated in such activities many food-growing units often abandon fields that have been sprayed, and clear and plant new ones, thus delaying the availability of food for their parent military units. Intensive spraying evidently forces the Viet Cong units to devote more manpower to food growing and transportation. The effects of defoliation and crop spraying, and some of the dilemmas they raise, were summarized in a statement by a highly experienced Viet Cong propaganda cadre and former Viet Minh fighter:

The Front knows that the purpose of these operations is to defoliate the jungle and destroy the base camps of the VC troops. To carry out the Revolution in the South, the Front needs strong base camps in the mountains and jungles to train and educate the troops while they rest. The Front needs to keep a large force in the jungle, and when necessary these troops can be sent down into the plains. If the jungle is destroyed, the Front will have no training camps for its troops. That is why the Front protests so vehemently against defoliation operations -- to make the Americans stop spraying chemicals. Besides, when the people's crops are destroyed, the Front won't be able to feed its troops. If the

troops are hungry how can they fight? Defoliation operations are very advantageous to the GVN and very disadvantageous to the VC. These operations are a setback to the GVN's drive to win the minds and hearts of the people, but from a practical point of view they destroy the [Front's] economy, and the jungle.

OTHER CHEMICAL AGENTS

Viet Cong propaganda has created a myth not only about the toxic nature of chemical spray, but in some instances also about air-dropped poison candy and even poison leaflets. In our interviews, therefore, it was difficult to distinguish between chemical spray and tear gas or other disabling agents used against the Viet Cong. For example, a North Vietnamese chemical warfare cadre was "told that during combat we [VC] might be attacked with chemical gas and that we had to learn how to avoid it." In this case the reference seemed to be to chemical sprays that "dry up the trees, kill the cattle and animals," make people "terribly sick, and destroy the grass."

Only one interviewee, a Main Force soldier, described what may have been the effects of tear gas on Viet Cong troops: "I have heard that tear gas was used in Phu Lac village. The gas blinded the fighters, who simply waited to be captured." He further indicated that "tear gas" was among the weapons most feared by his unit.

BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM

The interviews indicate a mixed reaction to the bombing of North Vietnam. Some men seemed to think it had little relevance to their situation and said in effect:

"Rather than us." Others hoped at least initially that North Vietnam and the Communist bloc would now come more fully to the support of the Viet Cong and thus bring the war to a speedy end, or that world public opinion would force the United States to negotiate and leave South Vietnam. Still others expected the Viet Cong to lose the war because the attacks were directed against their main source of support and supplies.

The interviews report varying reactions of the cadres to the attacks. For example a captive regroupee platoon leader and party member of a North Vietnamese Main Force battalion claimed that the attacks "had little effect on the morale of the cadres. But the enlisted men were very much worried, not knowing how their folks were doing in the north." A Local Force platoon leader and regroupee, however, said that "the cadres have been much bewildered." A rallied Main Force soldier who had worked at COSVN headquarters* said "the people who worked for COSVN were confident that Hanoi would be able to oppose the Americans," but a Local Force private claimed that the cadres in his unit "looked worried."

Several reports suggest that some Viet Cong, especially the cadres, are disappointed at the failure of Russia and China to come to the assistance of North Vietnam and the Liberation Front, and that they are beginning to wonder whether the much vaunted military power of these countries is really a match for the Americans. One reason for this disappointment is that prior to February 1965, Viet Cong

* Central Office South Vietnam, the political-military headquarters of the National Liberation Front.

propaganda had insisted that the United States would never dare to attack North Vietnam because this could provoke a Third World War. For example a rallied Local Force assistant company commander told us:

Previously the civilian cadres used to say to the villagers that the Americans did not dare to attack North Vietnam, because such action would provoke the reaction of socialist countries and spell the annihilation of the Americans. Now that North Vietnam has been hit, why has there been no reaction from the socialist countries? The inhabitants therefore concluded that the civilian cadres had up to now done nothing but bluff them.

Occasionally, the lack of support for the Viet Cong is blamed on the Sino-Soviet dispute, in which North Vietnam and the Viet Cong have adopted a pro-Chinese line.

Viet Cong propaganda repeats North Vietnamese claims that little damage has been inflicted and many planes have been shot down, and asserts that the attacks are evidence of the inability of the Americans to defeat the Viet Cong. Nevertheless, some interviewees claimed that the attacks had an adverse effect on the morale of the men in their units and on the attitude of the civilians. For example the afore-cited Local Force assistant company commander said: "The soldiers began to doubt the power of North Vietnam. Personally, I think that those air strikes have had a bad effect on their morale, and that this is one of the reasons that prompted a number of them to leave [i.e., desert] the Company." A Local Force private stated that the soldiers in his unit said to each other that "henceforth the Americans were going to take stronger action,

and that battles were going to be more numerous and violent." Consequently they were said to "fear for themselves."

The prevailing line adopted by the cadres in speaking to their own men, however, is that the Viet Cong must strike hard to keep the GVN and Americans fully occupied in the South and thus relieve the pressure on the North. For example, a Main Force soldier reported that, "the cadres said if we intensified the war here, the Americans would be preoccupied with the situation in the South and would not attack the North." The respondent seemed to suggest that Hanoi and the Viet Cong leadership were especially concerned over a possible GVN and U.S. ground invasion of North Vietnam.

Some interviewees were concerned that the bombing might lead to further escalation of the conflict, to the involvement of other great powers, and to the use of nuclear weapons: a war of this kind might destroy all Vietnam. A few men feared Chinese intervention, either because it might lead to an escalation of the war or because they feared that Vietnam might fall under Chinese control. Others said they trusted China to give disinterested assistance, because it is a socialist state, and because China is too big and powerful to covet little South Vietnam.

With the passage of time, more and more interviewees, when asked, were expressing the opinion that without the assistance of North Vietnam the Viet Cong cannot hope to continue fighting or to win. At the same time, few seemed to think that the bombing would cause Hanoi to stop sending supplies; they saw confirmation of this opinion in the reported sinking of a North Vietnamese arms supply ship at Vung Ro.

EFFECT OF THE PRESENCE OF U.S. COMBAT FORCES

The interviewees generally offered little comment on the presence of U.S. advisors or combat forces in Vietnam. Although the majority, when questioned, repeated the Viet Cong propaganda line to the effect that the United States sought to replace the French as rulers of Vietnam, few had seen any Americans. Many quoted Viet Cong propaganda to the effect that the United States was attempting to fight the war by proxy, i.e., by using the GVN rather than by employing its own troops as the French had done. Overt American participation in the war, most interviewees believed, was limited to the air, because the pilots of aircraft and helicopters were Americans in their view.

The principal Viet Cong objective is to "liberate Vietnam from American imperialism," but this aim seems too abstract for most of the interviewees, who do not appear to nurse any great personal hatred for the Americans. For most of the Viet Cong interviewed, the real enemy was the GVN whom they were actually fighting. The behavior of GVN local officials and of ARVN forces was frequently cited as a reason for the villager to join the Viet Cong or for his fear of falling into government hands. It should also be noted that no one among the interviewees had heard any but the Viet Cong explanations for the U.S. presence in Vietnam and for the increase in U.S. combat forces.

The deployment and expansion of U.S. combat forces in Vietnam, produced no notable reaction among the interviewees. Although Viet Cong propaganda rerorted the deployment and captured documents show some Viet Cong concern over the possible intervention of U.S. ground

forces in battles, the appearance of American combat troops had been too localized, up to June 1965, to produce a widespread impression on most Viet Cong soldiers. This may change of course as more Viet Cong units meet U.S. forces in battle, and as they come to increasingly identify the Americans as their opponent in the field.

Among the few who commented on the increase, some feared that it would lead to a prolongation of the war and to fiercer battles; others feared that it might result in a further escalation of the conflict. Some, especially North Vietnamese, hoped to be allowed to fight Americans rather than Vietnamese; fighting the latter was distasteful and not in accord with the designation of the United States as the main enemy.

Hardly anyone among the interviewees seemed to view the introduction of American combat forces, in itself, as a major added proof of American imperialist intentions in Vietnam. Perhaps one explanation for this is that the arrival of the new troops appeared to be in accord with earlier Viet Cong propaganda on American intentions in Vietnam.

EFFECTS OF INTENSIFIED MILITARY ACTIVITIES ON VIET CONG BEHAVIOR AND OPERATIONS

The majority of the respondents who had served in military units indicated that stepped-up GVN and U.S. operations, especially air attacks, have caused their units to spend more time and effort in taking evasive action. In many instances their units, fearing detection and attacks, move more frequently, spend more time camping

in villages in the hope of escaping attacks, and build more elaborate and deeper shelters. Usually, the units camp by platoons, with a considerable distance between platoons.

Perhaps the most significant effect of intensified military activities has been to force Viet Cong units to move more frequently, especially in the delta. Previously, Main and Local Force units often remained in one place up to five days or even several weeks, now they were reported to move almost daily. For example, a Main Force cadre told us: "My battalion had to move much more often than before. Each stopover never lasted more than two days, often one day only. Previously it could extend to three or four days." A Local Force soldier said, "We spend almost every night marching to another village to avoid being detected."

According to many captive and rallied Viet Cong military cadres and soldiers from Main and Local Force units who were questioned in various parts of the country, the frequency of moves has a major adverse effect on the soldiers' health, morale and combat effectiveness. The marches and the work required to dig in at the end of the march was described by many interviewees as very tiring and as one of the greatest hardships of Viet Cong life. For example, a Main Force soldier from a battalion operating in the IV Corps area reported that, "the men were thin, for they had to walk too much and forego much sleep." Similarly a captured assistant squad leader from a Main Force unit operating in II Corps area said the night marches were the greatest hardship he had to endure. "They were

very tiring and we were constantly afraid of stumbling upon a GVN unit." A captured senior sergeant, regroupee and party member of a Main Force unit operating in I Corps area told us, "I could not stand the lack of sleep and rest," while a North Vietnamese private of another Main Force unit in the same area reported that the men were discouraged by the frequent moves. The frequency of moves does not appear to prevail to the same extent in the heavy jungle as in the delta, because the Viet Cong forces have greater faith in the effectiveness of their concealment and therefore are to some extent less concerned about being detected. Jungle units often move in the daytime rather than at night and may spend more time in one place. Nevertheless some interviewees indicated that these units, too may move more frequently than before.

Even for Viet Cong with advanced warning ground sweeps aggravate living conditions and increase the frequency of moves. They disrupt plans and operations. For example, a Main Force cell leader reported that his unit had to move three times in the course of two days to avoid ARVN ground sweeps and that the men did not dare to cook their food for fear of being detected and attacked.

The interviewees give the impression that night air and artillery harassment was not sufficiently frequent or intensive to constitute a major problem for the Viet Cong. Many respondents report occasional disturbance of their sleep and cooking, but usually only about four or five times per month. One interviewee, however, a captured North Vietnamese private of a Main Force Battalion, claimed that air activities disrupted his unit's cooking

activities almost daily. He described the effects of these disruptions as follows:

We didn't have enough to eat. The rice we cooked was either burnt or uncooked. The rice didn't get cooked because we had to put out the fires when aircraft appeared. By the time we could start a new fire, it was too late and the rice could not get cooked. For me, eating uncooked or burnt rice was the worst hardship.

Several interviewees indicated that night air activities were increasing but noted that flare drops were seldom followed by any bombing, so that the men learned to ignore them. Several other interviewees said that when camping in the open their unit took cover even at night at the sound of circling aircraft overhead.

Units on the move remained motionless when exposed to flares, and, if the illumination persisted while they deployed for an attack, they often withdraw. According to the majority of the Viet Cong interviewed who had seen flares during operations, once the attack was in progress flares helped rather than hindered the Viet Cong assault and subsequent withdrawal.

The interviewees suggest the desirability of intensifying night harassment by air as well as artillery bombardment to disrupt Viet Cong movements, and rest, cooking and training activities. They also suggest that at least small bombs should be used in conjunction with flares to force the Viet Cong to take cover or to disperse.

The intensified GVN and U.S. activities also are reported by some respondents to have a significant impact

on their units' tactics and operations. A Main Force cadre said: "The bombs hindered the Viet Cong moves because sometimes they cut the communication lines [telephones] connecting different units." Other Viet Cong cadres stated that air attacks increasingly prevented the Viet Cong forces, when engaged by the ARVN, from leaving their trenches and counterattacking the ARVN units. Thus air attacks deprived them of the opportunity to exploit their successes. A veteran Main Force cadre reported that because of intensified air activity, "we had to take cover during the battles, and this reduced our fire power against the enemy infantry. And then as a result of air strikes, it became impossible to go to the rescue of a friendly unit that had gotten into difficulty."

To protect themselves against heavier air and artillery attacks the Viet Cong spend increasing time and energy on the construction of deeper shelters, communication trenches, and combat trenches and tunnels. But many interviewees recalled fearing that large bombs might bury them or that they might be trapped in their holes by ARVN ground forces through not being able to see what was happening.

A Viet Cong need for better antiaircraft defenses was frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Some reported that heavier AA guns (20 mm) had been introduced into certain battalions. Others stated that the Viet Cong had asked North Vietnam to send such guns and expected their arrival soon. Many respondents also reported that Viet Cong units were under orders not to fire at aircraft unless attacked, since the aircraft fire back with

increasing frequency. In some instances, it was said, the units did not fire even when under attack, for fear of provoking still more intensive bombardment.

EFFECTS OF INTENSIFIED MILITARY ACTIVITIES ON VIET CONG

MORALE

The interviews indicate that Viet Cong morale, like the morale of all soldiers, is affected by losses, hardships, combat experiences and expectations of eventual victory. The behavior of the Viet Cong soldiers under stress is further determined by the effectiveness of the discipline and control maintained by the cadres over the men and by the intensity of the political indoctrination of the troops. The degree of control and of indoctrination appears to vary by types of units: it is greatest in Main Force units and least in guerrilla units. The interviews also give the impression that the Viet Cong soldiers, accustomed to holding the initiative and to engaging in operations with a high expectation of success, are all the more disturbed if the unit is surprised by GVN forces or is defeated in battle.

Of course changes in morale are not necessarily directly or immediately reflected in the behavior of the Viet Cong soldiers. Many Viet Cong soldiers, as the interviews indicate, fear to show signs of demoralization since to do so often leads to public criticism of the culprit by the cadres, and can even result in his being sent away for "re-education" or transferred to a distant food-growing area. The majority of the interviewees stated that fear of punishment was an important factor in ensuring compliance

of the soldiers with the orders of the cadre. In many cases the respondents indicated that this fear was more important in keeping the men in the Viet Cong than political indoctrination.

Many interviewees said that they carefully hid their true feelings not only from the cadres, but also from their comrades. Apparently as a result of this, the interviewees were often not aware of changes in the morale of their units. In particular, new soldiers lacked such an awareness; veterans and cadres were in a somewhat better position to sense any changes. It thus happened not infrequently that a defector believed himself the only disaffected man in his unit, and that he was surprised to discover other defectors from his outfit in the Chieu Hoi Center.

Defectors, as one would expect, were more inclined than captives to attribute low morale to other men in their units. Nevertheless, we found that over one-third of those who described their unit's morale as good were defectors, while over one-third of those who claimed that morale was deteriorating were captives. The number of respondents who claimed that morale had declined in their particular units exceeded the number of those who claimed that their units' morale remained high.

Among the factors that were cited as leading to a deterioration of morale were hardships, war weariness, and separation from families. For example, a captured private of a Local Force Unit said "morale is lower than it was last year; most of the fighters are wearied and want to go back to visit their families." Many respondents mentioned that hardships caused new recruits to desert. Among the

defectors who were interviewed, many mentioned the hardships as their reason for defecting. Some other respondents claimed that morale had improved because life in the Viet Cong had become somewhat easier than in 1962, and because the Viet Cong had grown in numbers and were more successful. A captured private of a Local Force unit claimed that, "in general, morale is better now than in 1962."

The interviewees reported that many units became demoralized after suffering losses or defeats. In such cases it frequently happened that some men deserted, while others asked for permission to return to their homes. According to the respondents, these units were usually withdrawn from combat operations for periods ranging up to several months to rebuild their morale. For example, a captured assistant to a District Military Committee said that after a battle "seven or eight [men] requested to be demobilized, and some defected. It took a few months before morale could be raised again." A captured North Vietnamese squad leader of a Local Force Battalion told us that "the morale of my unit after the action was quite low." A rallied North Vietnamese training officer and party member of a Main Force Battalion asserted that "usually after a defeat many VC deserted the Army and went back to their families," while a Local Force private said that "each time we lost a battle we had to be trained for a month to a month-and-a-half to rebuild our morale." Another Local Force cadre mentioned a two-months' rest period after a battle. A captive regrouped and platoon leader of a Main Force Battalion also said that the morale of the men in his unit "deteriorated after each battle," while a captive squad leader of another Main

Force Battalion replied to questions concerning the effects of air attacks, "[they] affected the morale of certain soldiers, I think. I noticed that after a bombardment had caused dead and wounded, there were always three or four soldiers who asked for permission to go home, or who deserted. But, for the majority, it had no effect on their morale."

A number of interviewees reported malingering among the men in their units, owing to their fear of combat. For example, a captured Local Force cadre asserted that two-thirds of the men were "unwilling to fight." A rallied Main Force private said that, in his unit, "some men would feign sickness in order to stay behind" when the unit went on operations. A captured North Vietnamese private of a

Main Force Battalion told us, "There were many fighters who were afraid to fight because they didn't want to get killed. They stayed in their communication trenches throughout the whole engagement.... Of every ten fighters, about three or four were too scared to fight." A number of cadres and privates, who had been captured or who had defected, reported that while the morale of the soldiers had declined the cadres' morale remained high and that they showed no fear in combat. Several defectors claimed that their Main Force units, being composed largely of volunteers, had very few cases of desertion and that the morale of the units remained unchanged by failures. The interviewees noted in a number of instances that these units had suffered comparatively few losses and no major defeats.

The intensification of GVN and U.S. military operations is reported to have had a considerable effect on Viet Cong

morale. A rallied political cadre of a Local Force platoon said that his unit's morale had declined because "at present the fighting is deadlier and the VC troops have to fight more often." A civilian cadre and party member speaking of Viet Cong morale said, "Now because of the many frightful attacks conducted by the Americans, their morale has been somewhat dampened." Desertion and defection to the GVN increased during the spring of 1965. Several interviewees mentioned desertion by groups of 10, 15, 20, or even more men, after air or ground attacks. A rallied assistant company commander of the Local Forces who had eight years' service said that 150 men had deserted from his unit during 1964 and another 100 between February and April of 1965. A rallied assistant platoon leader and party member from the same company told us that morale declined beginning in 1964 when the company had lost two platoons in a helicopter attack. Other interviewees mentioned instances where platoons were reduced by combat losses and desertion to seven or eight men, or where companies and even battalions had been almost wiped out.

An increasing number of defectors who rallied to the GVN during this spring mentioned air attacks as one of the factors that caused them to defect to the GVN. For example, a Local Force cell leader with five years' service said: "I rallied because I could no longer endure the hard life in the Front, and partly because I saw the terrifying destruction by bombs." A Main Force cell leader gave as one of his reasons for defecting that "we have been attacked by airplanes very frequently lately." Many respondents claimed to know of other members of their units who deserted because of air or ground attacks. Others

again mentioned that the air attacks had caused them to lose their "fighting spirit." For example, a captured North Vietnamese Main Force soldier said: "After each [air] attack I felt so disgusted and fed up that I just wanted to leave at the first opportunity."

Another possible indication of the effects of increased GVN and U.S. activities is the views of captives and defectors on the outcome of the war. The majority of the respondents noted that the forces opposing them were better armed, more mobile and had more ammunition and supplies. The respondents' opinions on the importance of the difference between the two opposing forces varied. Those who believed that the GVN would win based their views on the weapon superiority of the GVN and on the frequent failure of the Viet Cong to hold their ground when faced by determined ARVN ground and air attacks. Statements to the effect that "the GVN will win because it has airplanes and amphibious vehicles" or "airplanes, artillery and tanks," while the Viet Cong "lack everything," are frequent in the interviews. Others said that "the Viet Cong can only harass the GVN," or more colorfully: "My compatriots said the GVN would win thanks to airplanes, and that the Viet Cong are like dogs that bite you from behind." A captured North Vietnamese squad leader in a Local Force Battalion told us:

As to the outcome of this war, the GVN will win and the VC will be defeated. Why? Because the GVN has all the means, and in comparison the other side has nothing. Once in a while, we fire from the forest and then run away. I really believe it, because that is the truth.

It may be noted that the unit to which this respondent belonged suffered a defeat and heavy losses at the time of his capture. A captured veteran assistant squad leader of a Main Force Battalion said that, while the VC used clever tactics, "they weren't strong enough to hold a place for a certain time and face a GVN attack in broad daylight. Besides, it is difficult for them to replace their losses." In addition, some respondents cited the growing reluctance of the villagers to join or support the Viet Cong as another reason why they thought the GVN would win the war. For example, a captured guerrilla platoon leader said:

As I see it, everything will probably be over in the course of this year and the GVN will win in this war, because I have noticed that the majority of people have begun to side with the GVN and you and I know that the outcome of this war depends more on the population than on arms. Another no less important factor is that man can't eat dirt and be on the move indefinitely.

Similarly a rallied Local Force assistant company commander said that, while he was not sure who would win the war, "I can tell you one thing: I noticed that the people began to turn away from the Front in 1963, and that the Front is today still losing the support of the villagers, whereas since last year the GVN has been winning ground."

Some interviewees attributed their declining faith in a Viet Cong victory to the increased GVN and U.S. military activities and the growing losses of the Viet Cong. For example, a captured veteran cell leader of a Local Force Unit said:

According to my personal observation I think that the Front has suffered a lot of damage; their bases are broken down; the soldiers are younger and younger. This proves that they are becoming short of troops, while the ARVN is conducting more and more air strikes, artillery fire, and more aggressive actions. So in my opinion the Front is losing.

Time and again the interviewees have expressed a hopelessness caused by what they have come to see as the Viet Cong's inability to overcome the widening weapon gap. A North Vietnamese Main Force soldier said, for example, "the GVN soldiers are better equipped than the Viet Cong. Furthermore they have planes and armored vehicles and they are better fed and clad. I think the Front's forces will never succeed in crushing the GVN forces." A Local Force soldier told us, "I am sure that the Front cannot win the war. The only way the VC could win is to have sufficient forces, including an Air Force, Navy, and Army." A captured regroupee and party member who served as a first sergeant of a Main Force Company said in answer to a question on who would win the war, "I don't know. The bombings do boost the morale of the ARVN officers. They are confident in the strength of the Americans who are helping them fight the VC in the South. [Question: Is this your own opinion?] No, this is what my superiors have observed and told me."

Among the defectors who have been interviewed, 10 out of 53 who had defected after February 1965 mentioned their loss of faith in a Viet Cong victory as one of their motives for leaving the Viet Cong.

Other captives and defectors either did not want to express an opinion on the outcome of the war, or expressed a belief in a Viet Cong victory. The latter belief was said to be based on the superior morale of the Viet Cong and their willingness to fight a protracted war, on the assertion that the population was increasingly supporting the Viet Cong, on the growth of Viet Cong forces and areas under their control, and in some cases on the claim that their armament was as good as that of ARVN. For example, a captured Main Force squad leader said:

In 1961, when I joined up, the Front's army was negligible beside the GVN army. Its units had to hide themselves in the forest. But today the state of affairs has indeed changed. The Front army has become much stronger, the liberated regions grow larger every day and the people who side with the Front are more numerous. Such obvious progress shows that, no matter what, the Front will win this war.

A possible indication that there has indeed been a decline in the faith of some Viet Cong personnel in victory and an increase in their sensitivity to GVN and U.S. superiority in weapons appears to be the efforts of Viet Cong cadres to reassure their men by spreading stories about growing outside assistance, especially in heavy weapons, that will help close the weapon gap. For example, a rallied Local Force platoon leader told us:

It was a rumor -- thanks to the party members who come from their meetings and who disclosed it -- that in the very near future there will be a seaport in South Vietnam

and the allies of the Front will supply some amphibious tanks like those of the GVN.

Other stories that were reported spoke of an "Expeditionary Corps" equipped with the latest weapons, which was ready to spring on the ARVN; of heavy antiaircraft weapons to arrive soon; of a massive attack by the North Vietnamese Air Force that would come on the day of the "general offensive" and would destroy the ARVN, and so on. In one case, a Viet Cong cadre told the men that the funds being collected in the villages were being set aside for the needs of Chinese soldiers who would come to help the Viet Cong fight the Americans.

The information provided by the interviews cannot be taken in itself as evidence that morale in the Viet Cong as a whole has deteriorated. While a decline may have occurred in some units, others, especially Main Force units composed of volunteers, appear to have good morale as do also many cadres and veterans. It is evident that Viet Cong controls and propaganda can offset to a considerable degree adverse effects on the morale of the units. There are, however, some indications in the interviews that the growing influx of poorly motivated draftees into Viet Cong ranks and the rapid expansion of the forces may have weakened the controls to some extent, if one is to credit the many stories of desertions by the new recruits.

In general, the interviews conducted so far do not indicate that Viet Cong soldiers have lost faith in their cadres or in the operational plans made by the cadres. Most soldiers still seem to believe that their units are well led and expect to attack only on the basis of good

intelligence and in superior strength. The factors favoring good morale, or at least compliance with orders, include: the isolation of each unit; the individual soldier's frequent ignorance of the area of operation, which helps to prevent his desertion; the deliberate Viet Cong policy of concealing defeats and losses from the soldiers and of telling them only of successes; the careful building up of morale prior to operations; fear of being mistreated by the GVN in case of capture or surrender; and fear of Viet Cong retaliation against the family in case of defection. Nevertheless, the interviews appear to indicate that some of the fighting men have less confidence in their chance of survival as the war becomes increasingly intense, and many have lost faith in a Viet Cong victory.

While on the basis of the interviews one cannot speak of a major break in Viet Cong morale, the interviews appear to indicate that the sensitivity of the Viet Cong to intensified GVN and U.S. activities may have increased and that there may exist growing soft spots in Viet Cong morale which, if effectively exploited, could under certain conditions result in desertion and defection on a much larger scale than hitherto, and contribute to a decline in Viet Cong combat effectiveness.

It may be inferred from the interviews that there would be great value in increasing as much as possible the Viet Cong impression of the weapons gap, especially in relation to weapon systems and munitions that the Viet Cong cannot match. The disparity between Viet Cong and GVN/U.S. weapons should be exploited in psychological warfare programs. For example, if B-52's are used in

South Vietnam, they should fly low enough to be seen by many Viet Cong. Viet Cong units should be warned that the air attacks they have suffered up to now are insignificant beside those which the heavy bombers can deliver and which may be soon inflicted on them.

The available evidence suggests that continuous day and night harassment of the Viet Cong amounts to a form of interdiction, and has a major impact on their morale, combat effectiveness, and rate of defection. The hardships of Viet Cong life already are so severe that any increase can significantly reduce the fighting ability and reliability of the unit. Day and night harassment by air, artillery, and ground forces tends to increase the time and effort that the Viet Cong units have to devote to the problems of survival instead of to fighting.

Disruption of camps and interruption of rest, cooking, food supply, ammunition collection, and transportation contribute appreciably to the lowering of Viet Cong morale and combat effectiveness. The interviews strongly suggest that sustained harassment could become a major threat to Viet Cong military effectiveness.

THE CHIEU HOI PROGRAM AND DESERTION HOME

GVN attempts to encourage defection from the Viet Cong have met with mixed and only partial success. The principal program established for this purpose, the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program, which has been in effect since May 1963, has undergone repeated ups and downs. The program was designed to induce a voluntary "change of heart" in Viet Cong members. In principle, therefore, it

does not apply to those who may defect as a direct result of GVN or U.S. military activities. In fact, as the interviews indicate, most defectors who rally to the GVN do not do so for the sake of ideas or principles. The defector often retains a high regard for Viet Cong aims, and he may be proud of his service record. The main operative reasons for defection are separation from the family, criticism by superiors, a net loss of personal advantages, weariness and unwillingness to suffer hardships, fear of combat, failure to be promoted, and other considerations of purely individual interest. In many instances the Chieu Hoi program merely serves to reassure an individual already predisposed to defect concerning the treatment he can expect at the hands of the GVN. Indeed, the potential defector often verifies the reliability of the promises made in Chieu Hoi propaganda [broadcasts or leaflets] by asking members of his family to check up on the program or by requesting them to negotiate his surrender with local GVN officials. The Chieu Hoi program and its appeals, therefore, appear to be too narrowly conceived to fit the actual motives for defection from the Viet Cong. In arguing for the success of the program, the GVN claims that, from its inception down to May 1965, close to 20,000 Viet Cong of all types have defected. The interviewees, however, indicate that these defections cannot be attributed solely to the program, since a substantial proportion of the defectors claimed to have rallied without having heard of the program's existence. Furthermore, an examination of the total number of ralliers per month shows that the rate of defection has been extremely sensitive to the political

instability of the Saigon government and the repeated changes in the leadership and organization of the Chieu Hoi program resulting from successive changes in government since November 1963. With each successive coup, and especially with the establishment of a military government, the rate of defection has declined. The coups have not only tended to raise doubts in the minds of potential defectors about the treatment they might receive, but also have resulted in a temporary paralysis of the administration of the program both at the national and the local levels.

During the period covered by the interviews (i.e., June 1, 1965) the rate of defection to the GVN, while fluctuating, rose fairly considerably. From approximately 750 in February 1964, it dropped to a low of 250 in October 1964 and thereafter rose steadily until it reached 1,015 in May 1965. The increase reflected in part the expansion of the Viet Cong forces and the growing number of draftees in them, as well as the intensification of military operations in Vietnam.

More recently, we have detected an improvement in the Viet Cong knowledge of the Chieu Hoi program. About 42 percent of all the respondents who came into GVN hands in 1964 and 36 defectors from that time period said they had not heard about the program, but only 24 percent of all of those who came into GVN hands in 1965 prior to June 1965 and 10 percent of the defectors said that they did not know about it. Apparently information about the Chieu Hoi program has become more widespread although we do not know how representative our sample is in this respect.

The interviews also indicate that significant numbers of Viet Cong desert to their homes. Some of these later defect to the GVN, while others are either brought back to their units or stay in hiding. The number of deserters from units covered in our interviews appears to exceed the number of defectors by a considerable margin. It seems highly desirable to encourage such desertion home by appropriate psywar programs.

There is also some evidence that Viet Cong soldiers try to exploit the confusion of battle, when the cadres' control is weakened, in order to defect by surrendering. Usually they do this by remaining behind when their unit withdraws. Under the present system, however, the GVN classifies such defectors as captives and treats them accordingly. There appears to be a need for a scheme that would encourage and reward quick surrender on the battlefield, especially if it could be shown that those surrendering had made no use of their weapons.

Despite the obvious importance of the Chieu Hoi program for the war effort, our impression is that it fails to meet the requirements of the situation. There seems to be a need for more active American participation in the program, which now lacks a firm administrative basis. More U.S. personnel should be assigned to work specifically on this problem since the needs cannot be met by the present part-time activities of overworked provincial USOM representatives. For psychological reasons and to ensure better support for the program by province chiefs, the Chieu Hoi program should continue to be administered by a separate ministry in the Vietnamese government. There also appears to be an urgent need to develop and staff comprehensive

and flexible follow-up economic and social programs designed to resettle the defectors, to employ them in civic action programs, or to train them as cadres in preparation for returning to their villages after these are secured. Various techniques might be used to compromise the defectors so as to deter them from returning to the Viet Cong, and so as to assure their loyalty if they are given arms or inducted into the RVNAF. The program also requires more imaginative, differentiated, and flexible propaganda and better exploitation of existing techniques and equipment.

EFFECTS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ON CIVILIANS

In our attempt to ascertain the attitude of civilians to GVN and U.S. military operations, especially those which cause them damage and casualties, we paid special attention to the information provided by respondents who were likely to be the most knowledgeable on this question. Many interviewees, in response to questions, revealed their personal views on the attitude of the population. We had less confidence in the opinions of those among them, such as regroupees, veterans, and military cadres, who had been away from their homes for a long time and who based their views on infrequent visits to other villages, than in the information provided by refugees, guerrillas, civilian workers and cadres, and new recruits, who had a continuing, intimate and more recent association with their own villages.

The interviews confirm earlier impressions that GVN air and artillery attacks on villages do not ordinarily

have a major adverse effect on the villagers' behavior, even though they may lead to criticism of the government or of the Americans. No interviewee in the sample said he had joined the Viet Cong because of these attacks. However, a small minority, composed mainly of Viet Cong veterans and cadres, said they had known other persons who joined because of bombings or artillery attacks. Some, including veterans and cadres, claimed that the attacks did not cause anyone to join the Viet Cong. In response to questions about their personal reasons for joining the Viet Cong, many of those respondents who had volunteered did not hesitate to say that they had been motivated, at least in part, by resentment over other aspects of GVN or ARVN behavior and policies, such as bad administration, unjustified arrests, theft of property by soldiers, and mistreatment of their lands; but none mentioned bombardment, though the villages of many of those questioned had been subjected to it.

It is not possible to assess to what extent the attacks cause the villagers to volunteer other forms of support for the Viet Cong. No one among the interviewees mentioned having been so motivated. The attacks may have some such effect, but the interviews suggest that, in the areas controlled or infiltrated by the Viet Cong, the villagers generally do whatever the Viet Cong ask. It is possible that, in some areas, the attacks reinforce the image of the GVN fostered by Viet Cong propaganda and that as a result some villagers are more willing or glad to comply with Viet Cong demands for corvée labor, taxes, or other forms of assistance.

Paradoxically, indeed, the more knowledgeable interviewees indicated an increasing tendency among the villagers to blame the Viet Cong for drawing such attacks upon them, especially when the attacks occurred as a consequence of the presence of Viet Cong units in the villages. When a village is attacked while Viet Cong forces are in it, the villagers sometimes blame the Viet Cong for provoking the attack by their failure to remain concealed. A captive civilian cadre, for example, stated that the villagers "did not blame the GVN for the shelling because they understood that the GVN fired on the hamlet only because of the Viet Cong." In many cases the villagers blame both sides, depending on circumstances, and wish only to be left in peace.

The inability of the Viet Cong to protect villagers was also said to have an increasingly adverse effect on their attitude toward the Viet Cong and to lead them in some cases to ask the insurgents to leave or to stop shooting. A Local Force assistant platoon leader and party member reported that the villagers "protested against the stationing of troops in the village because the Viet Cong did not protect their lives and property. Instead they brought destruction to the village.... The villagers insulted them and forbade them to stay in the village." An assistant platoon leader of a guerrilla unit reported that "the new recruits were angry and upset because they were not welcomed by the villagers when they entered the village since the houses of the villagers had been destroyed by bombs. They [i.e., new recruits] said they would go home as soon as the supply of rice was short." Other sources said that the people "forbade" the Viet Cong to fire, or refused to sell them rice. One Viet Cong cadre and party member said that he "hated the

guerrillas" for their irresponsible behavior which resulted in provoking attacks on villages. A captive guerrilla repeated that the people in his village "would not let us into their houses for fear of GVN soldiers." In most instances, however, the villagers were said to be afraid of openly expressing this opposition to Viet Cong presence or activities.

The interviews do not appear to indicate, however, that the attacks often caused the Viet Cong serious losses. Many respondents said that because the Viet Cong soldiers were able to take cover in prepared foxholes and trenches or because the attacks were not timely, only very few soldiers were killed. Only in a few cases did the interviews indicate that the Viet Cong units present in a village suffered major casualties. The attacks, however, often forced the unit camping in a village to leave. In some cases the attacks take place after the Viet Cong forces have left the village sometimes when no such forces had been present. While the villagers often avoid casualties by taking cover in prepared shelters, the attacks frequently cause extensive damage to their property.

Many villagers seem to be resigned to attacks because they appear to be unavoidable in a war, or they express the wish that the government would secure the area quickly so that attacks would no longer be necessary. A number of interviewees reported that villagers understood that attacks on them might have been due to their running when aircraft appeared, or assembling many sampans near a rice mill, so that the pilots believed they had discovered a concentration of Viet Cong.

Of course, attacks also provoked the villagers' resentment against the GVN and the Americans, especially when the attacks do not seem justified and when the population receives no warning or explanation. Crop spraying is likewise resented, since the villager fears he will be unable to feed his family. In a majority of cases the Viet Cong, being on the scene, can exploit attacks and crop spraying for propaganda purposes. Nevertheless, the majority of the villagers, when forced by attacks to flee, tend to seek safety in GVN areas rather than with the Viet Cong. Several refugees said that even though the villagers resented the destruction of their houses, most or all residents of their hamlets had moved to a GVN controlled area following the attacks. And despite Viet Cong propaganda, few interviewees believed that the GVN or the Americans were deliberately attacking harmless villagers. With advance warning, explanation, and some instruction on what the villager should do to avoid being harmed, resentment could be greatly reduced.

In a few instances, the villagers were reported to see in the attacks an opportunity to escape from Viet Cong control and surveillance and an excuse to move to the government side. It was also said that ARVN ground sweeps through villages, in addition to disrupting Viet Cong controls and exploitation of the villagers, remind people of the government's power and cast doubt on Viet Cong claims to be winning the war. The villager asks: "If the Viet Cong are winning, why do they run away when ARVN comes to the village?"

The increasingly negative attitude of the villagers towards the presence of Viet Cong forces in their midst,

as is reported in the interviews, should be encouraged and exploited by appropriate psychological warfare programs. In particular, the villagers should be encouraged to deny quarters to Viet Cong soldiers and to request their departure from the villages.

III. EFFECTS OF VIET CONG POLICIES ON VILLAGERS

The most striking development we detected in our interviews is indications of growing popular resentment of the Viet Cong provoked by its recruiting policies, heavier taxation, and increasing resort to brutality and terror. This resentment is deepened by the inability of the Viet Cong to protect the villagers. We see what may be the start of a shift in the rural population's attitude from one of relative indifference to increasing resentment of the Viet Cong and preference for the GVN in a number of areas. The popular discontent may spring from a broad change in Viet Cong strategy.

Several of the interviewees, including a defector from the Song Be battle and a North Vietnamese regular, claimed that Viet Cong strategy calls for a shift from hit-and-run attacks by mobile forces to the rapid expansion of Viet Cong forces and concentration of sufficient numerical strength and fire power to attack, capture, and hold important objectives, especially in Central Vietnam. Furthermore, the Viet Cong were said to want to achieve a numerical balance of military strength with the GVN during 1965 in preparation for the long-publicized Viet Cong general offensive and uprising, involving large-scale attacks on ARVN forces everywhere. Politically, it was said, the Viet Cong expected this shift in the military balance to lead to the neutralization of Vietnam and the establishment of a coalition government next year, if not to outright victory. Whether this represented the actual Viet Cong intentions this spring is not certain but Viet Cong efforts to greatly expand their forces is clear.

This would help explain some of the changes in Viet Cong recruiting, taxation, and population-control policies that appear to be affecting the morale of Viet Cong soldiers and the attitudes and behavior of the population.

In principle, the Viet Cong view the war in Vietnam not only as a war of liberation against American imperialism and colonialism but also as a class war in which the poor landless farmer and the poor city worker will take over power from the landlords and plutocrats.

One of the alleged attractions offered by the Viet Cong to the population has been its land reform program, under which the land of the rich has been distributed to some unknown extent among the poor of the areas under Viet Cong control. Some observers, assuming that the poorer peasants were seething with social discontent, have concluded that this land reform program has attracted widespread support for the Viet Cong. However true this may be, only a few villagers in our sample mentioned having joined the Viet Cong primarily because of benefits, conferred or expected, from the land reform program. Furthermore, a majority of our respondent, including most of the poor villagers, expressed no dissatisfaction with their lives prior to joining the insurgents, or did not claim to having been motivated to join the Viet Cong by any social or economic grievance. It is probable that some interviewees were not willing to admit that they joined the Viet Cong voluntarily because of promises of social and economic justice, equality, and land; on the other hand, a number of the poorer villagers said they had opposed seizure and distribution of the land of richer villagers, because they liked or respected the latter. It seems

however, that the Viet Cong social-economic program appealed to the idealism of some of the youth.

We also find that a large proportion of poor peasants were reluctant to join the Viet Cong precisely because they were the sole support of their families and feared that in their absence the families would suffer great economic hardships. One interviewee remarked that for this reason the poor farmers could not afford to serve with the Viet Cong, although the richer ones could do so since their families could hire help to work in their rice paddies. In our sample, only 60 percent were from "poor farmer" income groups while the remaining 40 percent were composed mainly of middle-income farmers. It is not known, however, whether the sample reflects the actual proportion of middle farmers in the Viet Cong movement as a whole. Many poor peasants who did join defected later because of deterioration in the family income and the inability of the Viet Cong Village Committees to provide adequate assistance.

Because of its decision to expand the insurgent forces at a rapid rate, the Viet Cong leadership seems no longer to rely primarily on voluntary enlistment. Instead, a draft of all men of 18 to 35 for three years' service has been introduced and enforced in many Viet Cong controlled areas. In addition, some youths under 18 are drafted.

This draft appears to have been put into effect in 1964. Some form of draft for service in guerrilla and Local Forces was in effect in various localities even earlier. In 1964 the enforcement of the draft was uneven and far from systematic. Much depended apparently on the ability of local recruiting agents to meet their quotas from voluntary recruits. At the same time, in the contested

villages the Viet Cong kidnapped or forceably recruited young men of draft age (some of whom had enlisted in the ARVN) in order to prevent their fighting for the GVN. Until 1965 many men in the contested areas or areas of weak Viet Cong control managed to avoid both the Viet Cong and the GVN drafts. This pattern appears to have changed in 1965 when the Viet Cong began to enforce their draft systematically, allowing few exemptions or none. The earlier promises that the villager would be allowed to stay close to home if he joined the Viet Cong are no longer heard. Instead, villagers are led off under guard to distant training centers, from where they go to the Main and Local Forces.

Increasing numbers of men leave Viet Cong areas to avoid the draft, or escape after being drafted. The following statement is fairly typical of this group:

I rallied because I was afraid the Viet Cong would draft me into their army. I was afraid I would get killed if I joined the Front, so I decided to rally. Formerly the Viet Cong did not really enforce their draft, but now it is impossible to evade military duty.

We were also told that in a fishing village the young men sleep aboard their boats to avoid being "captured" or "arrested" by the Viet Cong and pressed into their army. The new recruiting drive is obviously causing a great deal of popular resentment, and families refuse to encourage their sons to join the Viet Cong.

Furthermore, resort to the draft means that the Viet Cong are taking in men whose motivation to serve is low.

Some are advised by their families to defect. Many others, worried about the ability of their families to survive without adequate labor to work the fields, desert to their homes.

The infusion of large numbers of dispirited or resentful draftees into the Viet Cong forces is reported by the interviewees to have a major impact on the morale and combat effectiveness of Viet Cong units. The many respondents who discussed the Viet Cong draft and the attitude of the draftees were unanimous in speaking of the latter's poor morale and performance in combat. Many described the draftees as cowardly and as prone to desert at the first opportunity. For example a civilian cadre stated: "Those who were demoralized were the draftees, who were afraid of getting killed in battle.... The men who had been forcibly drafted into the Front's army were cowardly and discouraged." A Local Force assistant platoon leader and party member reported that the draftees who made up two of his company's three platoons were demoralized. Others mentioned that the draftees "have no fighting spirit and are all afraid of aircraft," and that unlike earlier recruits they were unwilling to die for the cause. A private of a Local Force unit told us:

The more recent recruits did not know how to fight because of the lack of training; they were younger, about 15 or 16; they were homesick and nothing could be done to keep them from going home. They said: Shoot me if you want, but I am not going to stay.

A guerrilla cell leader said: "The new fighters who come

from the village units to Region Main Forces could not endure the hardships and therefore most of them very often fled." Informants report that frequently after a battle groups of 10 or more draftees desert. Sometimes the draftees, if they see an opportunity on the march to a training camp or after arrival there, desert in large groups. One informant, for example, reports that out of a group of 40 draftees 16 defected after an air attack. He noted that the draftees felt they would not be penalized by the GVN if they defected: the government would understand that they had been forced to join the Viet Cong.

According to the interviews the draftees because of their low spirit and high rate of defection lower the morale of the unit as a whole. For example, a veteran platoon leader and party member of a Main Force battalion stated that even though his was a "hard-core" unit, morale had declined by "50 percent because of the numerous defectors, mostly new recruits." A veteran assistant platoon leader and party member of a Local Force company said that morale in his unit had been high until the unit's losses resulted in two platoons being manned by draftees; after which the morale of the unit had declined. (This particular company was reported to have had 40 defectors, including several key cadres.)

Several interviewees mentioned that the presence of large numbers of draftees in their units lowers their combat effectiveness and places a greater burden on the veterans. For example, a squad leader of a Main Force battalion reported that because it had two companies composed largely of draftees the remaining veteran company had to spearhead all the attacks and undertake all the

dangerous missions because the other companies were "unreliable." Others mentioned that in engagements the draftees panicked or ran away, thus forcing the unit as a whole to withdraw; or that they were too afraid to fire their weapons and participate in the attack.

These derogatory remarks about the quality, motivation, and combat effectiveness of the draftees stand in sharp contrast to statements in the interviews on the attitude of the cadres and veterans towards earlier new recruits. In 1963 and 1964, recruits were more often than not described as enthusiastic; the veterans looked on them as comrades. True, as many interviewees reported, the new recruits often became discouraged in the first three or four months in the face of the hardships of Viet Cong life, but they were seldom, if ever, said to be cowardly or lacking in fighting spirit. Several of the respondents from Main Force battalions, who claimed that the men's morale was high, also stressed that their units were composed largely of volunteers.

The increase in the size of Viet Cong forces has also led to heavier Viet Cong taxes, both in money and in kind. We have reports of poor families whose taxes have been raised since last year from 100 piasters to 400 piasters, and from 220 to 900 piasters. The result, according to one defector, is that the "family goes hungry." The villagers are usually taxed on the yield of their rice paddies, or on other produce they grow, or on the number of animals they raise. According to some interviewees, the tax on the paddy is a graduated one and ranges from 6 to 20 percent depending on the size of the crop. Others report taxes of 30 to 40 percent on the yield of rice

fields. A Main Force soldier, for example, said that his family paid 50 kilograms of rice in 1964, but now had to pay 300 kilograms. Forced contributions of rice are levied in other ways also; for instance, villagers are usually required to set aside a handful of rice at every meal for a special food fund. Though tax rates are not uniform in all parts of the Viet Cong controlled territory, Viet Cong village cadres and party members admitted during the interviews that the taxes were too heavy and were far greater than those imposed by the GVN.

This increased economic burden on the population under Viet Cong control appears to have had a significant adverse effect on the morale of Viet Cong soldiers in some units. Many of the soldiers had been told at the time of their joining the Viet Cong that the village committees would help their families during their absence. In fact, as the interviews indicate, the committees often failed to do so with the result that the families of Viet Cong soldiers frequently became destitute. The soldiers, learning of this, complained or even deserted either to help their families or because they felt that the Viet Cong had deceived them. For example, a captive commander and party member of a Local Force company said:

When I was in the movement, I watched closely the members of my unit. I found that they were most dissatisfied with the local political cadres' treatment of their families. For instance their families were poor yet they received no help from the local cadres. Also their families had to pay heavy taxes, or the local cadres suspected their families. This demoralized them the most.

A rallied Local Force assistant company commander told us that "the men often complained about the Front's lack of solicitude for those families who had sons serving in its ranks. The cadres, on the pretext that such families ought to set an example to others, always made them pay their contributions ahead of the others. The soldiers regarded this as an injustice towards them." A Local Force assistant platoon leader and party member who had defected because of the decline in the economic status of his family and the higher taxes imposed on it, reported that:

Many of the men in my unit were dissatisfied because the Front did not help their families who were poor, but instead levied high taxes on them. They either returned home or went [i.e., deserted] somewhere else to make a living.

Some interviewees attributed to this cause a certain number of defections by Main Force cadres, regroupes, and party members, as well as by privates. A Main Force squad leader who defected first went home and shot up the village committee because he felt that the Viet Cong had lied to him.

The increase in taxes has had also an adverse effect on the attitude toward the Viet Cong of an apparently growing number of villagers. Several interviewees report that some villagers refuse to give food or firewood to soldiers passing through their villages, on the ground that the taxes should satisfy all the soldiers' needs. For example the aforementioned assistant company commander said:

Prior to 1963, the inhabitants had a lot of sympathy for them [the Viet Cong soldiers] and gave them a warm welcome. But from 1963 on, things changed and the majority of the people were no longer kind. Some sometimes refused to give firewood or lend cooking pots to the soldiers, saying that their contributions [taxes] were enough for the latter to procure these necessities themselves.

An apparent consequence of the increased taxes on agricultural yield is that the villagers increasingly tend to lose interest in maintaining or increasing their production of food. A civilian Viet Cong cadre said of the villagers:

They are now very depressed. They do not want to get rich any more. They reckon that it is no longer profitable to work many rice fields with the help of hired workers because the more rice fields they work, the more they pay to the Viet Cong. Therefore they keep only as much land as they can work themselves.

In some cases they have even returned the land that the Viet Cong distributed to them. A Local Force platoon leader said, "Many families returned their rice fields to the Front. They refused to go on farming because they made no profit." Several other informants reported similar actions by their families.

Many interviewees reported that the "villagers were very worried and dissatisfied because the contributions were too heavy, but nobody dared argue" for fear of being taken away by the Viet Cong for re-education, or even of being killed. Several interviewees claimed that the

villagers "hated" the Viet Cong because the latter merely "exploited" them and made their life more difficult.

In addition, villagers often suffer from economic hardships resulting from their inability to go to markets in GVN areas or to bring needed supplies from GVN areas. In some cases this has caused a decline in the income of the villagers and has forced them to lower their standard of living.

An additional reason for the growing resentment of the villagers towards the Viet Cong is often cited in the interviews: the inability of the Viet Cong to protect the villages under their control from GVN attacks. A Local Force cadre and party member said, for example: "The people hated the Front because the Front was not strong enough to protect their property.... The villagers, seeing that the Front troops' presence caused the ARVN to attack their village and to inflict damage on their property, didn't like the Front." One consequence of this is the growing tendency of the villagers, already noted, to seek safety in GVN controlled areas.

The villager, the interviews indicate, has become increasingly aware that no area under Viet Cong control can be completely secure from GVN air, artillery or ground attacks. Furthermore, the Viet Cong often try to prevent the population from leaving the attacked villages and thus incur the onus of exposing them to danger. It seems likely that, with or without GVN encouragement, the flow of refugees will increase as the tempo of the war quickens. Hence it may be necessary to develop a comprehensive program to deal with refugees on a nation-wide scale.

A captive veteran village propaganda cadre and party member noted that in 1962 and 1963 the villagers "believed everything the cadres said" and "esteemed and respected them," but that beginning in 1964 the population became increasingly cold in its attitude towards the Viet Cong cadres. He accounted for the change as follows:

First of all, the compulsory draft order, which in spite of a different form and name was similar to the GVN compulsory draft order in possession of the cadres, was often denounced for its dictatorial and harsh nature. Then came the constant increase in taxes: the taxes of 1964 exceeded those of 1962 by 50 or 60 percent. Even those who had profited from the land distribution found that the taxes, not including the numerous collections levied several times a year, had become too high [for profitable working of the land]. Finally there were the problems of insecurity and the fear of death. The six hamlets under Front control were constantly pounded by GVN artillery and airplane bombings. Sometimes there were dead and wounded, as well as material damage, especially in 1964. The people seemed to blame these attacks on the presence of the Front cadres in the hamlets.

Other interviewed cadres also noted that the attitude of the villagers to the Viet Cong had changed, in some cases "drastically," and that the population was losing "confidence" in the Viet Cong. According to the interviews, the villagers are increasingly comparing Viet Cong behavior and policies unfavorably with what they might expect from the government. The disappearance of the Diem regime and the marked improvement in the behavior of the ARVN and Popular Forces towards the villagers, it is said, also

tend to place the government in a more favorable light.

In the face of what appears to be growing village discontent, the Viet Cong are reported to be resorting increasingly to threats in their dealings with uncooperative villagers. They may send the latter away for "re-education," possibly into areas of more intense aerial bombing; some of those sent away never return. Selective Viet Cong terrorism and murder are used to frighten the villagers, as is the threat of seizing their land and parceling it out to others.

The exploitation of these and other Viet Cong vulnerabilities, through appropriate and vigorous psychological warfare programs, might have a significant effect on the morale of Viet Cong soldiers and on their tendency to defect, as well as on Viet Cong recruiting and food procurement, and might well contribute to the further alienation of the villagers from the Viet Cong.

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE EXPLOITATION

The interviews point to a number of strengths and weaknesses in the position of the enemy. We believe that the data gleaned from our interviews can usefully be exploited in psychological warfare directed at the Viet Cong and audiences closely associated with them. They may be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of current and previous psychological warfare themes, techniques, media, and channels. Although most of the psychological warfare activities currently conducted by the GVN are not directed primarily at Viet Cong military personnel, we feel that the latter target is critical -- and will be especially so during the next few months. Gains in efficiency in this sector, particularly in the short run, can make it much more difficult for the Viet Cong to achieve superiority, or even equilibrium, in military manpower and over all fighting effectiveness.

VIET CONG PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND CHANGES.

The interviews suggest strongly that the Viet Cong psychological warfare apparatus has not been disrupted and is still functioning well, benefiting from the ubiquity, elan, and dedication of Viet Cong propaganda cadres. It also benefits from the primacy that Communist regimes everywhere give to political considerations. At the same time, many of the prudently restrained tactics of the Communist proselyter and propagandist, prominent in the years preceding the current manpower drive, are no longer

so frequently or favorably mentioned in our interviews. In recruitment and in the collection of taxes and contributions, for example, force is now said to be used at the outset and persuasion comes later, if at all. A former squad leader and party member from Vinh Long Province noted that in 1964 these new tactics were already making many people apprehensive and dissatisfied, and that the population was detaching itself from the Viet Cong. "If the Viet Cong had continued their smooth propaganda lines of 1962-1963," he said, "the population would be in their hands entirely." But taxes have risen and more rice has been taken "without any explanation."

The Viet Cong propaganda apparatus is being called on to deal with extraordinary difficulties arising out of current efforts to increase manpower and resources rapidly. In addition, as the war drags on, earlier Viet Cong propaganda claims and assertions are openly contradicted by subsequent events observable by the Viet Cong's audience. Viet Cong propagandists regularly resort to calculated exaggerations, as a means of multiplying the number and enhancing the brilliance of Front victories, claimed or real. They exaggerate to cushion the truth about their defeats, and to distort the situation in areas in Viet Cong control. When events palpably belie such fabrications, the factual-minded Vietnamese who characteristically makes his judgments on the basis of what he sees and experiences personally, more and more rejects the Front's propaganda and doubts the word of the cadres.

Two examples will serve to illustrate this point. One of our respondents reported that the Viet Cong cadres had told their troops that the Americans would be forced to withdraw from Vietnam in 1964. But the men noted that the American presence had become patently greater as time went on, and their faith in their leaders diminished. Another respondent reported that the cadres had promised (in mid-1964) that Tuy Hoa would be "liberated" within a month, but several months went by with no action. In the latter case the respondent concluded that the Viet Cong prediction of final victory was not to be believed either.

Despite this lack of faith in the credibility of VC propaganda, many people who undergo the Front's intensive indoctrination know the line very well. The inference arises strongly from our interviews that learning the line is one of the ways in which Vietnamese adapt at least partially to the organization that controls them. Hence the majority are able to parrot the line fluently, but they doubt its truth when their own experience conflicts with it. For instance, most of our respondents could repeat Viet Cong propaganda about the intentions of Americans in Vietnam, but those who had come into even fleeting contact with an American, or whose experience did not bear out the propaganda, were likely to form their own opinions.

Two examples will illustrate. A military rallier, who had served with the VC Main Force in Dinh Tuong Province, reported that everyone in his village disliked and hated the Americans because they believed the Americans had come to occupy Vietnam, and without the

Americans, there would be no war. This belief, he said, was not based on facts. After his rally he learned that such a belief was wrong, because "since my rally I've noticed that everything is done by the Vietnamese in the ARVN government. The Americans only help them. And they have even brought over foodstuffs to help the people." Another military rallier, an infiltrator from North Vietnam who had served with the Main Force in Darlac Province, reported "The cadres said the Americans came here to take over Vietnam. They ordered the Vietnamese around, they were arrogant, they were drunkards. But after I had rallied I found that the Americans I met were nice. They were the contrary to the VC's propaganda."

Although most of our cases of changed views occurred after the respondent had rallied, a few have mentioned changes of mind or the onset of doubts at an earlier point, sometimes after only fleeting contact with Americans. For example, a military prisoner, a former Regional Forces private and member of the Labor Youth Group, expressed his doubts in the VC line, because he had never seen any American mistreat or kill a compatriot. "I saw an American once. One day, walking to Phu Phong... I saw an American working with several Vietnamese to repair the Phu Phong bridge. He was shirtless and wore only a pair of shorts. I saw that he and the Vietnamese workers understood one another perfectly well." A civilian prisoner from Tuy Hoa told us that he had seen Americans in Nha Trang, Ban Me Thuot and Tuy Hoa nearly every day. "I've never seen an American doing something which showed he wanted to rule the Vietnamese."

Censorship and other communication controls, long prominent in the life of the Viet Cong, are likely to be tightened during phases of increased military activity and to bring in their train a number of disadvantages for the Front. Anxieties arise when there is lack of news about family and friends, or when there is no dependable information on the state of the war and the prospects for the individual and his unit. These strains may be tolerable for Viet Cong personnel who have had a long period of indoctrination, but they are burdensome for young recruits. Several of our respondents have complained about the extent to which Front indoctrination has interfered with their private feelings; and there are references to the strains on family emotions and morale when communication with sons in the Front is either wholly cut off or is rigidly restricted in the propaganda interests of the Front.

Experience of the actual conditions of life in the Viet Cong forces often contrasts sharply with the expectations generated by the Front -- or by the North Vietnamese regime. For instance, most infiltrators and regroupées report being told before their return that the South was already largely liberated, that a receptive population stood waiting and ready to support the Front fighter as he brought to a successful conclusion the struggle for liberation and national unification, and that they would be fighting the American invader. Those interviewed almost uniformly reported their disillusion on discovering the prosperity of the South, their separation from much of the population, the hunger,

hardship, and danger of life in the jungle, and the fact that they are fighting other Vietnamese. Learning that the Front is not always careful to clear the battlefield of its dead, and that it often fails to notify a man's family of his death and the location of his grave, also comes as a shock to the fighter who has been led to believe that his life in the Viet Cong would be glorious, and his death gratefully remembered. Infiltrators and regroupees seem to be especially subject to anxiety about death far from home, and burial in an unknown and unmarked grave.

Possibly the most important weakness in the Front's propaganda position is the fact that so many villagers now living in Viet Cong controlled or controlled areas have had experience with life under Viet Cong administration. In many cases, they have found conditions much more onerous than those they had experienced under the GVN, from which some of them may have been glad to be "liberated" during the years when the Viet Cong was building slowly, acting with consideration for the position of the villager, and offering promises of a just, peaceful, and prosperous future. The villager in such areas today has learned at first hand the fact that "contributions" to the Viet Cong may run several times the rate of former GVN taxes. This, along with harsh recruiting methods, alienates him. Moreover, Viet Cong promises of gains through land reform have proved less tempting in the reality for poor farmers and former sharecroppers who have seen the additional produce from their new land taxed away, or who have failed to grow

crops on such land because of a desire to stay out of trouble with the landowners or the GVN, in case the GVN re-establishes control over the village.

Viet Cong propaganda to the effect that service with the Front is safer than service with the GVN is also losing credibility through its conflict with reality. Young men of draft age, considering whether they should join the ARVN or the Viet Cong, are becoming aware that the prospect of safety is more and more shifting in favor of service in the ARVN. The chances of physical survival seem to be getting less in an insurgent force that is trying to raise the level of its activity against an enemy that possesses superior weapons -- including air, armor, and artillery. Furthermore, the draftee will get better pay in the GVN, and a better chance of supporting his family while in the service.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GVN PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Our interviews point to a number of opportunities, and also to a number of problems for GVN propaganda. Among the principal problems is the fact that people in rural areas lack a clear image of the national government. The outlook of most villagers seems to be restricted to the hamlet and village, or at most to the district. Such villagers are usually unaware of what is happening at the province level, and Saigon is another world to them. The larger context of the struggle in which they are caught has rarely been defined for them by GVN communications. Nor have the purposes and achievements of the GVN been described to them in believable, concrete terms.

They are therefore more susceptible to pressure from the omnipresent Front spokesmen.

A clear image of the U.S. presence, purpose, and operations in Vietnam is also lacking. For example, the Viet Cong have offered reasons for defoliation and crop destruction, but not the government. There has been no challenge to the Viet Cong charge that the purpose of these activities is to kill and starve people, and that this proves the cruelty of the Americans. Truthful information about what defoliants and herbicides really do, and about why they are being used, has not reached the villagers. The GVN and United States face a choice -- either to take advantage of the distortions circulated by the Front so as to increase the fear of staying in defoliated areas and of eating contaminated food, or to provide accurate information about the effects on humans, animals, and vegetable life, of chemicals used for these purposes, and to relate crop destruction and defoliation to the purposes of the struggle against the Viet Cong. In making such a choice, the GVN propagandist should weigh the advantages of discrediting VC propaganda along with the advantages of truth-telling, against any short-run gains that might be made by playing on VC-established fears.

Our sources comment that much GVN propaganda of earlier date has been vague, and suggest that it should be more clearly coordinated with specific military or economic operations. Vague or general propaganda may actually be damaging to the GVN cause, because its recipients may conclude the government has nothing better

to say and that more explicit information is being withheld because it might benefit the Viet Cong. It is especially desirable that information about GVN policies be conveyed to the people. Such information should not concentrate wholly on the long-term aims and purposes of the GVN; much of it should be devoted to the explanation of GVN policies that bear directly on the position of the villager, or of the potential draftee who may think that even a minor association or collaboration with the Front has hopelessly compromised him. Our informants indicate the benefits that the Front has reaped from the fears of those whom they have compromised. They also point to GVN practices and policies that would have robbed the Front of these advantages had they been better known. We have a report of a boy who stayed in the Front, feeling he was irretrievably compromised by attending a dancing festival; we have many reports of persons staying in the Front because their ID cards had been torn up, and they feared beatings or worse if they returned to areas under GVN control. It is obvious that accurate information about GVN leniency in dealing with such cases should be circulated when possible. Instances of good GVN treatment of ralliers and prisoners warrant wide publicity.

Unfavorable comparisons are frequently made between the Viet Cong's constant presence in the propaganda field, and the sporadic nature of much GVN propaganda activity. The Viet Cong propagandist is willing to talk to one or two people if more are not available. He is constantly alert for chances to distort GVN statements. He skillfully combines persuasion with pressure. His GVN competitor,

however, is only too prone to visit a village, set up his loudspeakers, make his speech, and then move on, leaving the propaganda battleground to his opponent.

PRINCIPAL TASKS FOR GVN AND U.S. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Our interview data suggest that during the next few months GVN and U.S. psychological warfare could usefully exploit Viet Cong vulnerabilities in order to deny manpower to the Viet Cong; to deny them supplies and resources; to destroy the illusion of Viet Cong invincibility in battle; to fix on them responsibility for causing and continuing the war; to further expectations of an ultimate GVN victory; and to clarify the image of the U.S. presence and purpose in Vietnam. All of these tasks can be effectively interrelated, and success in each can contribute to the success of the others.

Manpower Denial

Crisp and concrete propaganda to villages and hamlets from which the Viet Cong will be trying to draw manpower during the coming months should expose the methods now being used to draft, entrap, blackmail, and seduce young men into the Viet Cong forces. Cases should be cited in which youths have been taken away, allegedly for only one night or for a short training course, and then sent far away for production work or military service. Specific information about the conditions of service in ARVN should also be circulated in order to emphasize the superior safety, pay, death benefits, and family care enjoyed by members of the GVN forces. GVN

propaganda should play on the desire of the village youth to remain in or near his village. Intelligence, such as that recently available from Song Be ralliers, to the effect that draftees from Dinh Tuong were promptly marched away from the Delta into the Boi Loi Forest, should be sought out and publicized. GVN propaganda should highlight any information to the effect that men drafted for military service in North Vietnam are not released at the end of their term, but are told they must stay in for an extended period, or are pressured to re-enlist promptly. Such reports can be coupled with the suggestion that any draftee will be lucky if he survives the promised term of three years of military service in view of the death rate in the Viet Cong, the use of human wave tactics, and so on.

At the same time, GVN propaganda should give explicit instructions on how to avoid the Viet Cong draft -- for example, by staying away from home at night and by avoiding Viet Cong cadres. Other such tactics should be worked out and publicized, and it might be pointed out that joining the ARVN is not the worst way of avoiding much more onerous service in the Front.

Recognizing the possibility that many will not be able to avoid Viet Cong drafting or recruitment, the GVN should use propaganda to reduce still more the effectiveness of soldiers whose motivation to serve is already low. Accounts of the dangers of life in the Front, factual news bulletins of Viet Cong defeats, and the difficulty of fighting against forces with vastly superior weapons should be combined with incitement to defection by any and all means. This calls

for explicit information about Chieu Hoi centers -- their location and the conditions of life in them. It also calls for detailed surrender and rallying instructions, so that the soldier who has already decided to leave his unit will know how to go about it, even if he is far from home. For men who wish to rally or surrender, as much information as possible should be given about how to escape Viet Cong surveillance with the minimum of risk. Tactics and ruses that have successfully been used by others in the past should be reported in propaganda to the Front. As in similar psywar tactics used elsewhere in the past, it is recognized that such reporting may allow the Viet Cong to plug such gaps; but it is also usually the case that such plugging puts an additional strain on the Viet Cong control system, and creates fresh tensions between the cadres and the Front soldiers.

In its efforts to reduce available manpower, GVN propaganda should not fail to remind the Front soldier of possibilities of desertion as well as rallying; and GVN output should also suggest that if the Front soldier performs badly enough he may be released from service or sent away for "re-education." In either case, he avoids the perils of battle.

Denial of Intelligence and Supplies

Our interviews reveal a small but apparently increasing number of cases in which villagers have defied the Viet Cong. Some of these are minor -- as for example the report of the action of a villager in throwing back fish caught out of his pond by a Viet Cong. Others are

more important, rickin serious reprisal, such as denial of rice to Viet Cong soldiers by gift or sale; or urging such soldiers to stay out of the hamlet and go elsewhere. In taking advantage of such situations, specific propaganda suggestions should be worked out with the safety and the interest of the audience in mind, so that the people who follow the instructions will run as little risk as possible of exposing themselves to Viet Cong punitive measures.

As far as the facts permit, GVN propoganda should stress that the terms of battle in this or that area are turning against the Viet Cong; that the Viet Cong are not able to protect themselves against GVN/U.S. attacks; and that the villagers should therefore do everything they can to reduce the fighting effectiveness of the insurgents, so that the ARVN can take over again. By being uncooperative the villagers may avoid the quartering of Viet Cong soldiers in their village and thus escape GVN/U.S. attacks.

It should be a continuing task for GVN/U.S. propoganda to localize and deflate any successes the VC may gain this summer and fall, and to demonstrate that despite their maximum efforts they cannot be strong everywhere, but are vulnerable to determined resistance aided by timely intelligence for the ARVN.

It is of great importance to deny intelligence to the Viet Cong and to ensure intelligence support for the ARVN. GVN propoganda should exploit the desire of the villager for peace by pointing out that he can help bring the war to an end sooner by providing information to the ARVN rather than to the Viet Cong. He should be informed how he can do this without exposing himself to undue danger.

The villager should also be instructed about ways to avoid Viet Cong demands for logistical help, such as carrying food and supplies, and clearing battlefields. (Incidentally, villagers who have been impressed into clearing Viet Cong dead and wounded should be encouraged to share their observations, and to circulate information about the extent of Viet Cong losses, so as to offset Viet Cong efforts to represent defeats as draws, and draws as victories.)

GVN propaganda should help persuade the villager to deny food to the Viet Cong. This can be done in part by building on the villager's increasing awareness that anything not necessary for his bare subsistence will be taxed away by the Viet Cong. If he grows more than a minimum, he not only risks losing the surplus to the insurgents; he risks inviting crop destruction operations that may deny him his entire yield. This idea could be easily put into slogans: "Grow only what you need, or you risk losing your whole crop." Such appeals should be coupled where possible with information about refugee programs, so the villager who finds Viet Cong pressure intolerable will have an alternative that is acceptable to him as a to the GVN. Crop control operations should be accompanied where possible by warnings and by explanations. The standard tactic of warning several areas, only one or two of which will actually be sprayed in any one operation, can be used to convey instructions to the villagers without increasing the risks to the aircraft engaged in dusting.

Similarly, villagers should be urged to avoid corvée labor, such as digging up roads, making punji sticks, preparing traps, or digging trenches and foxholes for the Viet Cong. Since avoiding these tasks may be difficult for the individual villager, especially if he is curtailing his food-growing operations, it may be useful in some situations simply to encourage residents of a contested or VC-controlled hamlet to leave it, and thus force the Viet Cong to fend for themselves.

The GVN can increase the willingness of the villager to become a refugee if it assures prompt and efficient payment of resettlement and subsistence allowances. Information about ways of collecting such allowances should be made widely available. The responsibility for forcing the villager to flee should be placed squarely on the Viet Cong.

Destroying the Myth of Viet Cong Invincibility

Our interviews indicate that the Viet Cong place great stress on creating the illusion of invincibility in battle. For the Front, both recruitment and maintenance of morale depend heavily on the notion that the insurgents always win when they launch a planned attack. In the past their strategy has usually been to plan with great care, to commit a superior force at the point of attack, and to break off the operation or postpone it if the chances of victory are threatened by unexpected events. If during the coming months the Viet Cong try to hold on rather than to hit and withdraw, and fail in some prominent instances, this illusion of invincibility will be more difficult for

them to maintain. The speed and power of GVN/U.S. reactions are greater than they once were, so that the Viet Cong may sometimes miscalculate the costs of taking and holding. Propaganda can be used to heighten the effect of Viet Cong defeats, not only by giving full coverage to losses of men, equipment, and food supplies, but by driving home the point that the Viet Cong have failed to hold their objective, though it was their intention to do so. If things go reasonably well for the ARVN, GVN propaganda should stress that the Viet Cong have been foiled in their objectives, that their timetable has been disrupted, and that their forces and political position have been weakened by their efforts to expand the struggle. Even in the case of some Viet Cong gains, propaganda should suggest that time is now on the side of the GVN, since its forces generally are holding and winning during the season when air power is least effective. When the rains cease and air and ground operations can be launched with increasing effectiveness, the Viet Cong are going to fight on even more unfavorable terms; they will then have to stand down, retrain, regroup, refit, and endure the continuing hardships of life under GVN harassment.

Assigning Responsibility for the Continuing War

The Viet Cong have consistently and skillfully pinned on others the onus for causing the struggle in South Vietnam. GVN propaganda should capitalize on the growing awareness reported in our interviews that it is the Viet Cong who are responsible for provoking local attacks. Propaganda could help to extend this to a broader awareness of who is responsible for the war.

Clarifying the Image of the GVN and the United States

The task of improving the image of the GVN, and of demonstrating closer relationships between Saigon and the countryside, is probably less urgent at present than that of clarifying the image and purpose of the United States in Vietnam. Our interviews suggest that the villagers' vague awareness of the Saigon government today does not interfere with rallying. While the governments that followed the Diem regime have not aroused enthusiasm in the countryside, neither have they provoked overt opposition.

The failure to clarify the U.S. image is more serious, since the Viet Cong have made extensive use of American assistance to the GVN in their appeals to nationalist feeling. In our interviews to date there is very little evidence that the presence and activities of Marines or of airborne troops have had any impact on village or Viet Cong opinion. In the case of the airborne troops, this may be due to the time lag built into our interviewing system; but this explanation does not account for the absence of data about the Marines. They have been in Vietnam in sufficient force for long enough, it would seem, to make an impact on opinion. So far, however, our interviews have not revealed either the nature of the impact, or of any important new Viet Cong propaganda lines or tactics based on it.

Nevertheless, the U.S. presence is large, and increasing. The military aspect of this presence is almost inescapably dominant. Ordinarily, a Front soldier or a villager from a contested or Viet Cong-controlled area

will first encounter the Americans in their military role. Apart from face-to-face confrontations, the American military presence is felt through air activities, and it is noteworthy that most of our interviewees believe that Americans fly the planes they see. However, they rarely couple this observation with immediate expressions of resentment or hostility.

The second facet of the American presence is the economic one. USOM's activities over several years have brought Americans into contact with large numbers of Vietnamese. This is not altogether a gain, for example if we want to present the GVN as the main source of economic assistance. The Vietnamese role in the provision of aid to the villagers has sometimes been obscured by Americans who take a prominent part in the distribution of goods, often for reasons of immediate operational efficiency, and thus overshadow the role of Vietnamese local officials. In general, the association of aid distribution with the Vietnamese seems to fade as distance from the hamlet increases. The participation of the District Chief is sometimes noticed, but rarely does the villager seem aware of the role of the Province official, let alone that of Saigon. Most of the mentions of aid in our interviews relate to seeds, scythes, sickles, and fertilizer distributed in the village or hamlet. On occasion, donations of fertilizer have aroused resentment, apparently because some villagers put a year's supply on a crop all at once thus killing their plants with an excess dosage, when they should have applied it gradually. Viet Cong propagandists have profited from such errors by

alleging that the Americans were distributing poison that would ruin the land and cause itching to the feet of those who walked on it a year later.

Our interviews suggest strongly that popular Viet Cong views of the political and economic presence of the United States have been shaped predominantly by the Viet Cong or by other Communist sources. One hundred and four of our 215 respondents, either in response to a direct question or in connection with answering other questions, mentioned their views about why they thought the United States was active in Vietnam. While 40 of these answers could be characterized as clearly favorable to the United States, 35 were unqualifiedly favorable to the Communist side, and another 21 responses were favorable to the Communists, but qualified with some such proviso as this: "That is what the Viet Cong cadres said. As for me, I did not see the Americans killing Vietnamese, so I did not know." The remaining 8 answered that they had no opinion on the subject, or simply didn't know.

It is noteworthy, however, that few among those who gave pro-American answers were able to supply any sort of reasoned statement as to why the Americans were in their country. Among the few were persons who reasoned that the United States was a rich country; it did not need Vietnam's rubber or rice; therefore the Americans had come to help the Vietnamese liberate themselves from the Viet Cong. Others would couple this reasoning with the recognition that the United States wanted to oppose the spread of Communism, or needed a bridgehead on the Asian continent. Our data suggest strongly that there is need

for a statement, comprehensible and plausible to reasonably unsophisticated people, about why the United States is making such efforts and spending so much of its resources without apparent prospect of tangible economic gain.

From the standpoint of recruiting, this lack of definition of the American purpose is a definite aid to the Viet Cong. As long as the Front can point to the Americans as the "real enemy" -- the obvious successors to the French imperialists, colonialists, and oppressors -- the insurgents do not have to find a more convincing explanation of why Vietnamese are fighting against Vietnamese. The reluctance of Vietnamese to admit to themselves that they are fighting Vietnamese appears throughout our interviews; only rarely do we find statements of hard-core respondents that profess eagerness to close with "the enemy," whether Vietnamese or American.

The task of formulating a general statement to explain to the villager why the Americans are in Vietnam is one more for political authorities than for psychological warfare specialists. It does seem possible immediately, however, to give wider publicity to American activities in village and hamlet that indicate the Americans, in collaboration with Vietnamese, are aiding rather than exploiting the Vietnamese. On the military side, while it is important to keep in mind the balance of U.S. and GVN military activities, it is equally or more important to give full credit to the role and achievements of the GVN.

V. CONCLUSION

Our study attempts to interpret the results of a systematic program of interrogation of Viet Cong captives, defectors, and civilians. It does not and cannot judge the comparative morale and effectiveness of the ARVN in relation to the Viet Cong. Consequently we are not in a position to evaluate how the war is going or to compare the cost effectiveness of various weapons and tactics.

What the study does appear to show, on the basis of a relatively small number of interviews, is that the effectiveness of GVN and U.S. military operations and weapons has increased and that various elements of the Viet Cong show greater sensitivity to them. The growing military pressure on the Viet Cong faces them with greater hardships and losses, complicates their operations, and in varying degrees strains their control system and the morale of the troops. This does not mean, of course, Viet Cong morale is crumbling, or that they are incapable of mounting major operations or of effectively harassing ARVN forces and positions. Nor does it preclude the Viet Cong from having some successes, especially where they have the advantages of initiative and superior numbers and engage in battles at a time and place of their choosing.

Nevertheless, it seems to us that Viet Cong have acquired important vulnerabilities which offer opportunities for exploitation. Their apparent decision to expand their forces has added to their military, political, and psychological vulnerabilities. It has led the Viet Cong to sacrifice some of their important political and psychological advantages to military considerations. There

are some indications in the interviews that the Viet Cong are not always able to control what appears to be a growing number of poorly motivated and resentful draftees, and of increasingly dissatisfied villagers in their areas.

The interviews, in our opinion, confirm the importance of interdiction by air and ground harassment, and the need for still greater intensification of such operations. The effects of harassment can be exploited and significantly increased by appropriate psychological warfare programs.

Full exploitation of growing Viet Cong vulnerabilities will depend, of course, on developments in the military situation and on the action and support programs that can be developed. It seems to us that among the most urgent tasks are: (1) to intensify measures to encourage the largest possible flow of deserters and defectors, (2) to fan the growing discontent of the disaffected portion of the population and encourage it to withhold men and supplies from the Viet Cong. We believe that the present time offers excellent opportunities to achieve major advances in both areas of endeavor.

It is possible that the Viet Cong may not be able to maintain for a long time their present demands on their troops and pressures on the population, especially if these do not result in major military or political successes. If the Viet Cong fail to make such gains additional vulnerabilities may become apparent, which, if effectively exploited, may make it more difficult for them to motivate and control growing numbers of discouraged soldiers and disgruntled civilians. Indeed, it is conceivable that the Viet Cong might be forced to reduce not only the scale and scope of their operations but also the size of their forces.

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Appendix A

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Table 1

Distribution by Questionnaires

General Questionnaire	215
Dinh Tuong Province Defector Questionnaire	27
Refugee Questionnaire	8
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 250

Table 2

Classification of the 215 Interviews Based
on the General Questionnaire

		General Distribution									
		Prisoners			Defectors			Total Sample			
		Military	Civilian	Total	Military	Civilian	Total	Military	Civilian	Total	Total
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	26 52 --	15 14 9	41 66 9	30 53 --	8 8 --	38 61 --	56 105 --	23 22 9	79 127 9		
Total	78	38	116	83	16	99	161	54	215		

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NOTE: The Viet Cong use the term "cadre" to designate persons holding ranks of assistant squad leader or above. Cell leaders have been included in the rank and file.

Table 3

Regroupees
(included in totals in Table 2 above)

	Military	Civilian	Total
Cadres Rank and File	15 3	3 2	18 5
Total	18	5	23

Table 4
North Vietnamese
(included in totals in Table 2 above)

	Prisoners		Total	Defectors		Combined Totals
	Military	Civilian		Military	Civilian	
Cadres Rank and File	4	0	4	2	0	2
	10	0	10	2	1	3
Totals	14	0	14	4	1	5
						6
						13
						19

Table 5
Party Members
(including probational party members and members of Labor Youth)

	Party Members		Total
	Military	Civilian	
Cadres Rank and File	22	14	36
	2	3	5
Total	24	17	41

Table 6

Data by Period of Capture

A. Distribution by Date of Capture or Defection

	Captured or Defected on or before 1/30/65		Total	Captured or Defected after 1/30/65		Total
	Military	Civilian		Military	Civilian	
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	36 51 --	14 11 4	50 62 4	20 54 --	9 11 5	29 65 5
Total	87	29	116	74	25	99

B. Breakdown of Interviewees Captured or Defected on or before January 30, 1965

	Prisoners		Total	Defectors		Total	Combined Totals
	Military	Civilian		Military	Civilian		
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	18 31 --	8 9 4	26 40 4	18 20 --	6 2 --	24 22 --	50 62 4
Total	49	21	70	38	8	46	116

Regroupees and Party Members Contained in Above Combined Totals

	Regroupees		Total	Party Members
	Military	Civilian		
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	12 2 --	2 2 --	14 4 --	25 4 --
Total	14	4	18	29

C. Breakdown of Interviewees Captured or Defected
after January 30, 1965

	Prisoners			Defectors			Combined Totals
	Military	Civilian	Total	Military	Civilian	Total	
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	8 21 --	7 5 5	15 26 5	12 33 --	2 6 --	14 39 --	25 65 5
Total	29	17	46	45	8	53	99

Regroupees and Party Members Contained in Above Combined Totals

	Regroupees			Party Members
	Military	Civilian	Total	
Cadres Rank and File Suspects	3 1 --	1 -- --	4 1 --	11 1 --
Total	4	1	5	12

Appendix B

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

It is important to emphasize that this project is not a public opinion poll. We have not attempted to secure a random sample of the Viet Cong, or even of those Viet Cong who are captured or who rally. This would in any case be impossible under the present circumstances.

What we have tried to do is to select people who can tell us about Viet Cong motivation and morale in principal types of units, under varying circumstances, and at different times. When we come into a military or civilian prison, or into a Chieu Hoi or refugee center, we try to talk with those people who have been in a position to observe what went on in a certain unit, or in a particular geographical area, or among some special population group -- for instance, North Vietnamese infiltrators, or regroupees. If a man has spent most of his time with the Viet Cong as a member of a small food-production unit deep in the forest, then we don't ask to see him, or we spend very little time with him. An interview with a member of the Viet Cong Main Force who has had several years of service may, on the other hand, last for twelve hours spread over three or four days. In every case, we ask the respondent not only about his own attitudes and experiences, but also about the attitudes and experiences of others in his unit and about his observation in villages that he visited, or in which he had lived prior to joining the Viet Cong. We also encourage him to volunteer any opinions that he wishes to express, as long as they are in the general area with which we are concerned.

We are also able to distinguish some gross trends within our sample. That is, we cannot say that a given percentage of the Viet Cong now think that they are going to lose the war, since the prisoners and ralliers we talk to can be expected to have a lower level of morale than is typical of Viet Cong who are still organized in military units. But we can say that the percentage of our interviewees who thought the Viet Cong was going to lose the war rose steadily from January to June. From this, we can fairly confidently draw the inference that the expectation of victory in the Viet Cong ranks is declining. Descriptions of morale in Viet Cong units given by those captured in January or February can also be contrasted with descriptions given by those captured in May and June. Thus, we are able to gain an impression of whether Viet Cong morale and service conditions are improving or deteriorating, even though we cannot attach absolute numbers of percentage figures to our observations.

One question that always comes up is whether our respondents tell us the truth or not. Obviously, some of them do not. By and large, however, we have been impressed by their truthfulness. Indeed, the level of veracity has been much higher than we expected. We have several ways to check this. First, we have been able to interview several men who have been captured or have rallied from the same unit over a period of time. The statements of these various people can be checked against each other. Second, the ARVN authorities are able to interview many more people than we do, and a few of their questions overlap with ours. We can therefore cross-check our interviews with the ARVN interviews, particularly insofar as factual

Perhaps our selection technique can be explained by using a very rough analogy. Suppose one wanted to obtain a picture of the attitudes and experiences of American personnel in Saigon, and could interview only those who happened to be in the PX on Thursday afternoons. From this assortment of potential respondents, one could select a few officers, some enlisted men, and some civilians. One could also try to ensure that several of the respondents were from MACV or the Second Air Division, while others were from USOM, USIS, or the Embassy. One would be relatively more interested in those who had been in Saigon for a year or more, but would probably also want to talk to a number who had recently arrived. If exhaustive interviews with several dozen of these people were conducted, a fairly adequate picture of what life looked like to most Americans in Saigon could be obtained. This picture would, of course, still have some serious limitations. The sample probably would not contain any generals or any very high-ranking civilians, nor would it include those who had no PX privileges, and several other categories of personnel might be in short supply. Nevertheless, one could still learn something about those who could not be interviewed from those who were available.

Our sample is roughly comparable to this. We have talked with no very high-ranking members of the Viet Cong, and there are some types of units and personnel that are underrepresented. Nevertheless, we feel that we have covered the principal categories of personnel and units, and that we now have a fairly adequate picture of motivation and morale within the middle and lower ranks of the Viet Cong organization.

statements are concerned. Captured documents provide another check. Third, since our interviews are so long, we can do a great deal of internal cross-checking, and by the end of several hours our interviewers have a fairly accurate impression of whether or not a person is telling the truth. Finally, the interview situation is such that respondents tend to relax and talk freely. Usually, the Vietnamese interviewer and the respondent are alone. For most respondents, the interview is a pleasant relief from a dreary period of confinement; the subject matter is interesting to them; no questions about highly sensitive military matters are asked; and the interviewer is a sympathetic and agreeable person who does not bring any form of pressure to bear. In some cases it has been difficult to break off the interview because the respondent wanted to go on talking.

The conclusions drawn from interviews with a sample such as this one are not invariably accurate. However, as far as motivation and morale are concerned, we feel that they are more accurate than conclusions that can at present be obtained from any other source. We are gradually advancing from a very low level of understanding of the Viet Cong to a somewhat higher level. As more and more interviews are completed, and the sample becomes more diversified, we will be able to sharpen our analysis, refine our conclusions and to state them with more confidence. In the long run, of course, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If the Viet Cong actually behave more or less in the way we think they are going to behave then our analysis is likely to be the correct one.