THREE MONTHS IN VIETNAM - A TRIP REPORT
THE PARAMILITARY WAR

J. W. Ellis
M. B. Schaffer

16 August 1967

For RAND Use Only
DO NOT QUOTE OR CITE IN EXTERNAL RAND PUBLICATIONS OR CORRESPONDENCE
This document presents the edited text of a RAND-wide briefing given on 27 April 1967, shortly after the authors' return. Also, additional material from the question and answer period is included where useful points were developed and could be deciphered from the tape.

The content of this document should be considered in the raw data and travelogue category and not as organized analysis or findings from a study. It is reproduced here for whatever value that data may have as one more bit of evidence bearing on one phase of the present war in South Vietnam.
We want to talk to you today fairly informally about the beginnings of our study about a year ago—how we got interested in the subject—and then, after a brief resume of how we proceeded and why we went to Vietnam, to give you some indication of to whom we spoke, where we went, some of the sights we saw, and some brief—not conclusions, but at least tentative hypotheses that we formed during the trip.

Many of you will I think remember that early last summer we started thinking seriously about how airpower, in particular the USAF contribution to airpower, could fit in with the national pacification program in Vietnam. It now goes under the title of Revolutionary Development, at least amongst the Americans. The Vietnamese have their own phrase to describe it which isn't exactly the same, and really taxes translation. It connotes something like the connection between the rural inhabitant and the idea, or concept of nationhood.

What we became concerned about was the security aspect of rural development programs—not the content of the programs themselves—not the economic or social or political developments, but the protective security screen that most people have in the past blamed for the failure to prevent interference from VC activity, coercion, threats, retaliation, etc. In the short term, we were looking at Vietnam in the specific sense as to how we could implement something quickly, with resources in hand, to enhance rural security. In the longer term, we want to try to apply whatever we might learn from operations in Vietnam to make some more generalized comments with respect to what the USAF ought to be prepared for in a similar environment in the future.

After formulating some preliminary concepts, we spent three or four months discussing them with various elements of the Pentagon, Tactical Air Command and PACAF. We tried out our ideas and concepts, listened to theirs, explored whether or not the AF was really interested in applying any of its resources to a rather novel or, at least, different function. The reaction was unanimous. All agreed on the importance of the local security mission and encouraged us to assess the potential of airpower in that role. Consequently, we have just
spent over three months in Vietnam trying to get an understanding of the RD program itself and its security requirements, USAF resources and operations (particularly in the VR and strike roles) and, finally, US Army air power (with emphasis on VR and armed helicopter operations).

The rest of this 45 minutes or so will be concerned with three things: an end-of-tour, or trip report description of what we did, some slides (either to revive your interest or put you to sleep depending upon your nature) showing general scenery and also some specific elements relating to the rural security problem, and then a few hypothetical findings. I emphasize their hypothetical nature since we probably cannot document to everyone's (including our own) satisfaction that these things really will hold up. But they're beginnings of some ideas of how the USAF can do two things: contribute more to the security in the pacification program and also, incidentally, improve its own in-country operations against the VC in general.

First of all we show a map for general orientation. The four Corps areas are, I think, well understood by most everyone. These red dots here represent places that we visited on this trip, and you'll see they cluster in only 3 of the 4 Corps. This was by design and a little bit by accident. The weather during the period that we were out there was abominable in the northern area—transportation by air therefore was very time-consuming and difficult. Also, the Marine Corps has the main responsibility for this area, particularly in the pacification business, and we just decided to concentrate on the rest of the country where the USAF and the USA and the Vietnamese Army and VNAF have more of the forces involved and more of the responsibility. Generally speaking, we covered the IV and II Corps area by air, whereas the visits to III Corps were all made by road. The outlying portions of III Corps are relatively uninhabited, and it is there that many of the large operations are being conducted against the VC.

Concerning the organizations we visited and the people we talked with, we covered the waterfront from MACV/7th AF/USARV, on down through the GVN Corps headquarters, the US Corps (which are called Field forces), the Province/Sector level and the District/Subsector. The latter is the lowest level of the Vietnamese civil administrative organization
at which there are American advisors. There is usually a standard team of six Americans, all Army, at the Subsector. The Province, the next higher echelon, does have AF representation, usually at least one Captain or Major who is the Air Liaison Officer/FAC for the Province. Sometimes there are as many as three; it depends on the size of the Province and the military activity in the area. But Province is the lowest level in the ground warfare advisory business at which there is USAF representation.

As mentioned earlier, it was our intention to look at three different but contributing pieces of the problem of rural pacification as we saw it. First was the Revolutionary Development program itself which is largely a Vietnamese activity but supported with heavy financial and US-aid-type advisory and materiel support. Secondly, we wanted to determine how the USAF runs its business out there, in-country—how it conducts its operations, how targets are developed, etc. The third was an attempt to come to grips with the entire gamut of Army Aviation activities. Organizationally, there are two kinds of Army Aviation elements in Vietnam and we'll get into that in a few minutes.

First of all, on the Revolutionary Development program, most of our opportunity to observe and have anything to do with the field operations was in II and III Corps. This covered the central Highland area and the region immediately surrounding Saigon. Therefore, the kinds of ideas and suggestions which we have formulated and on which Marv will speak later may not be equally valid throughout South Vietnam. This is particularly so with respect to the IV Corps area which is basically different in that there are very few functioning American ground units there at the moment. Those few that do exist are in the northern reaches of the delta only a few miles south of Saigon.

Fortunately, we had access to the Combined Campaign Plan for 1967 which includes all operations against the VC. One of the major portions of the Plan is the Revolutionary Development Program. (We have assembled extracts from the Plan which are available in D form here at RAND.) The Combined Plan consists of the basic document itself and several annexes which deal with specific things such as securing the LOC's, the RD program, the National Priority Areas (there are now four, one
in each Corps area), and other features of the campaign to defeat the VC and to develop the country. The unique thing about the plan this year is that it truly emphasizes Revolutionary Development for the first time. It makes clear that a large portion—up to half—of ARVN (the Army of the RVN) is to be assigned to area security missions in support of Revolutionary Development activities. This is quite a striking change, and later we will mention some of the problems involved in bringing it about and also whether or not there are any obvious indications that it is beginning to happen.

RD is considered to consist, in this plan, of three phases. In a given area they'll be sequential, but across the country there will be areas which fall into all three phases simultaneously. First is the clearing phase, for which ARVN bears the main responsibility. The idea here is to put in large units, battalions and above, of ARVN to sweep through an area to hopefully drive out the VC military units if not destroy them. In theory the clearing phase does not end until there is no enemy unit larger than a Platoon free to operate in this area.

The second phase is one called securing, in which the civil/economic/political/social development program that is the heart of RD begins to take place. The security responsibility for this phase is transferred from ARVN to the Regional Force (under provincial control) and the Popular Force (village-based and usually under District control). These units are known by various titles, one of which is "Rough Puff;" most of the others are not so complimentary. They're ill-trained, ill-equipped, have a high desertion rate, their authorized strength is something like 300,000 countrywide.

The final phase, the developing phase, is to be more of a long-term effort and merges into the conventional government programs of nationbuilding. Here the security again is supposed to be one step further removed from obvious, overt, organized military activity and is intended to revert to the national police and the local police. This is the theory.

After having visited maybe a dozen or more installations in the provinces, districts, outposts, hamlets, and watchtowers, where the RF/PP live and, presumably, ply their trade, after watching the cadre
at work (i.e., the RD team members who are supposed to bring about the social revolution), you can come to some sort of general conclusion as to what is going on. Unfortunately it reminds one of things that have gone on in the past and have gone out of existence in the past. However, the program is new and there are some encouraging signs. In its scope, the 1967 plan is a retrenchment from the 1966 program. This is a very realistic step. Planning within limits of capability is a concept which has been very difficult to get accepted in the past. As an example, the present plan looks for the addition of something like about 4% of the population in 1967, whereas the '66 plan spoke in terms of 14%; previous plans were talking in terms of 60-75%. So at least the trend is in the right direction. Interestingly enough regarding the 1966 plan, the general estimates of how well they met the 14% goal run from something like 50-60%. In the 1967 plan, besides the 4% that they are supposed to gain through newly-secured areas, they talk in terms of consolidating gains already made with a further 38% of the population. Coincidentally, this 8% is roughly the 50-60% of the 14% of 1966--so that may be an indication of how lasting was the 1966 effort.

But, the sense of the program as we see it, at least in our limited sample, is that actions are being taken. National plans and funding have been drawn up, local province plans to support the national plan have been developed and approved, the training of the RD teams is in full swing, the retraining of the ARVN is beginning to accept its new function, the RD teams are actually being inserted into the countryside. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it's too early to tell what is going to happen or how successful they're going to be.

Now, on to AF operations. Here it was our intention to try to find out how targets are generated for in-country strikes, who generates them, on the basis of what kind of information, what channels of approval exist--when a target is nominated, who has to say yes you can bomb it or you can't, is the district involved, the province, the division, the Corps, the TACC level at Saigon (essentially the national level)--are there differences in these kinds of operational practices from corps to corps, and from, even, division to division. How in general are the air resources allocated against competing demands from various
organizations and consumers, and who are the main consumers—is it the U.S. Army, the ARVN; does the pacification program per se get any measurable share of this resource or not.

In dealing with the role of Army Aviation, we have a different problem. The USAF and the VNAF are pretty well organized in a centralized control fashion with descending order of latitude in the execution of a program. Army Aviation is organized in just the opposite direction. There are two kinds of aviation resources in the first place, one is organic to all of the American divisions. Each American division and some of the independent brigades have organic aviation units under their own command. These we have not had a chance to investigate; they are largely engaged in supporting the division and its operations and are strictly under the control of the unit commander, utilized as he sees fit. The only evidence of operations of that nature exist in the summary reports that have to be consolidated in Saigon and sent forward. These sum up things like sorties per day, tonnage of ordnance of various kinds expended, and this kind of thing. It's impossible to find out, without going and observing them in action, exactly what they are doing, how they're utilized.

On the other hand, there is a very large pool of Army aviation resources which are organized and deployed in a fashion similar to the USAF. They are organized into one group per corps area, each group having several battalions. These however are not centrally controlled as in the USAF Tactical Air Control System. Their operational employment is decentralized at least down to the battalion level (which means below the corps level), so that there are no readily available control centers where you can go to find out how the targets are generated for these forces, how they're employed, on what kind of missions, with what kind of ordnance, in support of what ground units, etc. We hope that Greg Carter, who is still out in Vietnam, has been able to get farther down this Army chain than we were while we were there to get some of the details of how this resource is managed and utilized. It would be useful for us, at least, to consider this insofar as pacification is concerned because of two things: First of all, they're deployed in more numerous locations around the countryside than the USAF is,
therefore they're close to where pacification security demands arise. That is, they're the most readily available air resource in terms of numbers and of deployed locations. In terms of numbers alone, they far exceed the number of airplanes in-country; there are something around 2,000 helicopters in Vietnam. This includes however both the organic and the non-organic aviation.

To sum up this part of what we have to say: We went out to try to find out about pacification and about the possible kinds of security forces that might be oriented toward providing a more secure screen around pacification. In talking to many, many people—both Army Air Force and civilian, we generally find no real quarrel with the idea that properly configured air power (I emphasize the word airpower and not air forces) can and should be able to contribute significantly to enhancing the security in local areas. You find, when you first start to talk to many Army people, they have in their minds the idea that you are talking about F-4's churning up the countryside around villages and inside hamlets—they have a natural tendency both on well-reasoned grounds and also just on Army-Air Forces differences of doctrine to react negatively to this. If you pursue the question you find that they are certainly not adverse to having helicopter fire support in exactly the same circumstances; this is one of the main reasons that we have to emphasize the airpower aspects instead of the Air Force aspects. Generally speaking we get no real quarrel with the concept. On the other hand, despite the joint campaign plan which lays heavy emphasis on the security demands of pacification, allocating of half of ARVN to this job, we find no evidence whatsoever in the 7th AF or in Army Aviation (e.g. the independent Army Aviation Brigade) of any emphasis or any thought ever having been given to the fact that perhaps some of their resources ought to be applied to that problem. The command briefings at the TACC, the senior organization that controls all air resources in-country as well as out-country, never even mention Revolutionary Development—the word just doesn't occur. The mechanisms that both the US Army and USAF use to generate targets or to allocate resources amongst targets in support of the Regional or the Popular forces are the same ones that are used to support ARVN and US Army requests for air support. The
result is clear. The USA demands for air support clearly dominate. They soak up the vast majority of the resources. What they don't get, the ARVN does, in its role as a national army. This leaves very little to trickle down into routine support of those units whose job it is to provide the local area security.

Finally, we have two points about the timeliness of any recommendations, ideas or conclusions we may have to present in the next few months. As I mentioned earlier in the Revolutionary Development business, it is just really getting started, particularly in the '67 scope. There are promising features, as I mentioned earlier. The ARVN is being retrained, gradually; the RD teams (the individual people) are being trained, and old teams which were assembled from individuals rather than from trained classes are being sent back to Vung Tau for team training. There's a Montagnard training school in Pleiku, which is training Montagnard teams to work in the Montagnard area. And as an aside to that, for the first time in history there is a Montagnard province chief—a point which it seems to me should have been used to great advantage in combating much of the VC propaganda directed towards the Highlanders. And maybe it is, but it's not obvious that it's getting out to the rest of the country—and perhaps that's on purpose too. Some of the other previous efforts at training Montagnards for security service and for irregular activity as Trung Son are being reoriented entirely in terms of the pacification program now, so there is a net addition to the resources available for the village and hamlet RD teams.

While it's really too early to tell whether or not this program is going to succeed any better than others, there are some indications that some of the same old problems are still there. Many of the teams don't stay overnight in the hamlet, an indication of their assessment of the state of local security. There is very little obvious evidence of meaningful military support from the Regional or Popular forces, and Mav will have more to say about that I think later. There's a lack of communications in the RF/PF and RD teams. Equipment-wise, availability is limited as is the range of the radios they do have. Quite often, they're off at the district or province for repair and there's no spares. So even if something does happen and there's an
outpost a click (kilometer) down the road, there's no way other than running
down there to call for help.

As yet there has been really very little overt VC reaction to the
RD program other than propaganda; and VC internal documents, which have
been captured, speak in terms of emphasizing the attacks or the destruc-
tion of pacification efforts in being. There is no concerted campaign
at least that has shown up yet, but based on past experience, it should
not be long in coming. So, what this boils down to, in my mind, is that
these indications have some implications that, within the next few months,
there is going to be a very fertile field for ideas concerning increasing
the security around these Revolutionary Development activities. And if
it's not immediately obvious now, it won't be long before it is.

As far as the USAF is concerned, it has a very large and capable
machine in operation out there, turning out something between 4 and 500
sorties a day, in-country. Most of these are going in support of US
Army efforts to defeat the hard-core VC/NVA organized units. Sooner or
later that activity, for one reason or another--either because we de-
feat them or because they choose to disengage, damp down their operation,
or whatever--this activity is going to diminish. When it does, what's
the USAF going to do with all those resources? They haven't thought,
to our knowledge, word one about what they're going to do with them.
The two obvious things to do are either to pull them out or to continue
to do the kind of interdiction and preplanned bombing that is now done
on the basis of intelligence information, most of which is either in-
correct, uncertain, or old. Our thesis is that the USAF ought, in its
own interests, to be thinking about alternate employment of these re-
sources in a way which could contribute to the general and continuing
goal that we are supporting presently, namely securing the countryside
and developing it.

Enough of this--on with the travelog. Marv has some slides to
show you what some of the countryside looks like.

(MARV)

We'll flip through a few slides, partially to provide a break and
partially to prove we were there. You should be able to tell from the
quality of the slides; we couldn't possibly have bought them. Recognizing that we've been irrevocably upstaged and preempted by CBS and NBC, we're going to confine our selections to rural Vietnam. We'll show them roughly in chronological order, and those of you who want to see girls in ao dais on Flower Street in Saigon, you'll have to arrange for a private showing.

The first couple of slides show the aircraft in which we traveled over a good part of the Delta--this one is a Dornier, a 4-seater; this is a C-45 holding about 10 passengers. We also flew in a Pilatus Porter on occasion, through the Delta; we've flown in C-46's and C-123's. The next slide is a shot of the Cao Lanh airstrip, which is in the central part of the Delta; next slide shows it from the ground. As you can see this is not the busiest air terminal in the world. Usually parked at the strip are the FAC airplanes, the aircraft that fly the visual reconnaissance program and do the forward air controlling, the 0-1; this picture is the AF version. Here's a close-up of it, showing the marking rockets under the wing; this is the only armament carried on the airplane. There's a big controversy now as to whether the armament should be upgraded and it probably won't be. The Army also has a similar kind of airplane--actually the same airplane--they call it the L-19, and it's known as the Shotgun, and it's engaged in the same activities, visual reconnaissance. It does not do forward air controlling however.

Next slide is an air view of a canal en route to Vi Thanh and this is a typical type of village in the Delta, built along the canal. A good deal of the bombing done in the Delta is against targets like this; they just essentially bomb tree lines. This is the airstrip at Vi Thanh surrounded on three sides by water. (Q: Intentionally? JWE: That's where they get the soil for the runway.) This is the air terminal at Vi Thanh. We have a few roadside scenes en route from the airstrip to the town itself, a roadside blockhouse, another, and this is the main street of Vi Thanh.

Moving on a week or so, we're now on our way to Long An Province by automobile, in the Delta, and are about to visit the city of Tan An. This is a roadside blockhouse, a very prevalent type of fortification in the Delta. (Q: Are those Vietnamese buses? A: Yes.)
A typical type of thatched roof house in the Delta. Incidentally, this is Gerry Hickey country, and for those of you that are interested in the construction of the houses, mechanism of how the harvesting is done, I very strongly recommend his book, Village in Vietnam which he wrote about a village in Long An province. We were there just about the end of January and it was harvest time. This is threshing. This is the main street of Tan An.

We then moved on to Hau Nghia Province, Duc Hoa District, and visited two outposts. This is one. This is a shot of the fortifications themselves, and this shows the fire arrow. They use these at night to indicate to aircraft the direction of VC attack. They're nothing more than cans with kerosene-dipped rags in them. I don't know that they've ever been used effectively but they exist all over Vietnam. Here is a watchtower in Duc Hoa. Most of these outposts and watchtowers exist either adjacent to a hamlet or a village and presumably provide security for it, or alongside a road or 100 yards off the road to serve as road security. The outposts that are adjacent to villages generally are very poorly laid out. What happens is that at night the important hamleters and villagers come into the outpost and close the door. One wonders who is protecting whom. Certainly the outposts, in many cases, are not protecting villagers which I believe is their intent. (Q: When were the watchtowers built. A: They were built all through the period from about 1959 through the present, starting with the early days of the insurgency. I don't know when those particular ones were built.)

We have now moved on to the village of Phu Huu in Binh Duong Province. This is Ted Serong, our Australian host who is now a civilian employee of OCO, the Office of Civilian Operations. He arranged the bulk of our travel in III Corps. What we're looking at is the cadre office, the Revolutionary Development cadre office in Phu Huu village, and leaning in the window is one of the cadre. Here are more of them. This particular variety carry weapons and wear yellow and red bandanas. (Rudolfo is Ted Serong's assistant.) And adjacent to the cadre office was a school, and of course the kids, which are superabundant in Vietnam, hammed it up for us a little.
We have now moved on to a village in Pleiku Province. This is a Montagnard village and it was located just off Route 19 (which is the east-west road between Pleiku and Qui Nhon) about 10 miles from Pleiku City. Directly across the road from this village was the headquarters of a tank battalion and when we arrived they were busily engaged in artillery practice. That was quite an arrival. The people living here were officially classed as refugees having come down from the surrounding hills. However, in that part of Viet Nam there has been a general movement of the Montagnard from the hills to the roadside communities and one wonders whether they are doing this simply because they are semi-nomadic anyway and they are moving to better and more fertile farmland and partially to trade with the Americans (and I strongly suspect the latter), or to come under GVN protection. These huts were self built using the materials provided by AID. AID also built the water spillway which I'll have a slide of.

In this hamlet there were no cadre and no fence. This is the characteristic type of Montagnard house on stilts. People generally sit under the house during the day to stay out of the sun. Q: Do people farm in the nearby vicinities? A: Yes, they are all basically farmers. Q: As you go along in these things can you indicate whether these areas have much or little or no Viet Cong activity around them? A: In this particular part of Pleiku Province there is VC activity but there is also a heavy military presence. The Montagnard people themselves (in my opinion) did not seem particularly worried about VC incursion. This is not necessarily true of the ethnic Vietnamese. Q: Do they have any self defense? A: The Montagnards? Q: Yes. A: Not in the villages that we built. Apparently there are some that do.

This is the dam, the spillway built by AID. These are the sandbags and here is a close-up of it showing pipes inserted in the sandbags to provide a water overflow. This is apparently all they wanted, what they asked for and it made them very happy. Q: What sort of houses did they live in in the hills? A: Same kind. This is their traditional house. Q: But they built them up there themselves? A: Without tin roofs though. Q: And what happened to those, are they
still standing up there in the hills? A: This is the usual pattern. (Audience--they turned them over to a real estate dealer). Typical Montagnard dress, different, of course, from that of the ethnic Vietnamese. Mammy Yokum with her pipe sitting under the house. Q: What are the white signs up there Marv, do they say anything? (Audience--probably says when they were sprayed). A: I can't tell.

Now we've moved on to a second Montagnard village. This was along the same road, a few miles closer to Pleiku. This was several hundred yards off the road. When we arrived the scene was practically deserted. A few people were poking their heads around the houses. This changed very quickly. People began to notice us and trickle out. Q: Do these people own this land, or is land given by AID? A: No, they are essentially squatters. They just reside on the land; there are no certificates of ownership and this incidentally would probably be a good ploy for the CVN to take. Of course these people don’t stay there forever. They move on every 7-10 years. Their type of agriculture requires it. Q: Is there no fertilizer used? A: Of course, we've started to introduce fertilizer but they hadn't used it themselves? Q: What do they raise in the highlands? A: Rice, all sorts of vegetables. Highland rice, corn, that's about all. Q: Each time they move does the AID furnish a new village for them, or do they take it with them or what? A: I don't think that AID has been around long enough to establish that kind of pattern with these people. Traditionally they move every 7-10 years as they wear out their land using slash and burn techniques. Q: Do the farmers function as a cooperative? A: Well, speaking from books that I've read, yes. Q: What do you mean yes. A: Yes, they farm cooperatively. Q: Had any of these villages you visited been hit by the VC? A: These hadn't been, but some we visited in the Delta had been hit on many occasions. The outposts in Duc Hoa had been attacked several times and overrun on occasions. Q: Well, what do the VC do in this upper area? If it doesn't hit these villages then what does it hit? You said there was a lot of activity, that the military was active there. What do they do? A: Well, there are certain districts in which the military have not
made great strides as yet and the VC has heavily infiltrated those villages; they essentially control them, they conduct political meetings and presumably launch terroristic raids from these places. Q: Against what? A: Against other, more friendly villages. Also, in this particular part of Vietnam, they collect taxes from road traffic. In fact this is the largest source of VC income. Q: Do they get the Montagnards to cooperate as VC actives? A: Some. In Pleiku province and in the other provinces of the highlands is where the VC main force and NVA live, i.e., in the mountains to the west, between there and the Cambodian border. They form a divide from which the terrain slopes down to the Mekong Basin. That territory is where several of the VC divisions live. It's the scene of the great battles in the Fall of '65 when the Americans first went in. There were several long, pitched battles but the VC are still there.

You see the little kid on the back of this girl. The Montagnards carry their children in a different way than the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese carry them on their hip. I've always thought that accounted for the traditional Vietnamese walk. Q: Marv, do Montagnards provide intelligence on VC activity? A: Some do. They are treated, as far as organizing their villages in the same way that the ethnic Vietnamese are. Cadre go in and initiate political action, build a fence where it is required, attempt to set up an intelligence system. Sometimes they are successful, sometimes they are not. In the particular villages we are looking at, that sort of activity had never been attempted. One village was very new, and the other had been there for some time but with no VC problems.

We have now moved on to Ban Me Thuot province which is about 100 miles closer to Saigon and also in the highlands. This is an ethnic Vietnamese hamlet of about 1000 people. The people here were refugees in the legitimate sense. They had come down from an area where an operation of the 23rd division was about to take place and had been urged to relocate by GVN leaflets. These people had originally been forceably relocated from the Hue-Danang area by the Diem regime in 1955. In the hamlet there was one Vung Tau cadre team operating a 59 man team trained in the city of Vung Tau, plus a company of ARVN.
The ARVN were bivouaced outside a partially completed fence. As a matter of interest, the census had revealed that in this hamlet out of a thousand people there were exactly 60 males between the ages of 15 and 35. One wonders where all the young men had gone.

The first slide shows a group of the cadre. Here are more of them, and this is a cinderblock manufacturing operation that the cadre have organized. Again, a typical Vietnamese thatched roof house. Q: Do the villagers own the land in common--is it all common land--or are there land owners in this village? A: I don't know what the procedures are in this part of Vietnam. In the Delta, most of the land in the village itself is privately owned and a certain per cent of it is allocated to communal use. I'm not sure whether those same procedures hold in the highlands. (Generally speaking in the Highlands there has never been a cadastral survey. There is no basis for land titles, primarily because there has never been a very large permanent settlement of Vietnamese.) Q: Is their only tax structure tolls, then, or do they have land taxes? A: Produce tax. They tax their crops. Q: Are Montagnards given all the rights of the normal Vietnamese? A: In theory, yes. In practice, no. (They wouldn't know what to do with them anyway.)

This is a fence. Another view of it, a double fence. This is where the ARVN was bivouaced outside the fence. (Are you sure this is not an old western?) And now on to the substantive part of the briefing.

We're going to talk about how one might augment the contribution of airpower to the Revolutionary Development of SVN.

As a preface, one might ask the question: is it necessary? Does one want to provide airpower to support Revolutionary Development? Our answer is yes on two grounds: In the present stages of the war it makes sense due to insufficient reliable ground forces and in the final, developing stages of Revolutionary Development it is indicated because of the requirement for a highly mobile constabulary.

Addressing each of these points in turn, now, let's look at the forces which have been committed to Revolutionary Development. On the side of SVN you have roughly half the ARVN: 150,000 plus 300,000
Regional and Popular forces. Jack mentioned some of the uncertainties associated with these numbers. Also there are 60,000 National police forces. These (in principle) are largely Police Field Forces although at present there are only 7,000 PFF. There are other types of national police also who are engaged in traffic control and that sort of thing. But the plans call for 60,000 National Police Field forces to go out into rural Vietnam and assist in the Revolutionary Development process. This yields 510,000 total exclusive of the US/Free World military assistance forces and the rest of the ARVN.

The VC figures come from the official 7th Air Force briefing which we heard in February. They comprise 113,000 Main Force and North Vietnamese Army troops, 112,000 guerrillas and terrorist fighters, and 58,000 support personnel.

If you eliminate the 113,000 Main Force VC you have a 3/1 ratio at best. Of course we haven't been too successful about eliminating the Main Force VC and the NVA in spite of some fairly strenuous efforts in that regard in the past year or so; but the fact is that while they are not eliminated, it becomes literally impossible for the ARVN to devote half its force to supporting Revolutionary Development. This in fact, has not really been achieved and won't be until the VC main force is suitably dispersed. Also the 300,000 RF/PF consists of a mixed bag of troops whose loyalty and motivation has certainly been questionable from the very beginning. In my judgment, we really have a 1 to 1 ratio to support Revolutionary Development and this is hardly the kind of security designed to inspire the villagers with confidence.

Addressing the second point, the need for constabulary, we have constructed a graph in the best tradition of RAND. This graph has no numbers on it. In fact, I'm not really sure what the ordinates and abscissas mean. The ordinates depict the % real estate or hamlets controlled by the government, we're not quite sure how to measure that. The abscissa is the percentage of the population with a positive attitude toward the government and we're even less sure how to measure that. Nevertheless it is certainly clear that at the start of an insurgency, a good hunk of the real estate is owned by the government and a fairly sizable percent of the population had some sort of good
feelings toward it. The objective of the early stages of insurgency is to erode the support of some of those people and since it is done with terror attacks or persuasion and not with large military forces, there is not a great deal of real estate that changes hands. But in phase III of the insurgency, the insurgents do begin to operate in large military units and attempt to gain some of the real estate, and so we've shown a change in slope. Just about this time (or sometime before that), the government gets worried and starts to organize a very vigorous counter campaign (in this particular case, it is known as Revolutionary Development) in an attempt to reverse the process. Initially the government operates in large forces clearing out the VC from villages it wishes to regain and, initially, it regains large hunks of territory but does not affect the people too much. Later it concentrates on the political action type of activity hoping to regain the people.

Now the point of this is that this process is almost by definition not reversible. There is a hysteresis that will exist. One is going to end the insurgency/COIN process with dissident elements remaining permanently, probably for a generation or so. Whether or not you end up with a permanent loss of real estate or gain of real estate is not relevant.

The point that I would like to stress is that the disaffections that have been induced in some members of Vietnamese society by this process, by counterinsurgency produced deaths and injury and property loss, to say nothing of losses in prestige and respectibility, are just not going to be quickly or easily overcome no matter how intense the level of civic action. The one principle that has been observed to be true, not only in this war but as a time tested principle as well, is that overwhelming military presence on a continuing basis tends to cause the population to act as if they're sympathetic. You're not really sure what they're thinking, but they're acting as if they're sympathetic. And to the extent that its rigidly enforced, this military presence induces the people to obey the law. These manifestations of behavior are about all one can count on if we wish to remain conservative in our planning. We're not sure that any of this civic action
business is going to work. We are sure that the military presence works. But unfortunately, a continued heavy military presence is more than we wish to undertake. However, this presence need not be in the form of ground forces. There is no reason why an air constabulary couldn't at least be thoroughly investigated, and that's the suggestion that we're making.

Now, what are some of these suggestions for augmenting the contributions that air power can make in Revolutionary Development. We have three. I'd like to preface these with the statement that we're not claiming that air power is not now making a contribution to Revolutionary Development. It is making a very large contribution insofar as its supporting (and very well) the American forces fighting on the ground. They are undertaking the destruction of VC main bases and facilities, and this is an integral part of the RD strategy. The Air Force is making a major contribution. But there is a lot more we feel they can do. One of the things we feel they can do is to increase the direct support to the hamlets, villages, outposts and watchtowers in South Vietnam. Another is to reorient the visual reconnaissance program to include, if not emphasize, support of the Regional and Popular forces. Finally we would propose to create a force to provide air strike and air lift to Vietnamese National Police Forces.

Addressing each of these in turn then. Under the heading of direct support to the hamlets we would propose, and this is already being done in some parts in Vietnam, to provide direct radio communication between forward air controller, Spooky and Phyllis Ann aircraft. Spooky is the flareship, AC-47 generally, C-47; Phyllis Ann aircraft are also C-47's and their job is to monitor VC radio communication. Each type flies all over Vietnam and generally has a Vietnamese on board. They can speak the language, they have all sorts of radio communication, generally have the facilities to communicate with the hamlets. However, they don't have the mission and there is also no mechanism, in theory, for them to relay requests for assistance. So we would propose that that mechanism be created.

We would propose to indoctrinate the paramilitary and ARVN forces supporting revolutionary development in the benefits of supporting air,
and the proper tactics to employ when coordinating with air. Not all the outposts, of course, are presently constructed such that they could properly utilize air support. Some of them are built right in the village and there is no conceivable way to provide air support in that case. I would contend that such an outpost is not providing a useful function except to give a safe place to sleep for the hamlet and village officials. This is not a defense.

We would extend the MSQ-77 radar system to include outposts in general. Now this is easily done. It requires a survey; it turns out that this system has been very successful. This is the beacon system whereby F-100's can bomb all-weather and all hours with about a 300 ft. CEP. It works out very well where they have surveyed it in, but they have not surveyed in the outposts and hamlets in general. Many of them could very beneficially use such a system; not all of them, as I've mentioned.

We would propose to tailor the aircraft ordnance utilization much more selectively. Certainly to support hamlets, one would want to use small discriminating ordnance; discrimination in ordnance is largely a matter of scale. One can use 100 lb. bombs very effectively to provide close support where one cannot use a 750 lb. bomb. In that same respect, it is just a matter of size. But minigun support, small rocket support, 40 millimeter grenade support—all would be appropriate. All are well within present capabilities of Vietnam.

We would provide air lift in response to sector and subsector requirements. Many of the complaints we heard, particularly in the Delta, were that they just lacked the mobility at sector level and subsector/district level to go out on operations. It is almost completely unknown for airlift to be provided to these people with which to conduct their operations. There is a shortage of airlift, and I recognize that, but still to get the proper benefit of those 300,000RF/PF, which will be required to swing the force balance in our favor, one will have to provide this kind of support and at this level.

Reorienting the visual reconnaissance program would entail several changes. First we would deemphasize countrywide coverage and border security and emphasize air cap over the RF/PF outposts supporting the
pacification hamlets. The present MACV policy (i.e., the present strategy in the visual reconnaissance program) is to demonstrate government presence all over the country. To do this frequent missions are flown over the whole country in a systematic way—looking for random sightings. They do not, as a matter of SOP, check in with hamlets and outposts that they happen to fly over. We think they are missing a very good bet. In fact, it would be possible to do this without really changing the current routine. The benefits of checking in with the outposts (i.e., of the FAC’s checking in the outposts) would not simply be a matter of encouragement and motivation. It would also be a matter of better intelligence. These people are generally isolated and they’ve never received air support before. There is a lot in the way of intelligence that could be passed back and forth between an outpost and the FAC to assist him in his visual reconnaissance activity. Second, we would reemphasize and undertake nighttime visual reconnaissance utilizing Firefly, LLLTV and IR techniques and, in fact, even attempt nighttime VR without these aids. There is some controversy among the FAC themselves as to whether or not this could be successful. Of course, some of these other techniques are already being used, but the Air Force is not emphasizing them in-country. It turns out the Army is flying Firefly missions and is conducting the bulk of the experimentation in the LLLTV, I believe. Q: What are Fireflies? A: It’s a helicopter with search lights plus a light fire team that flies at a relatively low altitude and does a fairly good job of illuminating a restricted field. (They are used along the canals looking for water-borne traffic.) Third, we would require that visual reconnaissance findings be interpreted in terms of relevance to Revolutionary Development. If you look at the cumulative sample of sightings that has been generated by the VR Program, I think one has to come to the conclusion that it's largely concerned with uncorrelated attrition. What they're trying to do is kill as many VC as possible and this is a matter of policy. But after looking at a month or two of that kind of information, one asks the question, what is the military significance of all this? And no one can give an answer. You don't know how much damage you have done to the 524th VC Main Force Battalion and you don't know what the
impact of your work has been in helping to secure XYZ hamlet, and so on. And so the suggestion I would make is that the VR sightings be interpreted in terms of their relevance to Revolutionary Development. Require that before an air strike is called against a bunch of guys that have been identified as VC, that one make the attempt to associate them with a particular VC organization and attempt to justify the air strike in terms of what the threat is to a particular hamlet in which pacification is being attempted. Q: Who would do that, Marv? A: I would propose that the Air Force would have to up-grade the quality of its intelligence staff at the sector level to do this. Now this same suggestion was made about a year ago (in the summer of '66) and at that time the response was to send an intelligence airman out to the sector level. Most of the sectors have this intelligence airman at the present. It turns out, and we have spoken to a number of them, that these fellows know nothing at all about intelligence, are very inarticulate and generally do not know the intelligence picture in their own sector. They are pretty good radio operators and excellent clerks. As opposed to this, of course, in the next building—sometimes in the same office, there is an Army S-2 on the advisory staff who is just the opposite. He’s a captain or major and knows the intelligence picture. One might ask, why can’t you utilize him? Well, the fact of the matter is that in many sectors in Vietnam, the Army is running its program, and the Air Force is running its and VR sightings are intended to result in air strikes. And that’s my next point, incidentally. I would, as an additional point, upgrade the priority given to ground corroboration of VR-generated targets. The recommendation that the FAC makes, that the intelligence airmen makes, at the conclusion of VR mission when a sighting has occurred is to recommend either an air strike or continued observation or photography or some such thing— but nowhere is there a formal mechanism to recommend ground follow-up. We think that this leads to all sorts of difficulties. First of all, the Army types at sector don’t know what the Air Force is doing. They do pass reports back and forth, but this is just a matter of a reporting system. It gets ground into the system, and no one acts on it. What we would require is for the Air Force to justify their sighting in terms of
relevance, to recommend certain specific actions including ground follow-up if necessary, and for the Army S-2/S-3 types to be forced to respond yea or nay with justification. And as a very simple implementing mechanism, we would recommend a slight revision in the present Form 13 which contains the options.

Regarding the air constabulary, we would create a force to provide tactical air lift and air strike to Vietnamese National Police Forces, specifically to the Police Field Forces who are going to be known incidentally, as constabulary in Vietnam. This again would require specialized aircraft and ordnance. The ordnance is the same kind I described before. The strike aircraft would undoubtedly be the low-slow kind like helicopter gunships or A-1S. There would undoubtedly be training required on the part of both air crew and the National Police Forces to beneficially utilize this kind of support. We think that this dictates a pilot program to demonstrate the feasibility of the approach. In that regard, a useful suggestion might be to reorient part of the Combat Dragon program, the field test of the AT-37, to this kind of activity either subsequent to or during the Combat Dragon program.

Now let me just summarize what I've been saying. The applicability of air to the various phases of Revolutionary Development, in our opinion, is across the board. Air power including jets, propeller and helicopter gunships should be made responsive to regular forces conducting phase 1 clearing operations, Regional and Popular forces in the securing operations of phase 2, and police and constabulary forces in the law enforcement operations of phase 3. The benefits of this change in emphasis will be an effective increase in the force ratio (or fire power ratio), meaningful short fuse responses given the proper request mechanisms, high quality targeting given the proper tactics—and given the proper ordnance and tactics one can minimize the counterproductive aspects of the use of air.

As we see it, the major stumbling block that will have to be overcome if this program is to be implemented is the lack of recognition given to the problem by the 7th Air Force. Given the proper motivation on their part, a number of potentially useful and demonstrative programs and measures could be instituted at an early date. These include
a mechanism whereby both airlift and air strike forces can be made responsive to sector (i.e., RF and PF), and intensive training of both the ground and the air forces to realize the full benefits of this support. The possibility of using the MSQ-77 radar system to support outposts should also be looked into. We would require changes in the 7th Air Force targeting and reporting procedures to require identification of VC target elements by type and organization number, and would also make an attempt to interpret the significance of these attacks in terms of relevance to the RD program. We would up-grade the staffing of the USAF sector intelligence slot to help accomplish this. We would try to obtain a higher priority for ground corroboration of targets uncovered by visual reconnaissance, and would modify the Form 13 to include a recommended action category of ground follow-up to do this. We would also require the S2/S3 to respond to such recommended action with justification. We would use ground elements more frequently in obtaining real time bomb damage assessment. Bomb damage assessment that is obtained in-country now is not real time, is after the fact, and is very poor, and our contention is that by using ground forces more frequently to support air strikes, or vice versa, the quality of the bomb damage assessment should increase. At the same time, one should also obtain higher quality targeting and should be in a position to interpret the significance of that attack in terms of relevance to Revolutionary Development since the possibility of obtaining prisoners and documents now exists.

Finally, we would create an experimental air constabulary or provincial reaction force on a pilot basis to demonstrate the feasibility of the air support principle.
Q: Marv, is there any significant differences between the new program over the old Strategic Hamlet program?
A: In the Revolutionary Development program, the only significant difference that we can detect is that they are serious about it this year. And they seem to be pursuing it. You can point to a number of operations that have taken place this year that have been specifically designed to support RD.

Q: What are some of the reasons the Army fellows didn't like Air Force support but did like helicopter fire support? Is it the speed of the airplane?
A: They can get helicopters almost anytime they want to, they can't get Air Force aircraft every time. Secondly, even if they get USAF support, it comes late. Third, they don't like big ordnance. Those are the three reasons. You can quarrel with each of these specific instances, but those are the main reasons.

Q: You also mentioned something about getting prior approval before being able to lay strikes on and never followed that up. Is there a chain where you might have some one veto—who can, who can't.

A: In theory the Vietnamese government has to approve every in-country strike.

Q: At what level?
A: Well, it varies, but generally the province level is the mean around which the distribution falls. Sometimes it's the District Chief, if he's a good one and the Province Chief trusts him and has delegated the authority. Sometimes the Division or a Corps (which again supercedes in a strange way the authority of the Province Chief) retains the prerogative. Although, the Province Chief, in theory, is able to make the decision, sometimes he cannot in practice because of the SOP of the Division or the Corps in which his province lies.

Q: What is the reaction time after all this fussing around? Say, if the village chief wants some support—say for an immediate request?
A: Well, we sat down at Vi Thanh one day and one came in on the radio and some hour and five minutes later it still hadn't gotten on
target. That's not an average obviously because that is a low priority Corps and the farthest away from any of the bases. The numbers that are quoted are like 35 minutes. They vary from fifteen to twenty minutes up, depending upon the seriousness, on the availability of the decisionmakers, their willingness to make a decision. Sometimes you can't find a province chief. It could come at an odd hour of the day etc.

Q: Isn't it true though (to answer part of the previous question) that there are areas where you don't have to get the approval of Province Chiefs cause you already have approval for hitting any target; or if you're fired on you don't have to get the approval of the Province Chief, you can deliver the ordnance if you have an aircraft nearby.

A: Not in theory. There are free bomb zones that have been created.

Your information is a year old.

Q: What do they do now?

A: Almost every case has to have some prior approval except where there is a TAOR with a major operation underway.

Q: There still are TAOR's?

A: That's right. I don't mean TAOR's, I mean an AO (area of operation), transient ones.

Q: Is this to eliminate the chance that they will hit a wrong target? Is this the reason for it?

A: Yes. Specifically the guidance about coordination in the combined plan says you're not allowed to fire at villages even if you receive light fire from them without approval.

Q: What constitutes light fire?

A: I don't know. I'm just quoting. But before it used to say you could shoot back; now it qualifies that, particularly with respect to villages. It doesn't say anything about you can't fire back at a guy who shoots at you out in the boonies, but as far as villages are concerned their restrictions are getting more and more stringent.

Q: In the Seventh Air Force, who did you actually talk to there? In view of your idea, it would occur to me that they would be all for it if they had that resource to opere.
A: We did not make any attempt on this trip to leave our ideas with anyone. Our purpose was simply to feel the pulse, to gather information to either refute or support our preconceived notions, and to come back and think it over and decide whether or not (in the light of all this) if it was worth pursuing. We have made the decision that it is and we're intending to go back in the next few months and pursue it.

Q: Not meaning to be derogatory, but I would say this. I was curious about it but it would occur to me that they should be for it, but it is implied, you don't say that you did not debrief on the way back. The implication there is that you've left me hanging--more or less the Air Force really wouldn't want to support this--they are off fighting bigger game.

A: I think your interpretation is correct. That's been the Air Force's problem for 5-1/2 years out there. They have been interested in bigger game always. Their eye was always on the next game - and they were losing the current one.

Q: In other words when one of these FAC's calls in a strike--against the Viet Cong in a local area--there is no attempt made to coordinate with the local intelligence people to find out--

A: Oh yes, yes there is. There's a routine. There's a mechanism which requires the local people to have a chance to coordinate. Here's what happens. We asked this question specifically. There is a report that he fills out, the Form 13. It goes laterally to the Army types at sector, it also goes upward to Corps and to the TACC. Invariably the Army type, who has the option of vetoing the action, only exercises that option if he is convinced that it is going to interfere with a friendly operation. Aside from this his attitude is well, the FAC has seen it, I haven't and he ought to know his own business.

Q: Who are you speaking of now?

A: I am talking about the MACV advisor at the sector. He doesn't really do it; it's his counterpart that does it. The Vietnamese counterpart, i.e., the Vietnamese sector staff that makes the decision and appreciation as to whether or not that requested
strike is in an area which they consider enemy territory or is not
going to endanger friendly forces. Then sector sends it to the
Division (if there is a Division) or the next higher military or-
ganization. It usually goes as far as Corps (which is the DASC
level). It is paralleled up from the Sector to the DASC by the
Air Force request net. But the DASC cannot operate until it gets
the Division/Corps approval. So the DASC cannot send in a request
to the TACC (which does the allocating and the strike scrambling
or diversion) until at worst three Vietnamese echelons have approved
it, Province which is a joint military-civilian organization, the
Division which is pure military, and the Corps which is pure mili-
tary, all Vietnamese. Now that communication chain and authority
chain, is paralleled from the Sector on by an Air Force request net
which goes in the Air Force chain. So there is an anticipation
at DASC level that a request is on its way. They can go over if
they don't hear anything--they can go next door and beat on the
door of the G2 or G3 at the Tactical Operations Center at Corps
and say where is that request--what did you do about it.

Q: On the hamlet level, can you give us a feel for the numbers. You
have a FAC flying around and he could talk by radio with somebody
in a hamlet. There are so many hamlets and we don't have enough
radios around, for one thing.

A: There are radios at just about every outpost adjacent to the ham-
et. AID has given away already three times as many radios as
there are hamlets in Vietnam. The radios are not always compatible
with the kind that the FAC carries, but that's something that can
be fixed.

Q: But aren't these radios one of the first things the Viet Cong al-
ways attempt to get as soon as they raid a hamlet?

A: Sure, but we give guns to people and they (the VC) like to have
guns too. That is the silliest reason in the world not to arm
and provide equipment to your own forces just because the enemy may
be tempted....

Q: Sure but I'm just trying to get a ....

A: ....although in year's past this was a main reason why the poor
quality of the equipment and the training exist in the RF and the PF.

Q: What is the number of hamlets?
A: About 15,000 hamlets in Vietnam. AID has given away something like 50,000 radios.

Q: Are these two-way radios?
A: Handy walkie talkie type things, HT-1's.

Q: We discussed this last year, if they do have radios why don't they have contact?
A: This procedure is following some places in Vietnam, particularly in the highlands. The FAC's do fly over the outpost--they're further apart; there aren't as many of them and everyday they check in with them and discuss the military situation. This is only possible where there are American advisors, or where they carry a Vietnamese observer who is bilingual.

Q: How common is that nowadays?
A: It depends on the part of Vietnam you're talking about.

Q: Talk about any part you want.
A: In the Delta, it is not common. The reasons that the FAC's give is because, although it is required, incidentally, by MACV directive, it is just too hard to find them and they are too uncooperative when they do find them. Very few—even if they don't get sick and are willing to fly when the flight needs to be made, are very adept. There is no positive value to them.

Q: In what areas that you were in was it common?
A: It wasn't common anywhere, as far as we could see. At any rate, in Central Vietnam, the FAC's do check with the outposts and I believe that it is not necessarily done by means of having an American advisor on the ground.