UNITED STATES ORGANIZATION FOR PACIFICATION
ADVICE AND SUPPORT IN VIETNAM, 1954-1968

by

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In May 1967 President Lyndon Johnson ordered the creation of a unique civil/military organization to manage United States advice and support to the South Vietnamese government's pacification program. This dissertation -- a discussion of the background and implementation of this decision -- examines why the President took the course he did and what that course reveals about the use of Presidential power, bureaucratic politics in the Executive Branch, and organizational response.

The organization created was called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) and was an amalgam of all United States agency staffs in Vietnam dealing with pacification. It was placed in the U.S. military headquarters under the supervision of the U.S. military commander. While the U.S. military had taken over the pacification effort structurally, the U.S. civilians managed to preserve their own identity and to control the program through aggressive leadership, bureaucratic skill, real and perceived Presidential interest, and a degree of cooperation and tolerance that was remarkable among disparate U.S. foreign policy agencies.

Years of organizational uncertainty preceded the formation of CORDS. Numerous attempts were made to bring unity to the U.S. effort in Vietnam, especially the pacification program. Until 1966 these efforts were largely unsuccessful, but in that year President Johnson turned his attention to this problem and spent the next eighteen months affecting a change. The focus of this dissertation is on his efforts during these months. They show the difficulty but not the impossibility of Presidential action despite the resistance of important personalities and bureaucracies. The results of the implementation of his decision are as instructive as the decision itself. The President's field managers carried out his wishes so successfully, from his point of view, that he virtually disappears from the story as an active force. Thus, the President was able not only to arrive at a difficult decision in the face of strong bureaucratic resistance, but he was able to set up a successful mechanism to see that it was carried out.
The decision to set up CORDS shows not only that, despite bureaucratic/organizational constraints, the President can determine and implement policy in the Executive Branch, but that success may, as it was in the CORDS case, be characterized by manipulation rather than by bargaining.

Though a Presidential decision must be fashioned with the restrictions and resistance to innovation and change of large bureaucracies in mind, the CORDS decision illustrates that directed change is possible. Even in the most difficult bureaucratic circumstances, Presidents can move the Executive Branch in the direction they want it to go, and Presidents can execute decisions that will represent the thrust of Allison's single rational actor model.

The CORDS decision reveals another important point -- the key issue need not be whether the President can accomplish change but how he goes about it. A new focus in studies on decision-making in the Executive Branch should be on how the President can achieve what he wants rather than on the limitations to his power.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF CHARTS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: SETTING THE STAGE: 1954-1963</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: 1964 and 1965</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: THE FIRST REORGANIZATION</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: THE SECOND REORGANIZATION</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V: THE THIRD REORGANIZATION: THE OFFICE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS AND THE FORMATION OF CORDS</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VI: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION: SETTING UP CORDS</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I: TERMS AND ACRONYMS</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX II: WHAT IS PACIFICATION?</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III-1. U.S. Mission Organization for Pacification, February -- November 1966 ........................................ 159

IV-1. McNamara Proposal for Unified Pacification Organization, 22 September 1966 ........................................ 175


VI-1. U.S. Mission and MACV Headquarters Staff Relationships After the Formation of CORDS, June 1967 .............. 230

VI-2. Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support ......................... 232

VI-3. Corps/Region Organization After the Formation of CORDS, June 1967 .................................................. 234

VI-4. Province Advisory Team Organization After the Formation of CORDS, June 1967 .................................. 238

VI-5. U.S. Advisory Organization in IV Corps After the Formation of CORDS, July 1967 ................................. 245
On the 9th of May 1967 President Lyndon Johnson ordered the creation of a unique civil/military organization to manage United States advice and support to the South Vietnamese government's pacification program. This dissertation -- a discussion of the background and implementation of this decision -- will examine why the President took the course he did and discuss what that course reveals about the use of Presidential power, bureaucratic politics in the Executive Branch, and organizational response.

The centerpiece of this study is an organization called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). Established by Presidential order and headed by a civilian with ambassadorial rank, Mr. Robert W. Komer and then Mr. William E. Colby, CORDS was an amalgam of all United States agency staffs in Vietnam dealing with pacification and civilian field operations (excluding main-force military and covert CIA operations). It was placed in the U.S. military headquarters (MACV).
at Saigon under the supervision and command of General William C. Westmoreland and later General Creighton D. Abrams. CORDS was, in title, a staff section in this headquarters, but it operated in reality as a subsidiary, quasi-independent corporation with direct channels of communication and command to its field elements. While the U.S. military had taken over the pacification effort structurally, the U.S. civilians managed both to preserve their own identity and to control the program through aggressive leadership, bureaucratic skill, real and perceived Presidential interest, and a degree of cooperation and tolerance that was remarkable among disparate U.S. foreign policy agencies.

CORDS was unique in U.S. Government history. For the first time there were civilians in the field commanding military personnel and resources. A civilian Ambassador was an integral part of a war-time military headquarters, serving not as a political advisor or coordinator but as a director, a manager, and a component commander.

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam can be faulted on many counts, and many argue that the American effort in Vietnam was doomed from the start. In this dissertation I am examining just one aspect of the U.S. role in Vietnam -- how the United States organized and managed the pacification program. The United States in Vietnam lacked a unified mechanism of direction and management and adequate machinery to translate policy into performance. Nowhere was this more apparent than in pacification advice and support before 1967.
Years of organizational uncertainty preceded the formation of CORDS, and the very term pacification never was precisely defined. The organizational confusion reflected the conceptual disunity on both the American and Vietnamese sides. Furthermore, when an official definition was promulgated, the responsibilities given officials and organizations involved in pacification rarely corresponded with those stated or implied by the official definitions.

Chester Cooper has remarked that the institutional arrangements for conducting a successful pacification effort were less important than the basic philosophy behind the programs, implying that if the United States Government had possessed an agreed philosophy of pacification, any one of a number of organizational approaches would have worked. This overlooks two basic points. First, for years, despite the existence of numerous sensible concepts the various agencies could not agree. The organizations that dealt with pacification were too locked in to their own institutional repertoires and too powerful in Vietnam and Washington to adopt a common philosophy without strong outside direction or clear assignment of responsibility to one actor. Second, Cooper, as many others, overlooks the importance of the second facet of any policy -- its implementation. Without a means of ensuring implementation, a policy is but a collection of phrases waiting to be perverted by the officials and organizations that carry it out. "Sound policy formulation," as Robert Komer asserts, "must

4. See Appendix II.
take fully into account the capabilities of the institutions involved to execute it effectively.\textsuperscript{6} This simple proposition was often violated in the Vietnam War.

Until late in the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the U.S. Mission\textsuperscript{7} was coordinated only at its apex by an Ambassador who often faced a \textit{de facto} military co-equal and semi-independent officials of several civilian agencies. The fragmented management of the pacification program in Vietnam was symptomatic of a larger lack of unity in Washington. No one agency, task force, or individual short of the President controlled American policy and operations in Vietnam. The disunity among U.S. representatives in Saigon thus was magnified with their parent agencies in Washington. Almost without exception this situation obtained for the entire period of American involvement in Vietnam.

From 1954-1961 the Mission in Saigon was organized little differently from those in other countries except that because of the unusually large size of the military and civil aid programs there, the U.S. agencies had substantial power and independence. In 1961 as the war entered a new stage and America had a new leader, the President was presented with clear-cut


\textsuperscript{7} The "U.S. Mission," or "Mission" as I will occasionally use it refers to the group of U.S. government agencies based in Saigon and presided over by the Ambassador. It is best to think of it as a conglomerate with a chairman. The principal U.S. agencies involved were the Departments of State and Defense, the United States Information Agency (USIA), the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which in Vietnam was known as the Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador (or OSA for short).
alternatives on organization for the U.S. effort both in Washington and Saigon. He cast aside an unconventional solution that would have given extraordinary powers to a supra-agency task force and would have emphasized the work of a few key individuals and close personal relations with officials in the Vietnamese Government. Instead, he chose to retain the standard American organizational response of separate agencies controlling and managing their own parts of the war. One of the most important effects of this decision was that for a variety of reasons, the size and aggressiveness being among the most important, the Department of Defense and the military dominated the U.S. response in Vietnam. Another effect was that because the decision was not clear-cut, the U.S. effort remained fragmented and often uncoordinated for most of the rest of the war. The President tried and failed to pull together U.S. programs by concentrating on Ambassadors and commanders -- a solution based on personalities, which as much as the organizations and bureaucracies were responsible for his inability to effect a change without major reorganization.

By 1966 this disunity and the sheer size of the American programs had pulled military operations and pacification, or the "other war" as it was then called, far apart. Lyndon Johnson turned to organizational solutions as well as personalities and spent the next year and a half effecting a change. Non-military actions were brought together under a Special Assistant working directly for him. In 1967 the operational cutting edge, pacification, of the non-military effort was unified and placed under General Westmoreland but with strong civilian influence and control. The CORDS decision did not unify the American effort completely; important areas such
as U.S./GVN political relations were excluded. In addition, it did not unify the Washington effort. The new organization was however a major step forward. This, combined with a strong Ambassador, gave more unity to the U.S. operation in Vietnam, despite its enormous size, than it possessed since 1955.

Two lengthy chapters cover the period from 1954-1965. They provide an essential background to the President's 1967 decision. The years of disunity, the Kennedy decisions of 1961, and the unsuccessful efforts of Johnson until 1966 point up the reasons for the problem, the difficulty of effecting change, and the magnitude of success when he arrived at the final solution. These two chapters frequently range wider than mere pacification. The uncoordinated nature of American efforts in this area were directly related to the overall U.S. Government problem of how to respond organizationally and managerially to the struggle in Vietnam.

Four chapters describe the process and implementation of the President's decision to give pacification advice and support responsibility to the military. In them the reader can see the difficulty but not the impossibility of Presidential action despite the resistance of important personalities and bureaucracies. But decision is only half the battle; implementation is as instructive as the decision itself. The President's field managers carried out his wishes so successfully that he virtually disappears from the story as an active force. The contrast between success in this case and the failures of implementation of past attempts is worth stressing.
In the past two decades a number of political scientists have interpreted foreign policy decisions and their implementation in terms of "bureaucratic politics." Central to this paradigm is the tenet that the making of foreign policy is an intensely political process, a process which in the end influences policy content. These theorists have tended to focus, in recent years, on the Executive Branch and its often-enormous agencies where power is seen as diffuse and based on bargaining and persuasion among many actors of whom the President, although more powerful, is but one. Great stress is placed on institutions and organizations and the degree to which they affect the information presented and influence the actor's position on a particular issue, the policy decision, and its implementation. The decisions of the U.S. government and the President, these analysts conclude, are not the result of a directing unified rationality but reflect as much the process of decision itself and the interests of those officials or agencies that take part. Thus the actions of foreign nations or the dictates of particular problems are but some, and often not the most important, sources of a governmental decision.

Graham Allison in his *Essence of Decision* codifies and sets forth three models of foreign policy decision-making. Model one ("Rational actor") posits that the U.S. government reaches decisions as a single

8. Often both theories of bureaucratic politics and organizational response are lumped together under the overall paradigm term of "bureaucratic politics." I will attempt to keep the two separate, at the risk of some repetition, but will occasionally use the term generally to encompass both, as has been done in this paragraph.

rational actor, that what a country does in its foreign affairs is an intentional act of a unified government. Model two ("organizational process") sees governmental behavior less as deliberate choice and more as outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior. Model three ("bureaucratic politics") proposes that government actions should be viewed as a process of shared power in which decisions and actions are the results of a "'political' process of conflict, bargaining, and consensus-building among competing bureaucratic elements"11 with the President as a powerful but not necessarily pre-eminent "player."

While Allison and his colleague Morton Halperin favor "model three," they are, upon careful reading, nowhere near as exclusive as their critics would have us believe. Halperin, in his recent work Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, admits the limitations of the bureaucratic politics paradigm and acknowledges, as does virtually every commentator, that it has limited value as a predictive method.12 He does feel that at least one must examine government decisions and actions from this perspective. Few would disagree with him.

Because governmental decisions usually are part of an extremely complex process, no exclusive, tight model can possibly hold for more than a limited number of cases. The very richness and diversity of the governmental process (the stress on which is one of the key contributions of the bureaucratic politics model) militate against the choice of a strict solution.

10. Ibid., p. 6.
Much of the dispute over the validity of "model three" has involved Presidential power, which in essence is where, over a decade ago, the argument began. Based on the experience to be related in this dissertation, I would propose that none of Allison's three models be viewed as exclusive. The solution is not "either or" but really all three. A view of government behavior that includes all three, with perhaps the addition of others such as John Steinbruner's "cognitive process," has the virtue of flexibility and variability which I feel reflects with more accuracy the imperfect, diverse, and complex government world. The decision to set up CORDS in 1967 shows that despite bureaucratic/organizational resistance and constraints the President can determine and implement policy in the Executive Branch and that success may be characterized by manipulation rather than bargaining. I emphasize manipulation as more characteristic than bargaining of this process within the Executive Branch. Bargaining becomes dominant when the policy moves out to Congress and the nation as a whole, but the CORDS decision was primarily within the Executive Branch; there was little Congressional influence.

Though a decision must be fashioned with the restrictions and resistance to innovation and change of large bureaucracies in mind, directed change is possible. Presidents can move the Executive Branch in the

14. John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974). Steinbruner's general focus is on the individual. He notes that officials especially those higher up who are not specialists but generalists, will focus on a few key variables and acquire programmed responses to deal with them, thus filtering out uncertainty and complexity. See his Chapter 4.
direction they want it to go. A new focus should be on how the President can achieve what he wants rather than on the limitations to his power.

Few commentators nowadays are rash enough to assume that a Presidential wish or even a formal directive are tantamount to complaisant execution or that most decisions are not reached without some degree of implicit if not explicit bargaining. Yet most students of Presidential power would agree that unless his domestic political and Congressional support base is extremely weak, the President can make decisions he wants and see that they are carried out. The key point is not whether he can but how he goes about it. The President and those few key assistants who can speak in his name are too busy to oversee every decision. But, if the President wishes to devote the time and energy or if he can set up some mechanism for control, then he can execute decisions that will represent the thrust of the single rational actor model. The decision to place pacification under the military exemplified this.

Despite this conclusion, the history of U.S. organization for pacification is also a superb example of the limits as well as the strengths of Presidential power. The entire decision-making process, including the prior years of disunity in the U.S. effort for Vietnam, is a case study in which bureaucracies wielded great power and influence. With the exception of the Treasury Department pacification involved every major foreign policy agency, but in no case was pacification felt to be an agency's central mission in Vietnam. Yet for most agencies organization for pacification had not merely policy but substantial budgetary and personnel implications. Time and time again, these agencies and their officials acted exactly as
their organizational repertoires and outlooks would lead one to expect.

The Vietnam War and pacification in particular exemplify what I would call a "middle-level" crisis -- one of sufficient but not critical (as was Cuba 1962) importance and spread out over time. The President was weighed down with many other concerns, and it was not until 1965 that Vietnam really began to pre-empt the government's attention. Decisions were seldom taken quickly, and the size and length of the war meant that implementation could not be overseen always and had to be left, for the most part, to the workings of the agencies concerned. Yet despite the important role of bureaucratic politics and organizational response, were not other circumstances, sheer human incomprehension and error, individuals, and the actions of the President of greater import?

The President is invariably the key protagonist in discussions of foreign policy decision-making and must be the focus of any answer. Was our lack of organization for Vietnam and pacification a conscious act of Presidential choice? What is misperception or lack of focus on the problem? Or, was it truly a bargaining process involving substantial Presidential compromise?

A good case can be made that the fault was not inadequate information. Virtually every observer of the Vietnam War has remarked upon the disorganization of the U.S. effort and its harmful consequences, and it is known that numerous official comments to this effect reached both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. So a basic point to be examined as the dissertation progresses must be: why were no steps taken to remedy this problem and why, specifically, did the United States fail to organize sooner and more efficiently for pacification?
For the period prior to 1966 it is not always clear just what exactly the President wanted. For a series of reasons he did not really focus on pacification or U.S. management of the effort to advise and support it. This was no longer the case in the actual decision to give pacification to the military and set up CORDS. There one observes a different process at work. The President wanted a change and an effective reorganization. In 1966 he attempted a series of solutions, some more successful than others. By September of that year, the President had decided to place the responsibility for pacification support in the U.S. Mission at Saigon under the military. Yet this did not become a reality until May the next year. Without doubt the President had to manipulate during the time that intervened, but did he really have to bargain? A possible answer to this question is found, I believe, in whether his conception of the desired organization was altered in the bureaucratic political process.

Lastly, the individual must be a key point of focus in examining decisions. Analysts of bureaucratic politics have underrated the influence of personality and the individual both in their ability to reinforce or actually determine a bureaucratic/organizational response and in the ability of some actors to move organizations in a direction different from what bureaucratic politics and organizational theory would suggest. The influence of individuals can be just as important as the bureaucracies they are battling or represent. It is my contention that the CORDS decision was the product of a few important people. Therefore, as much as possible I will focus on the top decision-makers. One observer has criticized recent bureaucratic politics theorists as promoting a system whereby government officials,
even the President, are relieved of responsibility for their actions. The CORDS experience shows the crucial importance of a few key individuals, how unpredictable their actions can be, and how Presidents can accomplish a centrally directed action in even the messiest of bureaucratic situations. Bureaucratic theory should teach us to understand the forces and influences involved but not the impossibility of concerted action or the abnegation of responsibility to impersonal forces.

This dissertation is first a history of what actually happened insofar as it is possible for me to ascertain using the available documents and interviews. My opening exposure to these events was as an historian, and I have reconstructed the process with that methodology.

One of the necessary ingredients for a successful study of governmental politics is detailed source material. Critics of the bureaucratic politics paradigm have cited this necessity as one of its weaknesses for it demands a degree of factual precision that few scholars are privy to. While I feel that bureaucratic/institutional politics is more useful as a heuristic device for examining decisions and actions than as a precise predictor of behavior, the number and variety of sources available to me for this narrative should please even the most rigorous historian. I will discuss

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16. As an historian serving with the U.S. Army in Vietnam and afterwards as a civilian historian with the Department of the Army working on the Army's official history of pacification.
the detail and provenance of my sources in the bibliography at the conclusion, but it should become clear that the narrative chapters are based primarily on internal U.S. government documents (for the most part unpublished) and personal interviews. These two source groups are interdependent. To reinforce them I have adopted the device of sending portions or all of the manuscript to some of the key actors or knowledgeable observers of the events related. I have incorporated their comments as part of the record.

Though the availability of detail assists the scholar in his approach to the truth, one still must be careful lest it unduly favor a particular paradigm. A mass of information, particularly on the Executive Branch workings below the White House, can easily lead the observer to exaggerate importance of the organizational process and bureaucratic politics models. This is not to say that one should not search for all the facts, but at the same time one should be careful lest they obscure patterns of direction. In examining the decision to place pacification under the military in 1966 and 1967, one is struck by the essential irrelevance of much of the bureaucracies efforts to re-organize themselves. Despite a veritable flood of information and paper and a plethora of actors, the key forces in the decision and its implementation appear to be a few key personalities. Thus while I would agree that the less information we have about a government decision (i.e., one by the Soviet Union), the greater tendency there is to turn to the rational actor model for a solution, the converse is no more valid. The mass of information that is available if one is let loose in government archives can create too much noise; it can obscure directing
themes or the importance of one actor.

Published sources on Vietnam and pacification generally treat pacification organization as a peripheral subject worthy of a few lines or at most a few pages. Two exceptions to this stand out. The first is Robert Komer's *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam.* Despite important analysis and conclusions it does not treat the process historically but as a participant searching for lessons. Richard Holbrooke's volume on the *Re-emphasis on Pacification* in the so-called Pentagon Papers covers the decision to set up CORDS in great detail, but he was allowed to use only documents and his personal recollections but no interviews. Furthermore, his coverage of the actual implementation after May 1967 is limited to a few short pages. Other volumes of the Pentagon Papers address the problem of organization but not at great length. Surprisingly, when recent theorists of bureaucratic politics cite examples from the Vietnam War, organization is not one of them.

Before going further, I wish to stress several key points that must be kept in mind as the reader progresses through this dissertation.

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First, it should be noted that I am dealing with U.S. organization and management of pacification and not pacification as a whole. To cover pacification properly one must have an intimate understanding of the Vietnamese, their language, and the Viet Cong. These I do not possess. In addition, while I realize that one treads a thin line between two areas, the following deals with organizational decisions and their implementation not an overall evaluation of the organizations themselves and their success or failure in the war -- except insofar as they illumine implementation of the President's decision. I am not trying to defend doctrines of pacification or to say that CORDS necessarily produced the right solutions.

I have also treated the Vietnamese Government actions peripherally, mentioning them to provide useful background to U.S. actions or to judge CORDS implementation. This may appear cavalier as pacification was a Vietnamese program, but to include the Vietnamese in detail would open up an entire range of issues too broad for this dissertation. In this case the U.S. organizational decisions can be discussed in semi-isolation as U.S. government issues.

Closely related to this point, I cannot emphasize too forcefully that whenever I refer to American involvement in pacification, I mean the U.S. advisory and support effort, military and civilian, to the South Vietnamese Government's pacification program. At no time did the United States take over the actual program despite a pervasive and often extremely influential advisory effort.
Chapter I

SETTING THE STAGE: 1954-1963

The decision to establish CORDS in 1967 followed a long history of lack of coordination and centralized direction both in pacification and in the entire American effort for Vietnam. The problems associated with this were apparent even in the late 1950's when the U. S. Mission and its component agencies commitments were miniscule in comparison to what they had become by 1967. Furthermore, these problems did not go unnoticed. Numerous outside observers and official participants have agreed that this lack on unified direction was a critical failure. Dennis Duncanson, an astute British scholar of the war, has put it as directly as any:

If we can isolate the crux of failure resulting from these cumulative difficulties facing the American effort in Vietnam, it was want of coordination and want of direction in the duplication of aid and advice.¹

This chapter will mix discussion of the U. S. organization specifically for pacification with that of the overall organization for the war. It is difficult and incorrect, especially during this early period, to separate the two. They are interrelated. Pacification during some of these years meant the entire internal effort against the Viet Cong. The definitions also were scarcely precise.² This in itself is indicative of lack of organization and direction. In terms of bureaucratic responsibility pacification crossed more agency lines than any other program in Vietnam. Problems in overall U. S. organization were directly related and transmitted to those for pacification. They set the essential background

2. See Appendix II.

The period covered in this chapter may be divided conveniently into two parts. The first covers from 1954-1960 when the war and the American advisory effort were small, and this effort was handled organizationally in ways little different from many other missions around the world. During the second part, from 1961-1963, there was not only a new President with a different style of leadership but the U. S. commitment and the war itself mushroomed. The President considered but discarded organizational solutions that would have traversed the grain of the government bureaucracies and instead established a large military advisory command that gave more, but not pre-eminent power to the agency with the most resources and aggressiveness, the Defense Department.

Vietnam in the 1950's was not the center of the U. S. Government's attention. It was just one of many problems around the world. So it should not come as a surprise that the U. S. Mission there was not organized differently than in other countries. By 1954 the U. S. Government had established a regular pattern of organization for its missions abroad. Prior to World War II the U. S. Embassy with subsidiary military attaches was usually the only American official representation in a foreign country. After the war however numerous government programs abroad spawned large missions of U. S. agency representatives to carry out military training, intelligence, aid, agriculture, and information programs. These agencies had statutory authority and responsibilities defined by Congress, and given the lack of unity among them in Washington and the intra-agency lines of communication it is no wonder that the Ambassador had a hard time living up to his description as the chief of all U. S. representation in a
In 1951 General Lucius Clay, then Special Assistant to the Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, was able to obtain an understanding among the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Economic Cooperation Administration (a forerunner of the Agency for International Development or AID) which said that the representatives of these agencies in a country were to "constitute a team under the leadership of the Ambassador" and that the Ambassador was:

...responsible for coordination, general direction, and leadership of the entire effort, for insuring that broad United States foreign policy in relation to the country is reflected in all of the operations, and for providing coordinated recommendations to U. S. regional representatives and Washington...The Ambassador's responsibility for coordination, general direction, and leadership shall be given renewed emphasis, and all United States officials shall be reindoctrinated with respect to the Ambassador's role as senior representative for the United States in country.  3

In practice the "Country Team" as this arrangement became known included all of the agency chiefs in each country in addition to other selected officials such as the Ambassador's deputy or Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM).

Three years later President Eisenhower undertook to strengthen this arrangement by issuing a strongly-worded Executive Order that gave the Ambassador "general direction and leadership" powers over the entire mission.  4 He was to serve as the "channel of authority on foreign policy and...provide foreign policy direction to all representatives of United States agencies..." He was given specific coordinating responsibilities

4. Executive Order 10575, 8 November 1954; "Management of Foreign Aid Functions."
and told to assure "unified development and execution" (my emphasis) of U. S. programs. While agencies preserved their means of direct communication and their local representatives could appeal in extremis a Mission Chief's decision to the Secretary of State and their home agency, the tone and wording of this order make it clear that the Ambassador had wide authority to manage and coordinate the Mission in every matter that did not involve merely internal agency affairs. Indeed, this order is far more forcefully and specifically worded than President Kennedy's May 1961 letter to Ambassadors (see below).

Yet it was a rare Ambassador who operated with the authority that this order gave him. There were several causes for this. First, and probably the most important, was the situation in Washington itself where the same interagency battles and jurisdictional disputes were magnified and interests even more solidly entrenched. Rather than having a Special Assistant for National Security Affairs with an overriding loyalty to the President and power to prod the bureaucracy, Eisenhower made use of the large and unwieldy National Security Council and its two powerful boards, the Operations Planning Board (OPB) and the Operations Control Board (OCB). Both were made up of agency officials and were distinguished by thorough, indeed ponderous, staffing that more often reflected compromise than clear decision. The OCB was charged with supervising and coordinating the execution of Presidential decisions, but as Richard Moose has noted that it was the conclusion of those who knew the OCB best that "effective coordination of interagency operations requires either White House direction or at a minimum active Presidential backing" but that the cardinal tenet of the system, respect for departmental authority and responsibility, ran counter to
Eisenhower himself seems to have realized the system's deficiencies and considered the idea of creating a "secretary for international coordination," but he never pursued it. Thus, since there was no agency in Washington with directing and coordinating authority over the others, despite the popular conception of the Secretary of State as primus inter pares, and since orders from the National Security Council tended to reflect compromise and staffing rather than clear direction, the ability of in-country agency chiefs to appeal back to their Washington base negated the strong words of Eisenhower's directive. This is a most compelling example of the President's inability to command by words only. Without forceful Presidential direction, bureaucratic politics did, in most cases, win the battle.

In 1963 the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, under Senator Henry Jackson, examined the role of the Ambassador and the Country Team and drew some conclusions that were as valid for the 1950's as they were for the following decade. Its study observed that the amount of cooperation depended on the degree to which the agencies were involved in operational matters. The Military Assistance Advisory Groups and the CIA tended to be the least responsive to the Ambassador. It was hard, it said, to have coordinated plans and operations as decisions and pressures rarely hit the same participants at the same time. Agency chiefs did not regard themselves as part of the Ambassador's staff but looked to Washington for guidance and direction. Especially with regard

to decisions that involved budgets and programming, the subcommittee's report noted that "to a degree the primacy of the Ambassador is a polite fiction." The situation was not seen as hopeless however, for it did conclude that a strong Ambassador could pull a team together though he might not actually command it.

If personalities rather than organizational strength were seen as the key to mission coordination, then other difficulties arose. Most Ambassadors were neither trained nor inclined to be managers. Responding to years of custom, they tended to view the heart of their task as reportorial and representational but not in terms of organizational leadership and decisions. If they were tempted to exercise more than general coordination they faced formidable obstacles. Other agencies often far overshadowed the State Department in terms of personnel and resources committed in a certain country. The CIA, by its very nature, zealously guarded its operational secrets. The Defense Department representatives commanded usually not only the most sizable representation but could appeal to a powerful and wealthy bureaucracy in Washington with institutionalized ties to Congress and the American public that far outweighed those of the State Department.

With this as a background, what actually happened in Vietnam? While there was cooperation initially, by 1960 it had sunk into a swamp of bitter disagreement and bickering that knew few equals in the history of U. S. foreign policy.

During the first year of U. S. involvement with the Diem regime how-

ever, pacification advice was handled with remarkable smoothness. The U. S. Mission in Saigon was run with a firm hand by General J. Lawton Collins who came to Vietnam as a special envoy of the President with instructions to oversee all U. S. operations there. The entire pacification program as it was then conceived was advised by the National Security Division of the Franco-American Training Relations Instruction Mission (TRIM). Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, drawing on his key role in defusing the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, served as its chief. Because he was a close personal advisor to Diem on many subjects, he effectively dominated all U. S. pacification advice to the Vietnamese, though specific programs of other U. S. agencies were not directly under his control.

This National Security Division was one of five in TRIM, and it advised the Vietnamese Government on its National Security Action program to bring peace, order, and government administration to the countryside, especially ex-Viet Minh areas, and to combat dissidence by political/psychological action. While its members were mostly military, there were USOM and USIS representatives. This division shows an unusual degree of unity of effort among the U. S. agencies in dealing with pacification. However, the U. S. Mission was relatively small at this point, and the programs the National Security Division supervised were not as broadly conceived as those CORDS managed later. Informal coordination was far easier to achieve. Furthermore, because of Lansdale's personal flexibility and unusually close

7. USMAAG, Monthly Activities Report No. 27 for February 1955, 15 March 1955, SECRET. This can be found among other early MAAG files at the Washington National Records Center, Job 60A1076, Box 5/6, "MAAG Indochina General Administrative Files 1955, 319.1 Reports." See also Appendix II, pp. 13-14, for a discussion of conceptions of pacification during this period.
relations with Diem, it is probable that the degree of coordination was more a personal than an institutional achievement.

The division, established in January 1955, was dissolved in August because of poor relations between the French and the Americans. Its functions were divided between the new U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) and other U. S. and French assistance agencies. Lansdale himself formed a staff section in MAAG to handle "unconventional" matters which included National Security Action and other pacification programs. He remained in Vietnam in this capacity until late 1956 when he returned to Washington. This ushered in a ten-year period in which responsibility for pacification was scattered among different U. S. Government agencies.

Symtomatic of the Mission's lack of organization was the controversy over the training of the Civil Guard. This was the local paramilitary defense force, responsible to the Province Chief. The Civil Guard, and its even poorer cousin the Self Defense Corps which ostensibly guarded the hamlets, were the only forces that were oriented directly toward defending the people in the countryside. The regular army was organized and equipped to face an overt North Vietnamese invasion, despite the fact that the pressure of Viet Cong insurgency, and the inability of the paramilitary forces to stand up to it, gradually pulled the army away from what originally was conceived to be its primary mission. Regardless of this slow reorientation these paramilitary forces bore the brunt of Viet Cong Military action in the late 1950's.

The Michigan State University Advisory Group, under contract to USOM was given advisory responsibility for the Civil Guard in 1956. They viewed it as a local police force, only lightly armed, capable of dealing with small-scale armed dissidence. President Diem and the U. S. MAAG envisioned it as a large, semi-conventional but counter-guerrilla force that could deal with internal security and free the regular army to face North Vietnam. Right or wrong, the Embassy supported USOM and for almost two years withheld most U. S. aid to the Civil Guard until Diem agreed to transfer the force to the Minister of Interior. In late 1960, less than two years after this, on MAAG's advice and against the Embassy's wishes, Diem gave responsibility for the Civil Guard to the Ministry of Defense. Thus for five critical years when such a local force possibly could have dealt with the nascent violence, the U. S. Mission fought among itself over the responsibility and concept for the Civil Guard. Diem, knowing these internal struggles, was able to play off one part of the Mission against the other and in the process became the "arbiter of, rather than a participant in," the U. S./GVN bargaining process.\(^9\)

As mentioned earlier, a key problem for anyone who would exercise some sort of conceptual unity or centralized direction to the U. S. effort in Vietnam was the sheer size of the military commitment. While most would agree that sustained security is essential to pacification, there is no question that the U. S. effort in Vietnam before 1961 as much as afterward was grossly unbalanced in favor of military aid, despite the fact that by 1958 the U. S. economic aid mission was the largest anywhere. There was

\(^9\) USVNR, Vol. IV.A.4, pp. 4.1 and 22-33.
no integrated program of economic and military assistance, though even be-
fore 1960 more than two billion dollars in aid went to South Vietnam, but 
over 80% of this was earmarked for security.10 The MAAG had over six 
hundred members; the Embassy numbered but an insignificant fraction of this 
figure. Even with the most harmonious of personalities it would have been 
difficult for the Ambassador to control such a disproportionate effort.

Relations between the MAAG Chief, General Samuel T. Williams and the 
Ambassador, G. Frederick Reinhardt, who replaced General Collins, were co-
operative and cordial. When asked by the State Department to review his 
Country Team and coordinating procedures, Ambassador Reinhardt wrote to 
General Williams requesting his views and advice. Williams' reply, while 
also friendly, indicated that he had never even heard of President 
Eisenhower's 1954 Executive Order. He pressed for better coordination and 
exchange of information and for improved staff work for the Country Team 
meetings.11

In March 1957 Elbridge Durbrow replaced Reinhardt. Without making 
a judgment between one or the other, it may be said safely that there was a 
personality clash between Durbrow and Williams. The Ambassador set out to 
bring the U. S. Mission under his command, to interpret the President's 
Executive Order in the strongest light possible. In August he created a 
Mission Coordination Staff responsible to his Deputy Chief of Mission.12

10. Ibid., p. 1.1.
11. Memorandum, Ambassador to Chief, MAAG et al., Subj.: Coordination of 
U. S. Programs Abroad at the Country Level, 28 May 1956. Memorandum, 
LTG Williams to Mr. Reinhardt, Subj.: Coordination of United States 
Program, 4 June 1956.
12. Memorandum, Daniel V. Anderson (DCM) to U. S. Mission Members, 
30 July 1957.
Four months later he informed the Mission's members that the Executive order would be adhered to with forcefulness. All incoming and outgoing correspondence had to be routed through the Embassy and at least coordinated with other Mission agencies. His deputy would be the Mission's overall executive officer. The Ambassador declared that no document or information on any program should be withheld if he requested it. Durrow followed this up by chastising Williams for failing to bring information to his attention, for interpreting and reporting back Diem's "disappointment" with the U. S. aid budget differently than did the Ambassador, for not coordinating road building contracts, and for refusal to give intelligence sources in a report. The General icily answered each of these charges. When interviewed thirteen years later, he observed that the Embassy clearly was trying to assert its power, to the extent of controlling every outgoing message, briefing, or visitor, and he admitted that there was confusion as to just who his superior was. In 1959 the battle was still on; the Ambassador told Williams that he wished "to be informed of all communications of any sort dealing with substantive matters sent by U. S. agencies in Vietnam" prior to dispatch—which would indicate that his earlier efforts had been unsuccessful.

15. Memorandum, General Williams to Ambassador, Subj.: Coordination, 23 December 1957, SECRET.
16. Personal Interview of General Williams conducted by Mr. Charles von Luttichau, 12 November 1970, on file at the Center for Military History.
The state of Embassy/MAAG relations by this point was clear even to outsiders. When Senators Albert Gore and Gale McGhee held hearings in Saigon in December 1959, the Ambassador was asked pointed questions about disagreements and lack of coordination and taken to task for his "apparent inability to exert required leadership over concerted, coordinated Country Team efforts." Relations between the two had so deteriorated that in 1960 Williams noted that he was subject to "yelling, cursing, and other verbal abuse" from the Ambassador.

A major policy issue that divided the two was support for Diem himself. Williams was personally close to the Vietnamese leader. Durbrow by 1959 was fed up with Diem, constantly pressuring him to the point that Diem was no longer receptive to his advice. Diem's enmity was set in cement when in November 1960 he believed that Durbrow had advance warning of a coup and did not inform him. Since the poor relations between Durbrow and Williams were known to Diem, he was able to negate any Embassy pressure for reform by turning to the U.S. military. It is beyond the intent of this dissertation to choose sides between the two; neither possessed the answer to the insurgency, and the personalities of both no doubt exacerbated the disagreement. However, that the two should be able to disagree on such profound issues with such enmity indicates a telling lack of leadership in the U.S. Mission and an even more disturbing one in Washington which was well aware of the problem. At a time when South Vietnam was faced with mushrooming internal subversion under a unified politico/military leadership, the U.S. riposte was fragmented, at times bitterly divided, and

lacking a clear conceptual response.

The general problem of Country Team coordination was addressed by the Draper Committee on military assistance which visited Saigon in February 1959 and reported to the President in June. It came out forcefully in favor of the Ambassador's exercising "strong leadership in the planning and programming of military assistance" and even said that the MAAG should "function as his immediate staff for military assistance purposes." Yet this was practically contradicted by their recommendation that the President give clearer responsibility for executing the entire U. S. military assistance program to the Secretary of Defense. Later, the latter proposal was adopted, but no change was made to tighten the Ambassador's powers. The end result was that MAAG chiefs looked more to Washington and less to the Embassy for direction.

There were no organizational changes in the U.S. effort in 1960 though in August General Williams went home to retirement, bitter over his feud with the Embassy and the fact that the State Department appeared to have backed its subordinate with more power than did the Defense Department its own. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr whose personal relations with the Ambassador were somewhat more harmonious, though MAAG and the Embassy still had major policy differences.

This year did witness the first attempt by the U. S. Mission to develop a unified conception and plan for dealing with the now highly-

20. Letter to the President of the United States from the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program and the Committee's Second Interim Report (Washington, D. C., 3 June 1959),
visible insurgency. In 1960 all elements of the Mission awoke to the seriousness of the situation. In March the Joint Chiefs of Staff (note the actor) initiated action to devise a plan to coordinate U. S. agencies assistance programs and rationalize the Vietnamese Government's efforts in the countryside. Three months later they recommended that U. S. Government agencies (note that they did not say the Ambassador) "encourage the GVN to adopt a national emergency organization to integrate civil and military resources under centralized direction for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations," yet nothing was said to remedy the fragmentation on the American side. 22

The Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) as this planning exercise in 1960 became known occupied the Mission for much of the year. In so far as coordination and cooperation went, it was a successful Country Team effort. No real disharmony appears to have marked its progress through the Mission, though by the points it recommended it clearly was not a victory for Durbrow's "get tough" policy with Diem. 23 In the CIP, internal security did assume primacy for the first time; the fear of immediate North Vietnamese invasion gradually was laid to rest. The plan however said nothing about the organization of the U. S. effort. Instead, it complained about poor organization in the Vietnamese military chain of command. Just as MAAG wanted the Vietnamese military high command to control all military forces including the paramilitary Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, it wished to control U. S. advice to all these forces. This may not have been wrong in conception since U. S. civilian advice and support to the

22. USVNR, IV.A.5, p. 60.
paramilitary forces had been woefully inadequate, but this meant assigning a secondary role to MAAG which, given its clear interest in the conventional forces, would result in Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps receiving the diminutive share of MAAG's interest, emphasis, and understanding. Advisory responsibility for these forces was transferred to MAAG in December, and for seven years these forces languished on the back burner until two forceful personalities, General Abrams and Ambassador Komer, took an interest in them and U. S. responsibility for their support was transferred to CORDS which viewed them as the key to its undertaking.

1960 was a transition year between the 1950's when Vietnam was one of many small trouble spots and 1961 and beyond which saw it occupy more and more of the government's and the President's attention. While there were no organizational changes, on issues the Department of Defense/MAAG axis began to win out over that of the State Department/Embassy. This and the sheer pressure of events in Vietnam began to drive the U. S. toward an emphasis on physical security and military response.

1961 was more eventful. President Kennedy made decisions during this year about U. S. organization for Vietnam that remained largely unaltered until 1966. In fact in this year the general structure of the American organizational response to Vietnam for the entire war was set. In May he decided not to create an extra-bureaucratic manager for Vietnam but to leave responsibility for coordination and direction to himself and his staff, the government agencies concerned, and ad hoc interagency task forces. In November and December he decided to set up a full Military As-

sistance Command in Vietnam of which the old MAAG would be but a subsidiary element.

Before detailing these events, one must appreciate that Kennedy's arrival in the White House meant a substantial change in the management of foreign policy. He was against bureaucratic restraints, though he recognized their existence. To begin with he immediately downgraded the cumbersome National Security Council and used it only infrequently. Eisenhower's Operations Planning Board and Operations Coordinating Board were abolished in February. Action was to be at the center; Kennedy, one observer felt, viewed policy less as a tool and more as a set of reasons behind the action program. 25

Instead of the large boards, Kennedy used a small, select staff under his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy, responsible directly to him to funnel both formal agency information and policy proposals and also to seek out and strengthen the position of people in the bureaucracies whose ideas might not make it up through normal channels. The same informality applied to implementation. Arthur Schlesinger noted that the Kennedy staff realized they were "powerless without allies throughout the permanent government," that merely expressing a wish was not enough. 26 To aid in this control and to increase the diversity of information reaching the President, Kennedy insisted on the White House receiving raw intelligence information or cables from the field. His staff was to act as his eyes and ears. Interagency coordination usually was dominated by

McGeorge Bundy and his staff, though from time to time Kennedy resorted to the device of interagency task forces to deal with particular problems. The President had earnestly hoped that the State Department would serve as his agent of coordination, but because of White House dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of the department and the unwillingness of Secretary Rusk to play a stronger role, this was not to occur.

Despite this air of prescience presented by Schlesinger and others, Kennedy, especially in his first year as President, may have realized imperfectly the difficulties of organization and getting implementation through the bureaucracies. He appears often to have expressed a wish and then assumed it would be handled by his staff and the agencies without persistent Presidential follow-up. The case of the Jupiter missiles in Turkey in 1962 and his surprise that they still were in place show that this problem lasted beyond the first year. One Presidential assistant said that Kennedy had no sense of how to move the bureaucracies that he would casually mention a problem to some official and say: "Why don't you handle it?" without realizing that the official had to work with and through many others. This was not a case of bureaucracies defying the President’s

29. Personal Interview with General Taylor, 14 May 1975. General Lansdale who operated at a level below that of Schlesinger and was far more vulnerable to bureaucratic and organizational attack, takes the same view, but one that may be more colored by his experiences and personality. He stated that he did not think that Kennedy was suited by background and training to let him be an executive who would conceive of things and then see that they were carried out. "He wouldn't understand whether his ideas were being carried out or not, and didn't realize that he had to be very strong in authority. He expected his agents to get things done, though he didn't always back them up enough."--Personal interview with Edward Lansdale, 14 November 1974 in Alexandria, Virginia.
orders, but rather of his telling individuals to do something and these same individuals then would make their own compromises with fellow staff members and the bureaucracies without the President's really knowing it.

In January Brigadier General Lansdale, then the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, returned from a visit to Vietnam and submitted a significant report on the situation. President Kennedy read the report with interest and alarm, even considering sending Lansdale out as the new Ambassador. Hilsman stated that Kennedy had "all but decided" on the appointment but that this move raised a storm in the Pentagon where Lansdale was viewed as "too political an officer." 30 Lansdale himself felt that it was blocked by the State Department, Rusk apparently having said he would resign if it was forced on him. The opposition, according to Lansdale, was personal as well as organizational. 31

In his report Lansdale proposed that the U. S. Government pick and send to Vietnam a small group of its best and most experienced people, tie them closely to Vietnamese leaders, free them from bureaucratic and agency encumbrances, and back them up. 32 He recommended that Durbrow and Arthur Gardiner, the USOM Chief, be replaced, but he did not advocate a proconsular ambassador merely a better leader. He did however go on to recommend that the Mission needed a special man for political operations to help the Vietnamese create a foundation of their own style for a more democratic yet strong government. This man must, he said, combine a sense of national

31. Lansdale Interview, op. cit.
security with sensitivity to Vietnamese feelings. He can only have been advocating his own appointment. Indeed, during 1960 he had tried unsuccessfully to return to Vietnam as a confidential advisor to President Diem but had been rejected by the State Department. 33

Meanwhile resistance to Durbrow's attempts to assert Ambassadorial control was growing in Defense Department and spreading from Saigon to Washington. On March 27th, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with Secretary McNamara who expressed dissatisfaction with the Country Team situation in Saigon. MAAG, he felt, should have a direct military line of command to the Department of Defense. 34 The next day Lieutenant General T.J.H. Trapnell, returning from a visit to Vietnam, reported to the Joint Chiefs that there should be a change in the American chain of command. Echoing the growing frustration of General McGarr with Ambassador Durbrow, he noted that military problems were being reviewed by the Country Team and changes made on military not political grounds. The Country Team, he charged, had over-controlled and overcoordinated military matters. In a statement that reflected the institutional military view, he recommended:

When the internal security situation of a country deteriorates to the point where it is obvious that military action of intervention is the only answer, I feel that the Country Team concept of control and coordination under the Ambassador should not apply and

33. There is extensive documentation on this in the following files: General Williams Papers File No. 136 "Lansdale" at the Center for Military History, and the State Department's East Asia/Vietnam records, Job No. 66D199, Box 5378, File on "General Lansdale."

34. Memorandum for Record, William Bundy, Subj.: JCS-SECDEF Meeting on March 27 to discuss Laos and Vietnam, 27 March 1961, TOP SECRET. General Trapnell presented the findings of his trip verbally, and there was a long discussion on the advisability of the Country Team mechanism as applied to Laos and Vietnam.
that pure military matters should be the responsibility of the senior U.S. officer in the country concerned. Military directives should not come through the Ambassador for his review but directly through military channels in order that military directives and policy decisions will not be influenced by non-military thinking and direction in a hot war situation.35

The Joint Chiefs asked the Secretary of Defense to study this problem as they realized that any change would require interdepartmental action and Presidential approval. While nothing was done immediately, these ideas would bear fruit later in the year.

The U.S. Government was groping at this point for some kind of solution. The President had decided to replace Durbrow with Frederick E. Nolting, previously the Deputy Ambassador to NATO, but both within the White House and the Defense Department officials were proposing more radical solutions. At a middle-level planning luncheon on March 28th, Walt Rostow, then a White House Special Assistant, stressed the necessity for better cooperation between the new Ambassador and General McGarr. He said that he had discussed reorganizing Washington support for "areas directly threatened," such as Laos and Vietnam, with McNamara. George McGhee of the State Department said that he had been sponsoring the idea of a "crisis commander" in the State Department with a full-time duty officer and a "war


36. Memorandum, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the Secretary of Defense, JCSM-202-61, Subj.: South Vietnam, 31 March 1961, SECRET. Gilpatric sent a rather short reply noting that direct military communication with Washington was being discussed with the State Department--Memorandum, Roswell Gilpatric to Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subj.: South Vietnam, 12 April 1961, SECRET.
William Bundy, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense of International Security Affairs, observed that there was general approval of this suggestion.37

On the 12th of April Rostow told the President that he should appoint a "full-time, first-rate back-stop man in Washington" for Vietnam, and informed him that "McNamara, as well as your staff, believes this to be essential."38 Shortly after this McNamara came to Lansdale following an "intellectual" dinner at the house of Robert Kennedy and asked him to come up with ideas for what to do about Vietnam and counterinsurgency. This was the genesis of the Gilpatric Task Force.39 He presented his recommendations on the 19th. A task force should be established to "supervise and coordinate" the activities of every U.S. agency carrying out operations in Vietnam. It should be of interagency composition but administratively supported by whichever organization provided the director. The new Ambassador was to be presented with an action plan and a special three-man Task Force staff to accompany him. Lansdale asked that he be sent to Vietnam with the Ambassador to make use of his close contacts with the Vietnamese and to command the initial implementation of the Task Force proposals.40

McNamara took these ideas to the cabinet meeting the next day, and the President directed that Roswell Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense,

37. William P. Bundy, Memorandum for Record, Subj.: Planning Luncheon March 28th, 28 March 1961, SECRET.
38. Memorandum, Walt Rostow to President, 12 April 1961 as quoted in USVNR, Vol. IVB.1, p. 23.
39. Lansdale Interview, op. cit.
should head an ad hoc task force on Vietnam to prepare a plan to counter the Viet Cong and then carry it out. Lansdale was to be the operations officer.

Lansdale's recommendations closely foreshadowed those formally made by Gilpatric when the Task Force reported back to the President a week later. The President, he said, should declare Vietnam a "critical area" and give "overall direction, interagency coordination, and support of the program" to a Presidential Task Force, of interagency composition but with the Deputy Secretary of Defense as the Director and Lansdale as its operations officer in Vietnam. Lansdale, he stated, "will proceed to Vietnam immediately after the program receives Presidential approval. Following on-the-spot discussions with U.S. and Vietnamese officials, he will forward to the Director of the Task Force specific recommendations for action ..."

Recognizing the obvious jurisdictional problems, he sidestepped gingerly around relations with the new Ambassador, who had sat in on the drafting of the Task Force Report:

The Ambassador as head of the Country Team is assigned the authority and responsibility to see that the program is carried out in the field and to determine the timing of the actions. He is authorized to advise the Director of the Task Force of any changes which he believes should be made in the program.

41. Memorandum, William Bundy to Paul Nitze, Subj.: South Vietnam Task Force, 21 April 1961, SECRET. Chester Bowles, the State Under Secretary was substituting for Rusk at this meeting which may account for the lack of State Department opposition at this point--Personal Interview with Mr. William Moss of the John F. Kennedy Library, 13 May 1975.

42. Memorandum, Roswell Gilpatric to President, Subj.: Vietnam, 27 April 1961 with attachment, "A Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam, 26 April 1961, both TOP SECRET but virtually all of these are reprinted in USVNR, V.B.4.I, pp. 42-56.
In carrying out his duties in the field the operations officer of the Task Force will cooperate with the Ambassador and the Country Team.\(^{43}\)

While it was not directly stated, the implication was that for activities related to the counterinsurgency program in Vietnam, the Ambassador would report to the Task Force Director.

President Kennedy made no immediate decision on organization. At a meeting two days after the report was submitted, he approved only the limited military proposals of the draft.

In the next weeks, Gilpatric and Lansdale's organizational innovations were altered so as to constitute little change from the current practice. The State Department appears to have taken the lead in this, though Lansdale's possible appointment did not sit well with the military either.\(^{44}\) Under George Ball, then Deputy Under Secretary, the State Department drastically revised the organizational proposals, deleting entirely Lansdale's special role and advocating abolishing the existing Task Force. A new Task Force was to be formed with Ball as its Director. Lansdale was so strongly opposed to these developments that he advised McNamara and Gilpatric that the Defense Department should:

\begin{quote}
stay completely out of the Task Force directorship as now proposed by State...Having a defense officer, myself or someone else, placed in a position of only partial influence and of no decision permissibility
\end{quote}

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Both volumes IV.B.1 (pp. 29 and 35) and IV.B.3 (p.19) of USVNR point to the State Department as does Mr. Robert Komer--personal discussion in September 1974. Hilsman, op. cit., p. 419 and 439 singles out the military. The Joint Chiefs opposition to Lansdale does not appear to have been open for in their comments on the original draft, they agreed with the military recommendations but did not specifically reject the organizational changes proposed--Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff for Secretary of Defense, JCSM-288-61, Subj.: A Program of Action for Vietnam, 28 April 1961. Lansdale Interview, op. cit.
would be only to provide State with a scapegoat to share the blame when we have a flop...The U.S. past performance and theory of action, which State apparently desires to continue, simply offers no sound basis for winning, as desired by President Kennedy.45

In the State Department's final recommendations, the proposed Task Force was even further downgraded to a conventional interagency committee below even the Assistant Secretary level.46 Established in and directed by State, the Task Force was to have as its director Sterling Cottrell whose highest previous post was that of Political Advisor to the Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC). For Vietnam, the Ambassador was asked to "consider" special field arrangements to assure rapid Country Team response to problems--scarcely a radical recommendation. The President adopted these on May 11th, thus implicitly rejecting any radical organizational change.

Why did the President discard the Gilpatric/Lansdale proposals and retain an organizational apparatus that many, including perhaps himself, realized to be inadequate? Specifically, did the President back down in the face of strong resistance from the State Department and the military or was his choice a conscious decision to leave relationships largely as they were for other reasons?

There is no doubt that the State Department took the lead among the bureaucracies in fighting these proposals. The authors of the Pentagon Papers on this period felt that the responsibility was primarily State's, and the flow of documents supports this viewpoint. Having just had a battle of several years duration between the MAAG Chief and the Ambassador

45. USVNR, IV.E.1, p. 36.
with Lansdale strongly opposing the Ambassador and advocating views, such as full support for Diem, that were questioned by the Department, State had ample reason to oppose the Task Force as originally conceived. In addition the original April proposals would have flown in the face of the concept of Ambassadorial primacy. The Ambassador, for operations at least, would have been reporting to a Defense-dominated Task Force with its own representative running operations in Vietnam.

It should be appreciated however that U. S. military resistance existed also. The Task Force, whose two most important positions were to be held by officials of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and not the Joint Chiefs or military services, would have violated the usual chain of command, shortcircuiting the MAAG Chief, the Pacific Commander, and the Joint Chiefs. It has already been seen just how sensitive the Joint Chiefs and General McGarr were to outside interference, and the Pacific Commander would demonstrate his own sensitivities on this subject later in the year when the question of a military command came up. The Task Force and its operations officer could not have avoided making detailed military operational decisions. Lansdale was known also as an unconventional officer, much of whose career had been divorced from normal military career patterns. His ties with the CIA would also raise bureaucratic hackles. The effect, in essence, would have been to remove the Joint Chiefs from their key decision-making position for Vietnam. During 1961 one can observe a clear desire of the Joint Chiefs to increase military independence, culminating in setting up of a military command in Vietnam in early 1962. This push was well in evidence by early May. The creation of an independent super Task Force would have quashed all this.
Thus, bureaucratically and organizationally these agencies had good reason to battle against the arrangements proposed by Gilpatric and Lansdale. The available documentation supports the importance of their resistance, yet there is no clear evidence that the President actually backed away because of it. The story is far more complex, and if the President did retreat from a once personally-preferred solution, bureaucratic opposition seems to be only one of many reasons. In enumerating these, one must appreciate that there is no first-hand evidence on what the President actually thought nor any that he had a clear preference. He may simply have postponed the decision in his mind and then lost track of it altogether in the press of more urgent business.

To begin with, those decisions were taken in the shadow of the crisis in Laos; the real focus of the Administration’s worry in this period was on Laos, not Vietnam. The Pentagon Papers have observed that there is no indication in the available record that the immediate Vietnam situation was a major influence in the decision to create a new program. Instead the hypothesis was advanced that the Gilpatric Task Force itself and the programs it recommended had as their object using a U. S. response in Vietnam to be a signal for Laos, to show that we did not mean to be expelled from Southeast Asia; reassuring the Vietnamese was only a secondary objective. If the situation was not judged an emergency at this point, then a major organizational shake-up, which would have implied an emergency, was unlikely.

Lansdale himself may have been a factor. In the initial days of the

New administration his experience and unconventional approach commended him to the White House leadership, but further exposure to his ideas may have dampened their enthusiasm. The authors of the Pentagon Papers volume on this period observed, in contrast to others who saw Lansdale's demise merely in terms of bureaucratic resistance, that on several issues, such as the liberation of North Vietnam and full support for Diem, his views "went well beyond what the Administration judged reasonable." Furthermore, his unquestioned abilities in personal political relations may have been cancelled out by his already-recognized problems with management and organization.

There are also indications that the Administration's interest in developing counterinsurgency were more important to starting the Gilpatric exercise than the desire to improve organization for Vietnam specifically. Organizational innovation for Vietnam was quickly advocated and just as rapidly discarded. Indeed, the organizational changes that were Presidentially generated, the Special Group (Counterinsurgency) and the Joint Chief's Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (see below), dealt with counterinsurgency worldwide, though the pressure of events dictated in practice an overwhelming emphasis on Vietnam. Perhaps the more basic, underlying reason for the President's unwillingness to create a strong, centrally-directed organization relates to more general theories of Presidential conduct. Presidents, not unlike many executives, abhor making difficult, unpleasant decisions. They would rather stall on them. Most important is to preserve the President's options and freedom of

48. Ibid., p. 36.
49. Ibid., pp. 20-21 and Lansdale Interview, op. cit.
action as much as possible. Turning problems over to a committee is a
time-tested way of avoiding or at least postponing hard choices. The send-
ing of special missions and the formation of various task forces during
Kennedy's first two years show that he had no intention of giving directive
power for Vietnam to one man short of himself. Lansdale, indeed any strong
single manager, probably would have come up with an action program that
would have been far more difficult to refuse or put off coming from one
man, publicly designated as "Mr. Vietnam" rather than as the product of
lengthy interagency battling at lower levels. Turning the war over to
single supra-agency management would have tended also to cut off auxiliary
lines of communication to the President, for he could not easily avoid hav-
ing Vietnam information first channeled through the man designated as in
which was influential with Kennedy, said that the President must keep com-
petition and clashes within and among bureaucracies, a policy of divide and
rule, which produces choice, due notice, and time to defer a decision.50
One should, he observed, avoid too much structuring, lest the President
lose his personal hold, and build competition into the system. There are
strong similarities between these views and the way Kennedy actually ran
the government.

Thus the decision not to accept the Gilpatric/Lansdale proposals con-
tains far more than the very obvious bureaucratic resistance would suggest.
Organizational dissatisfaction existed, but an equally strong case can be
made for rational calculation and Presidential indecision.

In late May the President did take one step to improve coordination of U. S. programs in foreign countries by sending a letter to all U. S. Ambassadors of Chiefs of Mission. Chester Bowles, the Under Secretary of State, was given the task of drafting it; Kennedy wanted U. S. agencies abroad to speak with a common voice and avoid situations where one agency could be played off against another by a foreign government. Schlesinger noted that the letter, aimed especially at the C.I.A., was resisted not only by them, but by the Defense Department, the Peace Corps, and even some Foreign Service Officers who did not want to be involved in management. Such resistance is hard to understand for the letter changed little and actually was weaker than President Eisenhower's 1954 Executive Order and a later Presidential memorandum that replaced it in 1960. The letter, which was identical to all Ambassadors, told Nolting that he was to "oversee and coordinate all the activities of the U. S. Government" in Vietnam. It said "supervise" not "direct." The Ambassador was to communicate problems to the Department of State not directly to the President. Given the Department's known weakness, this could not enhance his position in inter-agency disputes. Other agencies were allowed full communication with their home offices and could appeal Ambassadorial decisions to Washington through their own agencies. The Mission Chief could have agency members removed from the country, but the President was "confident" that this would seldom happen. Military attaches and MAAGs were placed under the Ambassador, but operational military forces under a U. S. area military commander were excluded and given a direct line of authority to the Joint Chiefs, the

Secretary of Defense, and the President. There is no doubt that the two were at least to be co-equal, and the tone and emphasis indicate that the military commander actually was thought to be the more senior. When the military command was created in early 1962 in Vietnam, this is exactly what happened. As the Pentagon Papers observed, the effect in Vietnam of the President's letter was "to preserve claims for independent authority for each of the major governmental departments involved."53

The Vietnam Task Force under Sterling Cottrell functioned throughout Kennedy's Presidency, but it is hard to discover anywhere that it had major influence or played an important role. It had no control over resources, no independent information system, and no field contingent in Vietnam. It was involved in day-to-day matters and did little directing. Instead the President dispatched three major missions, each ad hoc and non-institutional, to Vietnam. The first was by Vice President Johnson who had the following to say about the American effort on his return:

We must have coordination of purpose in our country team, diplomatic and military. The Saigon Embassy, USIS, MAAG and related operations leave much to be desired. They should be brought up to maximum efficiency. The most important thing is imaginative, creative, American management of our military aid program.54

If not calling for direct central management, he joined a lengthening line of senior officials who recognized that all was not well with American organization for Vietnam.

Less than a month later the President sent an economic mission under Dr. Eugene Staley to Vietnam to work out a joint U.S./GOV program to tackle

53. Ibid.
54. Memorandum, Vice President to President, Subj.: Mission to Southeast Asia, India and Pakistan, 23 May 1961 as reprinted in USVNR, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 159-160.
economic issues. The mission actually became more of a vehicle for military recommendations. It did adopt, however, a conceptual point of view, not necessarily new, that as much as any characterized the government's sense of pacification. Security should be given first priority, it said, but lasting success depended on social and economic programs to be applied in conjunction with those of the military; longer-range development programs were to follow after these. A specific action program was proposed in conjunction with these sequences. They also recommended parallel U. S. and GVN committees each of which would unify their country's efforts and have military and economic/social subcommittees to implement the action program. Had this been carried out fully, the U. S. pacification program would have been unified significantly. President Kennedy, and it would appear the rest of the U. S. Government also, chose to ignore the organizational proposals but did agree formally with the three basic tenets of security first, then economic/social action, and finally long-term development. He did however state that:

...the chief responsibility for the planning and execution of the U. S. share of the program will, more than ever, rest with the Ambassador and under his direction, with MAAG and USOM.

The final and most important mission sent in 1961 was initiated at an October 11th meeting of the National Security Council at which the President decided to send a special group, led by Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow to


Vietnam primarily to see whether U. S. ground force intervention was feasible and desirable but also to make an appraisal of the overall situation and "explore ways in which assistance of all types might be more effective." 57

No senior State Department official was included, their highest ranking representative being Sterling Cottrell. Schlesinger felt that "the very composition" of this mission "expressed a conscious decision by the Secretary of State" to turn Vietnam over to the Secretary of Defense. 58 Rusk, he said, decided to do this as the military aspects seemed the most urgent, and Kennedy agreed because he had more confidence in McNamara and Taylor than the State Department. Ambassador Nolting has stated that Secretary Rusk felt that his department had been "burned" over Laos and that he was happy to see Defense step in. 59 Dealing with Vietnam, he observed, was a job that nobody really wanted and that McNamara was filling a void reluctantly. Rostow confirmed this reluctance saying that McNamara consciously and systematically deferred to Rusk whenever the Secretary of State took a firm position. 60 Taylor took a different view; Defense was more energetic with more resources whereas State and AID were not used to

57. National Security Action Memorandum No. 104, Subj.: Southeast Asia, 13 October 1961 as reprinted in USVNR, V.B.4.I, p.328. Kennedy’s personal letter of instruction while emphasizing the military threat also stressed the importance of the Vietnamese doing the job themselves, and, he noted that "While the military part of the problem is of great importance in South Vietnam, its political, social, and economic elements are equally significant, and I shall expect your appraisal and your recommendations to take full account of them." -- Letter, President Kennedy to General Taylor, 13 October 1961 as reprinted in USVNR, Vol. V.B.4.I, p. 327.

58. Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 545.
59. Personal Interview with Ambassador Nolting, 7 November 1974.
planning and programming. He still faulted State for not assuming more of a coordinating and supervisory role however. But Taylor also believed that Rusk felt that the preponderance of the U. S. effort in Vietnam was military and for that reason McNamara and the Department of Defense should have a stronger leadership role. Rusk and McNamara, he said, carefully deferred to the other in each other's bailiwick.

General Taylor and his mission traveled to Vietnam in October and reported back to the President in early November. Despite the President's instructions he focused on the sending of American troops, but the complexity of the entire program prompted him to tell the President that:

...it will be a major challenge to our governmental machinery in Washington to see that the many segments of the program which involve many departments and agencies are executed with maximum energy and proper timing. I would suggest that a formalized procedure be established and promulgated to insure effective and orderly implementation.

While Taylor did not pursue this point in detail, his admonition was one more indication that there was need for unity and coordination in Washington. His proposal for organization in Vietnam itself was slightly more specific. The United States, he said, should establish a "limited partnership" with the Vietnamese at all levels, one aspect of which might be the appointment of Lansdale as a personal advisor to President Diem. At least four times Diem requested Lansdale in this capacity, but the President never sent him out. Rostow blamed Nolting, McGarr, and their respec-

63. Letter, General Taylor to President, 3 November 1961, TOP SECRET.
64. "Evaluations and Conclusions" from the Taylor-Rostow Report, 3 November 1961 TOP SECRET.
tive Washington agencies, saying that none of them wanted another American so close to Diem.65

Lansdale himself made the most radical recommendations. The President should go before Congress with a declaration of "sublimited" war and create an executive agency to:

- carry out the President's desires. The agency must be able to devote all of its time and energies to the task.
- It must be elevated high enough to demand and get effective contributions from all U. S. entities, including State and Defense, and be quickly responsive to the Executive will. The present Task Forces have neither the stature nor the permanent personnel required. It would be preferable to have a small task force headed by a Presidential Assistant, with members from each U. S. department and agency assigned to it full time, with its own channel of communication to the field, with complete control of the budget to counter the emergency in the country involved, and with a clear statement of its priorities in drawing on the men, money, and material needed.66

This new executive agency would send an operational manager to Vietnam who would pull together the entire U. S. counterinsurgency effort with only general guidance from the Ambassador. Local trouble spots in Vietnam would have their own special task forces whose directors would command support and personnel from all U. S. agencies involved.

Lansdale's proposal was ignored, but it is interesting as it was by far the most clear and precise "radical" proposal for U. S. organization for Vietnam during the early years.67

65. Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, op. cit., p. 278. Even Sterling Cottrell, the State Department representative on the mission, approved the idea of sending Lansdale out as a special advisor.
66. Memorandum, Lansdale to General Taylor, Subj.: Vietnam, no date, SECRET. This was included as an annex to the Taylor-Rostow Report.
67. Taylor states that it probably never was included in the final set of papers that went to the President--Personal Interview with General Taylor, 14 May 1975.
General Taylor's trip did lead to a major organizational change. The change was foreshadowed when he advocated in his report that there was a need to change the charter, spirit, and organization of MAAG, shifting it to "something nearer—but not quite—an operational headquarters in a theater of war." While the Joint Chiefs had been on record in favor of an operational command earlier in the year, Taylor's comment was followed almost immediately by two months of decision-making over just this idea.

Secretaries Rusk and McNamara seconded Taylor when they made their own recommendations to Kennedy a week later. But, the real impetus came two days after their meeting with the President when McNamara asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Lyman Lemnitzer, for his comments on the possibility of setting up a command structure in which the military commander in Vietnam would assume responsibility for all activities related to the counterinsurgency effort. This would have placed pacification clearly under the military, and the new commander would have reported directly to the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary, by-passing both the Ambassador and the Pacific Commander. McNamara considered the latter an obstruction and was anxious to remove him from the chain of command.

70. Memorandum, McNamara to General Lemnitzer, Subj: Command Structure for South Vietnam, 13 November 1961, TOP SECRET (Grp. 3).
Curiously, the Joint Chiefs do not appear to have understood this proposal, so McNamara reiterated it in more detail and went on to note specifically that he and Rusk envisaged military responsibility for the part of the economic aid program that directly related to pacification. William Bundy of ISA meanwhile was holding exploratory discussions with AID officials.

The Joint Chiefs did not enthusiastically accept McNamara's proposal. The stumbling block lay in having the field commander report directly to them rather than going through the Pacific Command. More serious resistance came from the State Department, though not from Secretary Rusk who initially supported McNamara's position. Ambassador Nolting strongly opposed the plan. Alexis Johnson preferred to find the "right man," rather than change the organization and observed that the title "commander" would indicate a violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords. This and other difficulties he argued to Dean Rusk.

On November 22nd General Lemnitzer replied formally to McNamara, opting for the idea of a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC. This not

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73. Note, William Bundy to McNamara, Subj.: Re the Vietnam Command Problem, 17 November 1961, TOP SECRET (Grp. 3).

74. Memorandum, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense, JCSM-812-61, Subj.: South Vietnam, 22 November 1961, TOP SECRET (Grp. 3).
only kept the Pacific Commander in the chain of command thus skirting a jurisdictional battle with Admiral Harry Felt, but to the Joint Chiefs it meant that, in accordance with the President's May 29 letter to Nolting, the new commander would be co-equal to and separate from the Ambassador. Pacification activities, they agreed, should be given to the U.S. military chief in Vietnam. McNamara approved the Chiefs concept and gave up on his attempt to bypass CINCPAC.75

By the beginning of December Alexis Johnson had won over Rusk. The State Department, worried that a new command would mean a "100% commitment to saving South Vietnam," said that the military man should have neither a new title nor a fourth star, though surprisingly they did not object to the concept of co-equal status. The C.I.A., while not resisting coordination, did not want the military to have command over any of their activities as McNamara had envisaged originally. William Bundy observed to McNamara that while AID and CIA objections were resolvable, State's would "gut" the proposals.76

McNamara tried to persuade Rusk that such a command was necessary and that while the commander would be co-equal with the Ambassador, the President's May 29th letter would be adhered to especially as regards keeping the Ambassador fully informed.77

No military man would be nominated who could not work under this ar-

76. Memorandum, William Bundy to McNamara, Subj.: Vietnam Command Arrangements, 1 December 1961, TOP SECRET.
rangement. He restated his desire to see all counter-insurgency activities
drawn together under the U.S. commander. The State Department, however,
continued to resist, though this resistance was far stronger below Rusk's
level; the military commander should be limited to "clearly military" af-
fairs. Objection now was raised to the idea of the commander as co-
equal with the Ambassador since Vietnam was not to be an area command.

On December 18th, McNamara met with Rusk and the two worked out the
eventual agreement. The new military chief would be called "Commander,
United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam" and would have re-
sponsibility for all U.S. military policy, operations, and assistance in
South Vietnam with direct access to the Secretary of Defense through
CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs. The Ambassador was responsible for political
and basic policy matters, and the commander was required to consult with
him on these matters. However, each could communicate policy differences
to their respective agencies in Washington. Both were to keep each other
fully informed.

The result was a compromise that preserved at least the veneer of

78. Memorandum, William Bundy to McNamara, Subj.: Honolulu Meeting, 14
    December 1961, SECRET (Grp. 3).
79. Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Military Command in South
    Vietnam, 22 December 1961, SECRET with attached "State-Defense Agree-
    ment on Command Structure for South Vietnam," SECRET. Earlier that
day McNamara had proposed slightly different terms of reference to Rusk
that would have given the Commander the title of "Commander, United
States Military Assistance Forces-Vietnam"—See Memorandum, McNamara to
objected to the word "Forces" as it would smack too much of "troops"and
military action.—See Letter, Rusk to McNamara, 18 December 1961,SECRET.
Rusk seems to have been able to get McNamara to make the eventual
agreement slightly more restrictive on the military commander than
McNamara originally proposed in his opening memorandum that day.
Greater specificity would be perhaps a better way to view it.
Ambassadorial primacy and kept any one man from controlling the U.S. pacification and counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam. But, it is also plain that while McNamara may not have received the full loaf, the Defense/military position in Vietnam was stronger and more independent. Now the double lines of authority were openly codified.

The Joint Chiefs approved the agreement, and on the 22d McNamara asked the President to approve General Paul D. Harkins, then the U.S. Army's Pacific Commander, for the position. The agreed terms of reference were presented, and, as if the whole process had been smooth, he noted that he had "consulted" with Dean Rusk and reached an understanding on the terms. 80 Taylor observed that the two Secretaries frequently did this. They would get together, iron out their differences, and then present their compromise to the President as if there had never been any problem in the first place.

What did the President do during all of this? Was he merely presented a decision that masked weeks of bureaucratic disagreement? Ambassador Nolting cast a different, but perhaps supplementary, light on these events. 82 Hearing of the plan to set up a strong commander, he decided in early December to fly back to Washington to argue against it. The trip did not take place until early January, after McNamara and Rusk has agreed on the

80. Memorandum, General Lemnitzer to McNamara, JCSM-878-61, Subj.: Vietnam, 20 December 1961, SECRET (Grp. 3) and Memorandum, McNamara to President, 22 December 1961, op. cit., SECRET.
81. Personal Interview with General Taylor, 14 May 1975.
82. Personal Interview with Ambassador Nolting, 7 December 1974. See also Memorandum, Lemnitzer (drafted by J-5 Staff) for Joint Chiefs, Subj.: Vietnam, 19 December 1961, SECRET which refers to "the activities of Nolting." Hillsman, To Move a Nation, op. cit., confirms much of the Nolting account though he does not mention the meeting with President Kennedy.
terms and presented them to the President. Nolting had no objection to creating a command as such but felt that it would give too much American military emphasis to a problem he considered political, economic, and Vietnamese. Rusk however would not support him, and McNamara would make no concessions, but Averell Harriman, then Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, agreed with Nolting and took him over to the White House where both, along with General Taylor, met with Kennedy. The President, according to Nolting, was absolutely unequivocal that there had to be only one head, one Ambassador, and he instructed Taylor to draft the terms of reference for the new commander to reflect this. Nolting felt strongly that the final terms did not reflect what the President requested. Yet by this point the President had already received McNamara's recommendations. His order to Taylor may have been a gambit to satisfy the Ambassador. It is difficult to believe that Kennedy would not have noticed that the McNamara/Rusk agreement in December was identical to the terms actually promulgated in February.

Regardless of the President's concept of the relationship, the actual solution was never clearly worked out. Instead, it was felt that imprecision of terms and organization could be negated by concentrating on harmonious personal relations. McNamara had openly stated this when he worked out the agreement with Rusk in December. Nolting felt that he "got on very well" with Harkins. On his return trip to Saigon he stopped at Honolulu and spent a day discussing the new arrangements with Harkins. Both wanted to make sure that they understood each other. Nolting avoided Durbrow's position by saying that he was not a military man and would stay out of strictly
military matters but that he did want to be informed. The result was, as Hilsman has suggested, a "mutual forebearance that probably foredoomed the two halves of the American effort to proceed independently of each other." In late January 1962 Kennedy approved the terms of reference for the new commander and on the 6th of February the Joint Chiefs passed them on to Admiral Felt and General Harkins instructing them to establish the command. While the MAAG Chief still was to answer to the Ambassador, MAAG was also under General Harkins. The MAAG Chief could appeal unresolved differences with the Ambassador back to Washington through military channels. MAAG continued to exist until it was absorbed into MACV in 1964.

The new arrangement, despite Nolting's meeting with Harkins in January, did not begin smoothly. When press stories indicated that Harkins would be totally beyond the Ambassador's control, Nolting acted to correct this impression by leaking his side to Homer Bigart of the New York Times. General Lemnitzer also flatly indicated that McGarr and not Harkins would attend Country Team meetings which would have downgraded the Ambassador's position and signaled that the military commander was wholly free of Ambassadorial control. McNamara was advised to change Harkins' instructions so that he would attend. This he did, and Harkins attended the meetings.

While this process of change was occurring, the Administration was also

83. Nolting Interview, 7 December 1974, op. cit.
84. Hilsman, To Move a Nation, op. cit., p. 442.
85. Message, JCS 3180, 062339Z February 1962, Exclusive for Admiral Felt and General Harkins, SECRET (Grp. 3)
86. Message, CINCPAC 5000, Ser. 0180, 7 April 1962, to COMUSMACV and CHMAAG/V, CONFIDENTIAL.
87. Memorandum, William Bundy to Secretary of Defense, Subj:
thrashing out the problem of how to organize Washington support for Vietnam. Pacification was never considered a separate entity but as part of the overall counterinsurgency effort. Though there was an attempt to create a single Vietnam manager in Washington, the real interest lay in creating an organization to handle counterinsurgency around the world. The events in Vietnam were seen as just one part of a world Communist strategy of insurgency. Several organizational efforts took place at the same time.

In late November President Kennedy told Maxwell Taylor that he wanted to know just whom he should regard as "personally responsible for the effectiveness" of Washington support for the new Vietnam program recommended as a result of the Taylor Rostow Mission. He wanted a proposal from the relevant advisors on this point and indicated that one individual should be identified with the program as was Mr. Foy Kohler for Berlin. No further mention was made of this proposal which was probably one of many ideas raised but not pursued by the President.

More significant was the establishment of the Special Group (Counterinsurgency) in January 1962. This was a special concern of President Kennedy who in 1961 and 1962 took a deep, personal interest in counterinsurgency. Taylor, who became the Group's first head, states that the concept grew out of the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs when a Strategic Resources Group was proposed to handle the Cold War but was turned down by

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88. Memorandum, Maxwell Taylor to Secretary Rusk et al., Subj: Meeting on Southeast Asia, 5:30 p.m., 27 November 1961 as reprinted in USVNR, V.B.4.I, pp. 423-424.
Rusk who felt that it would infringe on the State Department's responsibilities. The immediate impetus came from the CIA and Joint Chiefs who urged Kennedy to establish a single high authority to develop an integrated counterinsurgency program. These proposals marked the end of the Kennedy Administration's serious effort to give the State Department authority to coordinate all foreign operations. State had neither the ability nor the inclination, and the activities of Rusk bear out the latter, to accept this role especially in areas with sub-limited wars. Neither the "Bissell Group" (CIA) nor the Joint Chiefs recommended that the Defense Department take over in these critical areas threatened by insurgency, but the former did advocate that special task forces for critical countries be chaired by Defense but with a Special Group under the National Security Council over them. This was the framework for the proposal drawn up by General Taylor.

Taylor intended the Special Group to involve itself in actual operations, but this was resisted by all the major agencies concerned, especially the Department of Defense. William Bundy, then Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, recommended giving Defense primary responsibility for coordination and execution of interdepartmental

89. Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, op. cit., pp. 192 and 201.
counterinsurgency programs, especially in Vietnam. He attempted to separate policy formation from execution by saying that State could still be the senior advisor to the President on foreign policy but that planning, programming, and execution should rest with the Defense Department. Other agencies, including State, resisted Taylor's plan and the end result was a considerable watering down.

Set up by Presidential order on 18 January, the Special Group (CI) never really lived up to the hopes some may have entertained for it. The NSAM made it look formidable as its membership certainly was. Of its four stated functions the first three related to emphasizing counterinsurgency and improving U.S. organizational response and resource allocation to this task—all of which reflected the direct personal interest of President Kennedy. Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam were assigned to the Special Group which was given authority to insure development of interdepartmental counterinsurgency programs for these countries and to resolve any interagency problems over them. While the Special Group was placed above any other interdepartmental task forces, agency independence was left largely intact. It was to resolve problems and coordinate actions not

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91. Memorandum, William Bundy to Gilpatric, Subj.: Talking Paper Concerning Cold War Organization, 29 December 1961, SECRET.

92. National Security Action Memorandum No. 124, Subj.: Establishment of the Special Group (Counterinsurgency), 18 January 1962 as reprinted in USVNR, Vol. V.B.4.II, pp. 442-444. General Taylor was the Chairman. The other regular members were: The Attorney General, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of Central Intelligence, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Administrator of the Agency for International Development, and the Director of the United States Information Agency.
manage and direct.

The Special Group by even the mild standards of its directive did not significantly affect the U.S. effort in Vietnam. To begin with, its focus was wider than Vietnam, and all of its members were burdened with their regular jobs. Most of them also represented their large bureaucracies; they were not independent. By placing his brother on the Group, Kennedy evinced a strong Presidential interest, and one observer reports that Robert Kennedy pointedly grilled agency representatives at meetings. The Attorney General was trying to install fear into them to let them know that they were being watched by the President—perhaps a useful method for White House control of the bureaucracy. Yet it is hard to point to any major accomplishments by the Group as regards Vietnam. The lack of coordination continued, and certainly no forceful direction was given to the Vietnam effort. When General Taylor left in October 1962 to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Special Group declined, and in 1966 it was merged into the new Senior Interdepartmental Group system.

Also during this period the President was responsible for another organizational change regarding Vietnam. While this change is indicative of the difficulty of forcing organizations to act against the grain of their repertoire, it also shows the President's ability to get compliance if he places enough emphasis on an issue. As I have said earlier, a recurring

93. U.S. Department of State, "United States Overseas Internal Defense Policy," September, 1962, SECRET, which notes that "members of the Special Group (CI) will act on behalf of their respective departments and agencies."
94. Stavins et al., op. cit., p. 73.
Presidential theme in 1961 and 1962 was the interest in improving the U.S. response to insurgency, something that was not shared by Services which looked primarily to World War II, Korea, and Europe. During these years the President published a series of NSAMs that illustrate an involvement in the fine details of the problem. On January 10th General C. V. Clifton, the President's Defense Liaison Officer, stressed this interest in details to General Taylor and noted that some Presidential queries had not even been replied to. The President, he said, wanted a senior officer in charge of counterinsurgency high up in the Army. \(^9\) The next day Kennedy sent a strongly-worded reminder to McNamara:

> I am not satisfied that the Department of Defense, and in particular the Army, is according the necessary degree of attention and effort to the threat of insurgency and guerrilla war.\(^9\)

Reflecting the difficulty of getting the Army to change its orientation, he emphasized that counterinsurgency should be comparable in importance to conventional war preparations. It should be understood that Kennedy was not complaining here about overall government coordination and primarily was interested in general counterinsurgency programs. He did state emphatically that he wanted two general officers to be designated immediately as Army and Joint Staff focal points for activities in this new type of warfare. This brought action. In less than two weeks he was presented with and approved the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of Defense's proposals to implement his wishes.\(^9\) Even before final Presidential approval the Army

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95. Memorandum MG C.V. Clifton to General Taylor, 10 January 1962, SECRET.
96. Memorandum, President to Secretary of Defense, 11 January 1962, SECRET.
97. Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Counterinsurgency, 24 January 1962, SECRET and Memorandum, MG C. V. Clifton to McNamara, 24 January 1962.
placed a rising Major General, William B. Rosson, in charge of Special Operations in the Army's military operations staff. This however had little influence on Vietnam as most of Rosson's effort concerned the counterinsurgency response. The Joint Chiefs created the position of Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), held first by Major General Victor H. Krulak, which handled not only worldwide counterinsurgency but which was operationally involved with Vietnam, becoming until 1965 the major planning agency for Vietnam actions on the Joint Staff. It did become the focal point for Washington military action on pacification.

The creation of SACSA, the Special Group (CI), and MACV ended a year of stopping and starting on U.S. organization for Vietnam and pacification. In it one can see a clear trend toward giving greater leadership to the military and the Department of Defense which was assisted by the open distaste of Secretary Rusk for such a role and his willingness to step aside. The creation of MACV, despite the efforts of Ambassador Nolting and his close personal relationship with General Harkins, sealed the military's independence from direct Ambassadorial control. The civilian agencies too retained their separate lines of communication and rights of appeal to Washington. These organizational decisions, except for some

98. Interview with Mr. Vincent Demma of the Center for Military History, 13 November 1974. SACSA was authorized in: Memorandum, Lemnitzer to Joint Chiefs, CM-560-62, Subj.: Establishment within the Joint Staff to the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities, 23 February 1962, CONFIDENTIAL.
minor adjustments and the more radical pacification organization changes of 1966-1967, stayed unaltered for the rest of the Vietnam War. Coordination and direction came to depend on personalities rather than specific organization.

Throughout this year it is hard to pick out a consistent thread of Presidential preference. He toyed with the idea of an unconventional single manager on both ends, but then rejected it in favor of ad hoc task forces and reliance on the traditional agency system. Bureaucratic resistance to change naturally was there, but the real fighting seems to have been among the agencies not between the bureaucracies and the President, and this resistance was not the dominant factor in the President's mind. He did not feel strongly enough to overrule the agencies. If a case can be made for bureaucratic influence on these decisions, a far stronger one can be made for Presidential inattention and choice, be it indecision or a conscious choice that the available system was about as good as any of the proposed alternatives.

What were the results of all these changes? Opinion is divided. John Mecklin, who served in the Mission during this period, described the U.S. effort in Vietnam in the early 1960's as:

like a contest among a dozen teams of carpenters to see who can build the same house fastest, simultaneously, on the same lot.99

Yet he praised Nolting and Harkins for avoiding jealousies and interagency fights and working together to make the arrangement work. Nolting himself, as mentioned earlier, gave credit to the personal relationship and not the

organizational system they were presented with. As for controlling the
civilian agencies, Nolting felt that no one man regardless of formal title
could have spent more time on their business than he did. To correspond
to the Vietnam Task Force in Washington, he renamed the Country Team the
"Saigon Task Force" which had regularly scheduled meetings once a week.
These meetings included General Harkins and the MAAG Chief, though they
tended to be informal gatherings with only occasional use of agendas, minutes, and decision papers.

Others were more critical. In March 1962 an Army general told the
Special Warfare Advisory Group that there was:

little unity of command in Vietnam--neither among
the indigenous forces nor the Americans. There is
little or no coordination between CIA, USIA and MAAG.

In May General Rosson told the same group that "there is virtually no
liaison between the U.S. agencies" in Vietnam. Eight months later in
January 1963 at a time when many observers, especially official, felt that
the war was going well for the South Vietnamese, Roger Hilsman, then head
of Intelligence and Research at the State Department, and Michael Forrestal,
of the White House, returned from a trip to Vietnam and gave the following
report to the President. Large portions of it are worth repeating for the
problems were not new then and never were completely eliminated. Their
description of an alternative Ambassador is exactly what took place when

100. Nolting Interview, 7 November 1974, op. cit. and Nolting Interview,
18 August 1975.
101. Memorandum for Record, Subj.: Meeting of the Special Warfare Coordinating Group, 23 March 1962, CONFIDENTIAL.
102. Memorandum for Record, Subj.: Meeting of the Special Warfare Coordinating Group (Focal Point) for 4 May 1962, CONFIDENTIAL.
(1) There is no overall planning effort that effectively ties together the civilian and military effort.

(2) There is little or no long-range thinking about the kind of country that should come out of a victory and about what we do now to contribute to this longer-range goal...(3) Among both civilians and military there is still some confusion over the way to conduct a counter-guerrilla war. Many of the lower-ranking people out in the field in actual contact with the problems seem fully conscious of the importance of the civil and political aspects, but in the middle and higher levels understanding is far from perfect. The American military mission must share some of the blame for the excessive emphasis on large-scale operations and air interdiction which have had the bad political and useless military effects described in our report...

The real trouble, however, is that the rather large U.S. effort in South Vietnam is managed by a multitude of independent U.S. agencies and people with little or no overall direction. No one man is in charge. What coordination there is results mainly from the sort of treaty arrangements that are arrived at in the country team meetings... The result is that the U.S. effort is fragmented and duplicative...

What is needed ideally is to give authority to a single executive, a man with perhaps a military background but who understands that this war is essentially a struggle to build a nation out of the chaos of revolution. One possibility would be to appoint the right kind of general as Ambassador. A better alternative would be to appoint as Ambassador a civilian public figure whose character and reputation would permit him to dominate the representatives of all other departments and agencies.

There are, of course, some formidable political and bureaucratic problems in taking either of these steps. What is more, we cannot say that the matter is urgent or that disaster would inevitably or immediately follow if things remain as they are. 103

There is no direct link between these recommendations and Presidential action, but it is interesting that both Ambassadorial solutions were tried later... Lodge the civilian and General Taylor the military. Each solution

emphasized a policy of relying on individual rather than the more disruptive organizational change.

Within Vietnam itself, at the corps level and below, there were several experiments, generated at those levels, to improve management and coordination. In the 1st and 2nd Corps areas, the Senior Advisors, both military, tried to bring some unity to pacification advice and support. The 1st Corps advisor designated a corps "Rehabilitation Officer" to coordinate all U.S. agencies for pacification. The 2nd Corps advisor had missions for the U.S. civilian agencies written into his operational plans. In the 4th Corps area, a Division Senior Advisor set up a detailed military and civilian planning and operations advisory group that unified American advice in several provinces. These coordination efforts were the result of personal initiative on their part, not direction or inspiration from above. Participation was voluntary. Nothing was established to last beyond the foresight of the personalities involved. 104

In 1962 and 1963, the operational and conceptual center of the South Vietnamese Government's pacification program was the Strategic Hamlet Program. It involved grouping much of the rural population into fortified hamlets that were expected to resist both Viet Cong political influence and military attack. Regardless of its merits and success or failure, for two years this was the pacification program, and the bulk of American attention to pacification was focused on it. The Vietnamese Government set up an

Interministerial Committee on Strategic Hamlets under the President's brother, Counselor Ngo Dinh Nhu. Ambassador Wolting followed suit in March 1962 with the Committee on Province Rehabilitation, or "Trueheart Committee," chaired by his Deputy Chief of Mission, William Trueheart. Every major U.S. agency in Vietnam was represented. As the Strategic Hamlet Program declined and Diem and Nhu were overthrown, the Trueheart Committee slipped into oblivion. The Vietnamese committee on strategic hamlets had become such a creature of Nhu that when he was toppled the Vietnamese coordinating mechanism for the program collapsed along with his power. When McGeorge Bundy asked how the United States would communicate its recommendations for the hamlet program now that Nhu was dead, Trueheart replied that each agency would work through its own lines to influence the GVN.\textsuperscript{105}

The Trueheart Committee was authorized to develop a Mission position on pacification plans and operations, to represent the Mission on overall pacification matters, and to coordinate U.S. pacification plans, programs, and advice and assistance to the Vietnamese. The committee had no directive power; new programs or disagreements were to be submitted to the Ambassador.\textsuperscript{106} It also had no secretariat and in actuality involved only informal interagency coordination. Opinion is mixed as to just how successful the Trueheart Committee really was.\textsuperscript{107} Hilsman felt that while it may have been

\textsuperscript{105} HQS, CINCPAC, Record of Special Meeting on the Republic of Vietnam, held on 20 November 1963, SECRET (Grp. 1).

\textsuperscript{106} See State Department East Asia/Vietnam Records, Job No. 66D193, Box 1779 with file on the Committee on Province Rehabilitation. This is the most extensive file on this committee in existence. There are very few other references to it. It contains a complete set of the meeting minutes.

\textsuperscript{107} COL Carl W. Schaad, The Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam; the Role of the People in Counterinsurgency Warfare, 6 March 1964, CONFIDENTIAL (Grp. 1), an Army War College Thesis. Leonard Maynard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 30. The former gives it a favorable assessment; the latter does not.
a success in terms of assembling logistic support, the military continued
with their own "shooting war" not coordinating it with the hamlet program:

From the beginning, the United States effort lacked both from the "unified civilian, police, and military system of command and control" and the "subordination of civic, police, social, and military measures to an overall counter-guerrilla program" that were the first principles of the strategic concept that had been worked out.108

This was the legacy of military "independence" and the lack of a single manager.

Henry Cabot Lodge replaced Nolting as Ambassador in late August 1963, and with his arrival the surface Mission unity faded swiftly. Pacification was not directly the issue that split the Mission. The fissure between upper (especially Nolting/Harkins) and lower Mission levels exploded in all directions when Lodge arrived and began to back away from support for Diem. In much the same way as in 1959-1960 the U.S. Mission split over Diem largely along military/civil lines. William L. Sullivan, then an assistant to Harriman, analyzed this split and broadened the issue into the whole question of the correct strategy for winning the war...the military interested in tangible, active, physical operations, both pacification and regular unit, and the civilians focusing on political aspects and mental attitudes. 109 Nolting and Harkins had kept the disagreements below the surface. Lodge arrived and overnight the whole power order in

108. Hilsman, To Move a Nation, op. cit., p. 442.
109. Memorandum, William Sullivan to McNamara, Subj.: Divergent Attitudes in the U.S. Official Community, exact date not known but certainly in September 1963, SECRET. This is an extremely valuable source, the type of material that rarely shows up in official documents.
Vietnam changed. Instead of a co-equal arrangement with Harkins at times more equal, Lodge asserted himself as the senior American in Vietnam. He had international stature, was an experienced Ambassador, and possessed the President's assurances that he was to be first in the Mission. He also began to ride the crest of an official U.S. change of policy towards the government of South Vietnam.

It soon became quickly apparent that while Lodge may have been an excellent choice to manage the change in policy toward Diem in Vietnam, he was not a success in managing the Mission and drawing together its diverse elements. Veiled and not-so-veiled references to this were rife throughout his tenure as Ambassador. Secretary McNamara summed it up well in December 1963 when he told President Johnson that:

The Country Team is the second major weakness. It lacks leadership, has been poorly informed, and is not working to a common plan. A recent example of confusion has been conflicting USOM and military recommendations both to the Government of Vietnam and to Washington on the size of the military budget. Above all, Lodge has virtually no official contact with Harkins. Lodge sends in reports with major military implications without showing them to Harkins, and does not show Harkins important incoming traffic. My impression is that Lodge simply does not know how to conduct a coordinated administration. This has of course been stressed to him both by Dean Rusk and myself (and also by John McCone), and I do not think he is consciously rejecting our advice; he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now.

110. Ibid. Sullivan felt in 1962 that Harkins appeared to be "top banana" in the U.S. official community. Harkins was a senior officer with considerable experience and disposed far more resources. For Nolting it was his first Ambassadorial post, and he was a "fairly junior" Foreign Service Officer. It is interesting to note also that at the Secretary of Defense Conference at CINCPAC Headquarters on 21 March 1962, Nolting was ranked after Harkins by protocol.

111. Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Vietnam Situation, 21 December 1963, as reprinted in the New York Times, 13 June 1971, p. 35. One observer present during this period later remarked (continued)
A system that was premised on personal relations and cooperation rather than firm direction and clear assignment of responsibility had broken down.

The change in Ambassadors, the fall of Diem, and the sudden elevation of Lyndon Johnson to the Presidency mark a significant transition period. All over the countryside the situation deteriorated rapidly as Diem's pacification program and his control apparatus disintegrated. In Saigon the change in government ushered in over a year of instability. The direct American involvement both in the war and in the Vietnamese Government began to grow. The situation had finally, visibly burst the bounds of the limited response assigned to it. The expanding war, the governmental decay and instability, and the gradual assumption of a far larger American role all contrived to create a different seedbed for organizational change. By comparison the period prior to mid-1963 looks deceptively simple. In the next two years the American effort would mushroom, but despite numerous proposals for organizational change and widespread perception of their necessity, the U.S. structure to deal with pacification, indeed the entire war, looked much the same two years after the upheavals of 1963.

Several conclusions may be drawn as one looks back over the years from 1954-1963. The most obvious is that perception was far ahead of remedial action. During the later Eisenhower years, the organizational problems and lack of unity certainly were appreciated within the bureaucracies though probably only dimly perceived, if at all, by the President. During Kennedy's Presidency perception extended from the bottom to the top. Yet under neither was strong action taken to pull together the effort in

that "Lodge and Harkins hated each other's guts."--see Interview with General Sternberg by member of the USMACV History Office, n.d., on file at the Center for Military History.
Vietnam or in Washington. Why?

First, and this is most important to understanding the other reasons, Vietnam was not the center of Presidential or governmental attention. Decisions taken on Vietnam, however fateful they may have been to later involvement and problems, were taken in the shadow of crises and areas of concern that seemed then far more threatening--U.S./Soviet relations, Taiwan, the Congo, Berlin, and Cuba. Even within Southeast Asia, Laos preempted policymakers' attention in 1961. Vietnam was not perceived as being of central import in these years. It was a problem that was left largely to the bureaucracies, to committees, and to Presidential Special Assistants. Clearly the degree to which a problem is deemed to be important will determine the time, energy, and force the President can personally apply to a problem. This would explain another conclusion--the striking lack of Presidential involvement. Much of what has been related is a tale of bureaucratic battling. But, it is among the bureaucracies and not between them and them and the President. There are two levels of action. The President is presented with choices conditioned by yet masking the decision process at the bureaucratic level. Yet he is not a prisoner of their alternatives. He can interject his own as he did when he considered Lansdale as Ambassador or asked McNamara to set up what became known as SACSA. He is a qualitatively different actor, not one of a circle, on a different plane and not always aware of the detail of the maneuvering going on beneath him. This said, his power still is circumscribed. He governs not by word or order but by attention, emphasis, and re-emphasis.

The questions of organization for Vietnam and pacification in these years shows a failure, however understandable, of leadership. President
Eisenhower issued firm orders but there was no follow-up. He was effectively insulated by the NSC/OCB system, and Vietnam was such a marginal area that it rarely surfaced above it. Kennedy's failure is less excusable, for by nature and system he was far less insulated; the problem was visibly graver; and he had numerous warnings that all was not well with the organization. He also was presented with clear alternatives. Yet his behavior was equivocal. He insisted on Ambassadorial primacy yet decisions he took whittled away at it. He expressed an interest in having one man in charge of Vietnam, but he did not pursue it. He began his Administration by attempting to have the State Department take on a leadership role in foreign policy, yet by the end of his first year Kennedy let policy formation and implementation for Vietnam devolve more and more into the hands of his White House staff and Defense Department. The picture thus is contradictory, but it does not point to the impossibility of strong Presidential action. There is no evidence that bureaucratic resistance was the major motivating factor in his decisions or lack of them. The decision to change may simply have fallen past his attention and been lost in the press of more important business. Ultimately, he may not have had confidence that the advantages of major change outweighed those of leaving the structure and relationships largely as they were.
Chapter II
1964 AND 1965

This chapter examines in detail two years in which a veritable stream of suggestions for organizational improvement of the overall U.S. effort and that for pacification were presented. These suggestions, and concrete experiments in some cases, came from every agency involved in Vietnam as well as the White House. The President, for the most part unsuccessfully, took part in some of these proposals and experiments, but the bulk of them came from the bureaucracies themselves and were fought over among them with, it appears, little White House input. It was seldom clear what the President wanted, even in hindsight, and his wishes, when they were made known, were not followed by persistent Presidential attention. The bureaucracies' groping for a solution was even more of a failure. Without strong White House direction the field managers and home agencies clearly were unable to arrive at a satisfactory outcome. This failure would fuel the logic of a Presidentially imposed solution.

A remarkable aspect of these two years is how little the American organization for the Vietnam War and for pacification changed. Despite a vastly bigger U.S. effort and an enormous commitment of military and civilian resources, a change in Ambassadors and commanders in Saigon, and an expanded war, the U.S. organization at the end of 1965 was not radically different from what it had been two years previously. As before one must ask why. Lack of perception is not the answer. The problems with U.S. organization were appreciated at all levels, and numerous proposals for change, some general and others highly specific, were made. The President himself
gave his Ambassadors authority unprecedented in Vietnam, but they failed to make use of it.

These two years were ones of building pressure for an alteration in the American organization. Pacification was at the center of this pressure. More than any other aspect of the U.S. effort, pacification figured most frequently in proposals for change. Washington impetus to reorganize the Mission was at first shunted to the side in 1965 by resistance from the Mission, the onset of the Air War in the North, and the introduction of American troops which momentarily distracted policymakers at home. But by the end of 1965 the increased war made the inadequacies of the existing organization more obvious, fueling both the necessity and the pressures for reorganization. The changes in 1966 and 1967 were a direct outgrowth of this pressure.

Richard Holbrooke, writing in the Pentagon Papers, felt that the impetus for reorganization was largely Washington-generated with resistance usually coming from the Saigon Mission. While this is generally true, and especially so after in 1966, the reality is more complex. Proposals for change came from both Washington and Saigon, and they were opposed in each locale. There was also an element of resistance to Washington, to outside direction, rather than only to the change itself. Despite their own personal doubts, the Saigon-based officials would respond to Washington that U.S. Mission organization was adequate and seldom admit the need for alterations. No Washington-suggested reorganization was successfully carried out,

1. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 20
but the pressure remained. The day when change would be imposed was postponed but not eliminated.

Several factors were responsible for the renewed interest in reorganization—the expanding war, the organization of the South Vietnamese Government for pacification combined with that government's overall weakness and instability, and the growing U.S. effort.

The expanding and more overtly military war, combined with the dominant perception of the struggle as a military one and the predilection of organizations for reacting in terms of their training and capabilities at hand, meant simply that the U.S. and GVN military response would grow and their total war strategies become even further imbalanced in favor of military actions. Especially in 1965 the obvious military war diverted U.S. and GVN resources and attention from pacification. Though many would claim even then that it was the key to the war, pacification did not have the same emphasis when priorities were set and resources disposed. The new war was at first a diversion from the more difficult and intractable problems of pacification. It appeared to offer an easier answer, one more in keeping with the traditional American response to conflict and the response which had been taught to the strongest Vietnamese institution, their military. The war's stepping up also generated U.S. military proposals to create an overall Southeast Asia Command that would have taken over more of the total U.S. effort and also been free of Ambassadorial control.

The Vietnamese Government itself influenced reorganization of the U.S. effort. Following eight years of relatively stable rule under Diem, the country in November 1963 was suddenly turned over to politically-inexperienced generals. Coup followed coup. The glue of Diem's leadership and
police which had held the government together no longer was there. More and more the Americans found themselves involved in internal Vietnamese politics and administration in a way Diem never would have countenanced. On several occasions in Washington and Saigon, joint U.S.-Vietnamese commands and infusions of U.S. advisors directly into the Vietnamese Government were advocated though eventually rejected. These perforce would have meant a more unified American advisory effort.

The Vietnamese Government's organization for pacification also influenced the pressure for change. With the dissolution of the Strategic Hamlet Program which had been under Nhu's firm civilian leadership, the new government placed its remains and the direction of the new Chien Thang pacification plan under the military high command. There was ostensible unity to the Vietnamese program; a Central Pacification Committee, composed of the Prime-Minister, the Vice-Prime-Minister, appropriate civilian ministers, and the four military corps commanders, was in charge of pacification. Executive direction however was to come from the new Rural Life Directorate, under a colonel, of the high command. This prompted more than one U.S. military suggestion that the same be done on the American side. Similarly, the 1965 creation of a separate Ministry of Rural Construction (later Revolutionary Development) supported civilian contentions that USAID or the Embassy should be the unifying agent for the American pacification effort.

Probably the most forceful generator of pressure for change was the growth of the U.S. effort itself. In these two years the military component in Vietnam grew from less than 20,000 to nearly ten times that figure, and the civilian representation increased correspondingly. Each agency became a
separate bureaucratic empire in Vietnam. Prior to 1964 each had its own ideas on what needed to be accomplished, its own communication channels with the parent agency in Washington, and its own personnel and administrative structure. They also had field personnel, operating under separate but parallel chains of command, out in the countryside away from Saigon. This process did not begin in 1964, but in previous years U.S. field representation was far smaller. A major increase started in early 1964 when MACV began to establish small advisory teams in South Vietnamese districts. While the program began with thirteen test districts in March, in a year most districts had military teams. As this went on, the military province (or sector) teams themselves expanded. The U.S. military in the field, particularly at province level, were joined by civilian agency representatives, who sometimes were ex-military or active duty officers on detached service, reporting back to their own organizations. The end result of this was that the advisory effort in the field grew even more remote from the ability of the Saigon-based Ambassador to control it, and often several U.S. bureaucracies presented conflicting advice to harassed Vietnamese officials at all levels, particularly in the provinces.

In Washington there were no substantial organizational changes to handle the Vietnam war as it expanded. President Johnson clearly was the man in charge of Vietnam, but only on those issues of high policy or immediate necessity that he had time to deal with. More so even than under Kennedy, final policy decisions on Vietnam centered on the President who tended also to go outside the government for advice. In 1965 an informal war cabinet for Vietnam, the "Tuesday Lunch" group, grew up. Consisting of but a few of the President's most senior officials, this body met regularly
with the President to discuss the war and reach decisions on key issues. It 
was however not a formal structure and had no full-time supporting machinery. 
Richard Moose felt that individuals were more important to President Johnson 
than institutions. Johnson believed that the key to the U.S. effort there 
lay in finding the right man to lead it. It was not until mid-1966 that the 
President began to act the premise of organizational change as well as that of personalities.

The State Department continued to play much the same role that it had 
under Kennedy. In early 1964 William Bundy moved from his position as 
Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs to become 
Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. However, he concen-
trated on high-level policy decisions and diplomacy not day-to-day manage-
ment and implementation of programs. President Johnson, after consulting 
with Rusk and McNamara, put him in charge of coordinating the recommenda-
tions for Vietnam that McNamara presented upon returning from his trip 
there in March 1964, but there is no indication that he was actively in-
volved in coordination of the U.S. programs. What State Department involve-
ment there was below major policy actions was turned over to one of his 
deputies and the State-chaired Vietnam Coordinating Committee. Chester 
Cooper, who served on the White House staff during these years, has noted 
that "time after time" Secretary McNamara and his subordinates seemed to be

Clark and Lawrence J. Legere (eds.), The President and the Management 
3. National Security Action Memorandum No. 288, Subj.: Implementation of 
South Vietnam Programs, 17 March 1964, SECRET. Partially reprinted in 
"crying for political guidance and leadership from the State Department"... but..."it was slow in coming." The State Department, he felt, was resigned to playing a reactive, peripheral role. It certainly did not lead, and as the other agencies commitments to Vietnam grew, especially those of the Department of Defense, their extensions in Vietnam became more and more independent. The Defense Department in 1965 overwhelmed the other agencies with their vast advantage in terms of personnel and resources committed.

The President did make one organizational change in Washington during these years when he revitalized the old Vietnam Task Force in February 1964 giving it a new name, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (or VNCC), and a new boss, William L. Sullivan of the State Department. The VNCC was set up to manage policy and operations in South Vietnam, and its members had to give priority to work for the Committee. However, major questions of policy and operations were subject to Presidential approval "in consultation with heads of departments and agencies as appropriate." The President hoped to keep departmental appeal from VNCC decisions at a minimum.

The VNCC was one more example of strong authority on paper negated by weakness in practice. It shows the futility of Presidential leadership by directive alone. From reading the records of VNCC meetings it is clear that the Committee did not deal in high policy except to provide back-up papers or lower-level staff work, and it did not "manage" operations in Vietnam. Its

4. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1970), p. 255. Cooper's assertion may be only partially correct, for the military at least appear to have wanted political approval as much as they wanted political guidance.

5. National Security Action Memorandum No. 280, 14 February 1964, SECRET.
leadership went back and forth from the State Department to the White House ending up for most of 1965 under the leadership of one of William Bundy’s deputies, Leonard Unger. It was at its strongest under William Sullivan, but he was in charge for less than five months. Michael Forrestal, the White House Special Assistant who headed the Committee from July 1964 to January 1965, put it gently enough when he admitted that the VNCC was "not able to deal with problems of highest national policy" but had been useful in assuring that Saigon’s military, political and economic programs got fairly quick and sympathetic attention from Washington agencies. He did not mention leadership, management, or even coordination. Chester Cooper, who served on it, called it an "information clearinghouse" with little bureaucratic or administrative "clout." Major policy decisions and disposition of resources, he said, continued to be dealt with at the top of each agency, and none of them, especially the military, wanted the VNCC getting into their operations. Furthermore, most of the important decisions and actions taken during these two years were military, a fact that helped restrict the Committee to the role described above. It was unrealistic to expect a middle-ranking committee, based in the State Department, to exercise much policy or managerial power on issues that deeply affected the resources and programs of several larger bureaucracies. Even those on the Committee who disagreed with fellow members could always appeal to higher officials in their own departments. But finally, the Committee was far

6. Memorandum, Michael V. Forrestal to William Bundy, 30 December 1964, CONFIDENTIAL.
removed from the highest decision-maker who after signing its implementing
NSAM does not appear to have shown much interest in it, provided much sup-
port, or made use of it.

Washington dissatisfaction with U.S. organization in Vietnam generated
a series of attempts in late 1963 and the first half of 1964 to improve it.
It was far easier to try to change the machinery in Saigon than to attempt
to overhaul it at home. Lieutenant General William C. Westmoreland was sent
out in January 1964 as Harkins' deputy and probable eventual successor. One
of his goals was to pull the military organization together. This resulted
in the complete absorption of MAAG into MACV in May. Westmoreland did not
confine his ideas on reorganization to the military side. He advocated also
unifying all U.S. pacification efforts under his direction (see below).

Similarly, Lodge's new Deputy Chief of Mission, David Nes, was also
dispatched to Vietnam with instructions to improve the coordination and
unity of the U.S. team below the level of Lodge who, it was recognized, was
not going to do it himself. The effort to compensate for Lodge's lack of
leadership by installing a managerial deputy was pressed most strongly by
McNamara who told the President in December 1963 that:

Lodge's newly-designated deputy, David Nes, was
with us and seems a highly competent team player. I
have stated the situation frankly to him and he has
said he would do all he could to constitute what would
in effect be an executive committee operating below the
level of the Ambassador.

Nes formed the "pacification Committee," or "Nes Committee" as it was
also known, chaired by himself with the deputy chiefs of the other U.S.

8. Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Vietnam Situation, 21 De-
Mission agencies as members. It never was a success. As early as February 1964 General Westmoreland, still Harkins' deputy, told Nes that the committee was too large and needed an agenda and more meeting time. Nes agreed that his group had not met the "highly complex problems effectively" and tightened its organization, also naming Westmoreland as Vice-Chairman, but, he stated, the committee was to coordinate not direct. It would only recommend actions to the Ambassador. This was scarcely accomplished before the committee was summarily disbanded by Lodge in April. Nes may not have been the manager that Washington hoped for, but Lodge was responsible for the Nes Committee's lack of success and eventual demise. He was suspicious of the committee and did not want authority to reside in his deputy. The Pentagon Papers reported that every attempt Nes made to establish an "executive committee," as he promised McNamara, "further alienated him from the Ambassador."¹¹

Meanwhile the U.S. military services in Washington were pressing for a more significant change in U.S. command arrangements in Vietnam. In late January General Maxwell Taylor, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs,

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11. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 59. See also Interview, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 12 March 1973.
advocated that the United States prepare for a major escalation of the
war. 12 Despite the necessity for winning the war in the South, the United
States, he said, must stop North Vietnamese support. In conjunction with
his proposed course of action, he recommended that the U.S. military com-
mander in Saigon have responsibility for the total U.S. program in Vietnam.
In addition an integrated political/military/economic approach for all of
Southeast Asia should be developed. Finally, he advocated that the United
States should induce the Vietnamese Government to turn over tactical
direction of the war to the U.S. commander—a complete contrast from the
position he would take on this issue later when he was Ambassador.

McNamara submitted these proposals to Dean Rusk. Given the magnitude
of the Joint Chiefs recommendations, his reply was curiously terse and
non-committal. He did however object to any broad command changes that
would give the military more power: "this war, like other guerrilla
wars, is essentially political, an important factor to bear in mind in
determining command and control arrangements." 13 The war, he said, must
be fought and won in the minds of the people. While his interest in the
political side of the war was commendable, he did not follow this up with
any proposals of his own and merely noted that the State Department would
consider promptly any Defense Department or Joint Chiefs recommendations.

12. Memorandum, JCSM-46-64, Taylor to McNamara, Subj.: Vietnam and South-
east Asia, 22 January 1964, as reprinted in the New York Times,
13 June 1971, p. 35. This memorandum was originally drafted by
General Krulak's SACS A office.
13. Letter, Rusk to McNamara, 5 February 1964, TOP SECRET (Grp. 1).
The U.S. Army staff agreed with the Joint Chiefs idea of an inter-related counterinsurgency approach in Vietnam, noting the need for close coordination among U.S. agencies. Ideally, the U.S. command arrangements should parallel the organization of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The Army was interested also in creating a full Southeast Asia Command whose responsibilities would not be limited to South Vietnam but include Laos, Thailand, and North Vietnam if necessary. It saw three advantages to this. If U.S. troops were sent, then there would be a command to handle them. The Pacific Commander would be removed from the chain of command. And finally, they openly admitted that it would reduce Ambassadorial intrusion into military affairs in Southeast Asia. The Army's recommendations never were acted upon as U.S. troops were not sent at this time, and there were strong disagreements about them among the services and even within the Army staff.

In Vietnam the situation was not much better than in Washington. Ambassador Lodge did not wish to manage the Mission, yet he was unwilling to turn this task over to anyone else. He preferred working with a small, personal staff directly responsible to him, and during his first Ambassadorship the Country Team existed more in form than in substance. Relations between Harkins and Lodge were distinctly cool. Even President Johnson

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14. See CSAM 77-64, "Army Statement of Non-Concurrence," Enclosure B to JCS 2343/317-1, 11 February 1964, TOP SECRET and Army Staff Memorandum 2-64, Dir. of Special Warfare, ODCSOPS to SACSA, Subj.: Revitalized South Vietnam Campaign (JCS 2343/317), 9 February 1964, TOP SECRET.

15. Ibid.

16. Chester Cooper, et. al., Elements..., op. cit., p. 284. See also Interview, Major Paul Miles with Westmoreland, 10 April 1971, CONFIDENTIAL.

17. Philadelphia Enquirer, 13 January 1964, and Interview, Major Paul Miles with Westmoreland, 10 April 1971, CONFIDENTIAL.
realized that Lodge was no manager. In late May this prompted him to cable Lodge:

...we believe it is essential for you to have a top-ranking officer...as chief of staff for country team operations. My own impression is that this should be either a newly appointed civilian of wide governmental experience and high understanding, or General Westmoreland. 18

This deficiency was seconded by William Bundy who wrote to Rusk that the U.S. Mission was as coordinated as possible given Lodge's basic nature, but that there was a need for a good executive as Deputy Chief of Mission. Bundy's perception may have been off-base, for Lodge consistently demonstrated that though he was unwilling to exercise managerial authority, he certainly was not going to delegate it. All of this came at a time when the U.S. Mission was still relatively small. The President's suggestion never was implemented as Lodge resigned in June to participate in Republican politics.

The available record contains numerous complaints about the organization of the U.S. effort in Vietnam in 1964. Several examples are worth noting. In March General John M. Finn reported to the Army's Chief of Staff that the United States had no single unified concept for its effort in Vietnam, and that the Mission needed a mutually acceptable concept of counterinsurgency obligatory to all members of the Country Team. 20 A RAND paper in late 1964 saw lack of full coordination in policy-making

18. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 21.
19. Memorandum, William Bundy to Rusk, Subj.: Highlights of the Honolulu Conference, 3 June 1964, SECRET.
among U.S. agencies in Saigon as a major problem; with few Country Team
meetings, the agencies were largely on their own. General Charles
Timmes, the departing MAAG Chief, stressed the need for integration of the
U.S. effort and the "absolute necessity" for joint planning and programming
by all U.S. agencies. In October, a joint State/Defense/AID/USIA/CIA
message was dispatched to Saigon in an effort to improve coordinated plan-
ing among all agencies. It observed that:

Although we have available here a considerable amount of information on the military aspects of the Chien Thang Pacification Plan, we do not seem to have a coherent and integrated description of the programs as a whole. For example, detailed plans and requirements for the essential integration of civilian resources into the Hop Tac Program are completely lacking. We are also without any idea of the relative time-phasing of the military and civilian effort.

And a few weeks later General Westmoreland admitted that:

In many areas the pace of military operations has not been synchronized with capabilities of province, district, and village to provide administrative and police follow-up. In some cases, the military pace has been too fast considering the paucity of administrative and police follow-up. In some cases, the military pace has been too fast considering the paucity of administrative talent; and in other cases, pace has been too slow with the result that administrative cadres have piled up behind security forces.

While civilian agencies planning was generally acknowledged to be far inferior to that of MACV, one Joint Chiefs of Staff planner at the time posed an important question:

22. MG Charles Timmes, Debriefing Report, 10 June 1964, CONFIDENTIAL (Grp. 4).
23. Message, State 853 to Saigon, 16 October 1964, SECRET.
How could a military plan be prepared to support an inter-agency effort without knowledge of the details of other agencies' plans? Viewed in this light, the advanced position of the military planners appears more as a unilateral effort which is not necessarily coherent and not necessarily responsive to the counter-insurgency mission.25

Furthermore, though the U.S. military advisory structure was unified in May, there were still deep conceptual divisions within USOM which was roughly separated into two factions. First were the traditional AID offices that were a feature of most United States AID missions around the world. These still saw their role in Vietnam as that of assisting in conventional economic, educational, and administrative development. Economic assistance, their officials felt, should be directed primarily towards long-range development. Pacification to them meant security, and thus it should be left to the military. Opposed to them were the "counterinsurgents" or field operations oriented officers who believed that USOM should back short-term, high-impact projects that would give immediate help to the population.26 Developmental activities could not wait for full security but must be pursued immediately as the war was a battleground for the peasants' loyalty.

USOM's Office of Rural Affairs (later Office of Operations, then Office of Provincial Operations, then Office of Field Operations) began in 1962 and was the operating arm of the "counterinsurgents." During the critical year of mid-1964 to mid-1965 it was the center of a dispute between

25. Draft Memorandum, LTC Dalby (or SACSA) for Director of the Joint Staff, Subj.: Concept for Integrated U.S. Mission Planning, 7 December 1964, SECRET.

26. For much of this paragraph I am indebted to Chester Cooper, et al., Elements..., op. cit., pp. 155-156.
them and USOM Director James Killen who was a traditionalist. While Killen was able to diminish its role, his prompt removal when Lodge returned in July 1965, the growth of USAID (USOM under a new name), and the new pacification cadre programs gave it another lease on life. It was this aspect of USAID operations in Vietnam that brought it most frequently into interagency conflicts and pacification. The dichotomy with USAID always persisted and was heightened when the "counterinsurgent" faction, along with some, but far fewer, of the traditionalists, were removed from USAID and placed in CORDS in 1967.

These problems of disunity, especially the conceptual one of how to deal with the struggle in Vietnam, were not unique to AID. Every agency had the division between those who wanted their agency's program to be the same as what it had always sponsored elsewhere under different situations and those who felt that the circumstances in Vietnam demanded a new response. Thus not only was there disunity among U.S. agencies over pacification but differences within each of them.

Just as indicative of the widespread perception of the problem of organization were the specific proposals for change that were put forth. Implicit in the President's recommendation to Lodge that he have a chief of staff and his broad letter of authority to Ambassador Taylor (see below) was the understanding that all was not well with the organization of the U.S. effort.

In February William Colby, then Chief of CIA's Far East Division, and Chester Cooper, also of the CIA, proposed to their Director John McCone that the United States should appoint a single American counterpart to the Vietnamese Government's Vice-Prime-Minister in charge of rural pacification who would be directly responsible to the Ambassador, have a military deputy, and command pacification advisory elements of all U.S. agencies. This was necessary, they said, because the U.S. and GVN response to the insurgency had been dominated by the offensive aimed at destroying large enemy units at the expense of the political war in the Vietnamese villages. This was never adopted. The formation of the VNCC shortly afterwards by-passed it.

It is interesting that in 1964 General Westmoreland and his staff took an active interest in reorganization and made several proposals to strengthen and unify the American advisory effort including two that, if implemented, would have seen the military commander take over pacification advice and support. This is in marked contrast to 1965 and 1966 when Westmoreland backed off from ideas of reorganizing, let alone taking it over himself. His interest was spurred by a visit he made to Kuala Lampur in June 1964 accompanied by Sir Robert Thompson, the USOM Deputy Director and USIS Director from Vietnam, and some of his staff. Thompson, who headed the British Advisory Mission to South Vietnam from 1961-1965, had been one of the key architects of the successful countersurinsurgency in Malaya which featured a unified civil-military command.

29. Personal Interview with Chester Cooper, 6 May 1975.
However, this visit only reinforced Westmoreland's thinking. From the
day of his arrival, the disunity in the American effort was apparent to him.
In March General Richard Stillwell, then chief of MACV's operations staff
(or J-3), presented Westmoreland with a detailed plan to make the U.S.
military commander the Ambassador's executive agent for pacification. Since
the Vietnamese Government had placed pacification under its military, the
same should be done with the U.S. side. The Country Team's inadequacies
were freely admitted:

It does not provide an in-country executive mechanism
with directive authority and supervisory responsibility
that is necessary to insure unity of effort and rapid
reaction in an emergency insurgency situation.\footnote{Stillwell's proposal did not spring entirely from within MACV. Secre-
tary McNamara and General Taylor visited Vietnam in early March for a major
review of the situation and the U.S. effort. Prior to their arrival they

In the proposed organization policy formulation and policy advice would
still rest with the Ambassador and the agency chiefs, but execution would
be under the military. MACV would however become an interagency joint
staff. At each administrative level below in the field the senior military
advisor would unify U.S. planning, programming, and budgeting, but agency
representatives would still have access to their GVN counterparts and own
agency supervisors. Thus one sees here a halfway measure that would have
put the military in charge of what they could do best but somehow kept
policy formulation and execution separate. This separation probably would
have jeopardized the success of this recommendation had it ever been
adopted.

\footnote{Staff Study, MG Richard Stillwell, Subj.: Counterinsurgency Vitaliza-
tion, 10 March 1964, SECRET.}
informed the Mission that they wanted to discuss, among things U.S. organization for pacification. This should be viewed as a continuation of the unsettled nature of Washington's views on how to organize for pacification as already shown in the January JCS proposal and the February recommendations of Chester Cooper and William Colby. McNamara's visit did result in a plan to abolish MAAG and place its personnel and functions under MACV, but when McNamara reported to the President, there were no recommendations for any broader reorganization and no hint of Stillwell's idea of MACV becoming the executive agency for pacification. Stillwell lamented to General Harold K. Johnson, then the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, that major questions had not been addressed at the conference with McNamara and his party. "Reorganization of MACV/MAAG is one thing," he observed, "integration of the U.S. Mission is vastly more important." It is probable that the relations between Lodge and Harkins precluded such a change, particularly one that would have placed more of the overall U.S. program under MACV.

In early June Westmoreland, who was returning with Lodge from a

33. National Security Action Memorandum No. 288, Subj.: Implementation of South Vietnam Programs, 17 March 1964, SECRET. McNamara's pre-trip draft of the report to the President said: "...though more can be done, perhaps, in integrating the U.S. effort and meshing it with the GVN effort..."--see Draft Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: South Vietnam and Southeast Asia, 5 March 1964, SECRET. This was removed in the final recommendations after the trip.
34. Letter, Stillwell to Johnson, 12 March 1964. The abolition of MAAG did end the unfortunate situation of military advisors having two masters--COMUSMACV and the Chief of MAAG.
Mission/Washington conference at Honolulu, talked at length with him, pointing out that responsibilities within the Mission were not clearly established and that there was a serious lack of coordination especially in regard to pacification. The Embassy, he said, was ill-prepared to deal with large managerial problems due to its small size and lack of experience. Lodge agreed, and Westmoreland suggested three alternatives: have the Deputy Chief of Mission serve as chief of staff for pacification, appoint a military officer to the Embassy to serve as the pacification executive, or designate COMUSMACV (the U.S. military commander) as executive agent for coordination of all U.S. efforts in pacification. Lodge, accepting that his staff had their hands full with non-pacification activities and preferring the third alternative, tentatively approved it but refused to take any initiative and replied that he would express his views only if queried by Washington.

This idea of Westmoreland's was overtaken by events. The President shortly thereafter replaced Harkins with Westmoreland who took over on June 20th. Lodge resigned and his place was taken by General Taylor with Alexis Johnson, a senior Foreign Service Officer, as his deputy.

The new deputy, who arrived in Saigon ahead of Taylor asked the Mission's agency chiefs to give him their recommendations for organization. Westmoreland did present a detailed proposal. It was an attempt to define

35. Message, MAC 2815, 060245Z June 1964, Westmoreland to Taylor CONFIDENTIAL.
36. The "tentative approval" is from a personal interview with General Westmoreland, 18 April 1975.
37. Memorandum, Westmoreland to Ambassador Johnson, Subj.: Recommendations of Organization of U.S. Mission and Echelons of GVN in Coordination with our Advisory Efforts, 1 July 1964, SECRET, with charts.
more precisely agency responsibilities for key mission tasks. While he originally wished MACV to be made the executive agent for pacification and USOM for development, after discussions with USOM officials this was changed to "responsible agent for coordination" of pacification. It is worth noting that pacification was conceptualized as a two-stage operation. The first was called pacification and the military were envisaged as the leading force. The second was called development with USOM to be the most interested agent. AID and long-term development, according to Westmoreland, would take over only after the country was secure, a solution that, given the state of the countryside, would have left the military in charge of pacification for many years.

Lyndon Johnson's choice of Taylor and Johnson to go to Vietnam may be thought of as the apex of his attempt to find the "right man" for pulling the U.S. effort together and reversing the course of the war. Taylor, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the most well-known military man in America on active duty, a figure who commanded respect within the military. He was the one man who, the President reasoned, should be able to control the military effort and mesh it with the civilian and political aspects of the war. Alexis Johnson was the Deputy Undersecretary of State and the most senior Foreign Service Officer. By sending him out as deputy he significantly upgraded the position while calming civilian worries about

38. Westmoreland said that he got the idea of each agency being executive agent for parts of the mission's functions from the military organization of a "proponent" commander. This is best exemplified in the example of the Navy's "proponency" in the Pacific and the Army's in Europe--Personal Interview with General Westmoreland, 18 April 1975.

a military takeover.

One observer believed that by sending Taylor and Johnson out the President effectively put off any Washington-initiated reorganization as no one could tell the former Joint Chiefs Chairman how to run a mission. Taylor's resistance to Washington suggestions on how to improve the war effort, even when they came from the President himself, has been well documented. Generally, these suggestions veered away from direct reference to the Mission itself and instead pressed for schemes that would have forced indirectly more U.S. integration such as infusions of civil affairs advisors into the Vietnamese Government, joint U.S./GVN command, and encadrement of U.S. troops with the Vietnamese. The senior members of the Mission were unanimous on these issues and strenuously rejected all of them, usually with the justification that such measures would smack of colonialism and increase Vietnamese dependence on Americans. On few issues was there such consistent and long-term agreement within the Mission and such a stream of resisted suggestions from Washington.

With the difficulties between Lodge and Harkins in mind, before he left for Saigon, Taylor got President Johnson to provide him with the strongest possible terms of reference:

...my desire that you have and exercise full responsibility for the effort of the United States Government in South Vietnam. In general terms this authority is parallel to that set forth in President Kennedy's letter of May 29, 1961, to all American Ambassadors; specifically, I wish it clearly understood that this overall responsibility includes the whole military effort in

40. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 21.
South Vietnam and authorizes the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate.\textsuperscript{42}

He went on to tell Taylor that he wanted to know what arrangements Taylor would devise to meet this instruction in order that supporting action could be taken in the "defense Department and elsewhere."

Though the original impetus came from the new Ambassador, this letter indicates the support the President gave Taylor and his willingness to step on any Washington bureaucratic toes to back him up. His use of the word "exercise" makes it clear that these powers were to be actively used. Few, if any, other U.S. Ambassadors have ever entered on their assignments with such a formidable combination of personal command and respect combined with Presidential authority and backing. Yet Taylor was little more effective in solving the coordination problem than his predecessors who never were given the power he was. At the end of his tenure a year later, the U.S. Mission was, if anything, more fragmented with larger bureaucratic fiefdoms than before. What went wrong?

Taylor, for one, did not feel that major organizational changes needed to be made. If he did have any doubts about the organization in Saigon, they were not translated into any major alterations. Indeed, he was more worried about the broad powers conferred by the President as upsetting the military chain of command. He hastened to assure the Joint Chiefs, the

\textsuperscript{42} Letter, President to Taylor, 2 July 1964, CONFIDENTIAL which is quoted in full in Message, JCS 7217 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 2 July 1964, CONFIDENTIAL (Grp. 4). Part of this is quoted in USVNR, IV.C.5., p. 9. Taylor stated that he went to the President and requested that he be given a strong letter of authority from the President. Johnson told Taylor to draft it, which he did. -- Personal Interview with General Taylor, 14 May 1975.
Pacific Commander, and General Westmoreland that he would not interfere with the existing command arrangements. He did not want to put Westmoreland "in the unhappy position of having two military masters." He thus was unable to break out of the mould of years of military training and instruction in the importance of the chain of command—a perfect organizational response from a man whose intellectual attainments and White House assignment might have led one to hope otherwise.

He did ask Westmoreland to clear all policy cables going to Washington by military channels, but only so that he could dissent, if necessary, through State channels. That alone reveals how he saw his role. In an interesting admission he later remarked:

Largely because the parties involved were reasonable people, this arrangement worked well, although I would not defend the propriety of the arrangement as a matter of organizational principle.\(^4^4\)

General Westmoreland confirmed this arrangement:

I was in full agreement with making Ambassador Taylor the person in overall charge of the Mission and subordinating myself to him with the understanding—which was made clear, that he would not be in the military chain-of-command. But at the same time it was his prerogative to keep abreast of military matters and it was my responsibility to keep him informed...We didn't always agree on matters, and he was always very careful to make my independent views known when there was disagreement. In other words, he didn't try to superimpose his military advice over mine. On the other hand, he wasn't reluctant to make known his views which may have been different from mine. This didn't happen very often but did happen on a few occasions.\(^4^5\)

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Interview, Major Paul Miles with Westmoreland, 10 April 1971, CONFIDENTIAL.
Taylor did make one organizational change. He formalized the Country Team concept setting up what was called the Mission Council in July. The organizational structure of the Mission Council was not vastly different from Lodge's "Mission Team," and most of it was developed by Westmoreland and the civilian agencies after Alexis Johnson's arrival but prior to Taylor's. Its members were the Ambassador, his Deputy, the Embassy political and economic counselors, and the heads of U.S. agencies in Vietnam. An Executive Secretary, soon to be known as the Mission Coordinator, prepared the agenda, recorded decisions, and followed them up. The Council met once a week by itself and also had regular joint meetings with the Vietnamese National Security Council. Interagency subcommittees, chaired by the agency which had primary interest, dealt with special areas of concern. While the Ambassador was the final decision-maker, the object was to try to achieve a consensus, especially among staff officers before issues even reached the formal meetings. Taylor saw it as a miniature National Security Council. He allowed, however, each agency to appeal Council decisions to Washington, another indication of the agencies' ultimate independence.

In a letter to Elbridge Durbrow in 1965 Alexis Johnson took some pride in the Mission Council pointing out that "we established the habit of Mission elements and the GVN and the Mission working together in a more effective way." Yet, the hands-off philosophy was evident for Johnson

46. A key document for this is cited in footnote 37.
47. Taylor, Swords..., op. cit., p. 318.
...the Mission Council and the Joint Council were important not so much for what was in face decided at the meetings but for the fact that their existence, and the necessity of reporting to them, acted as a spur to the staff people to get things done and to resolve issues on their level. 49

Consensus was the guiding motto; decision from the Ambassador was to come only as a last resort, and even from his decisions, agencies could appeal to Washington.

One former member of the Mission, who saw the Council system at close-hand, felt that it had an uneven record as a coordinating device. 50 Coordination did not really flow downward from the highest level; little effect was felt in the field. No member of the Council was willing to subordinate the operation of his particular program to the Council as a whole, and staff work was done by the agencies themselves, not by a separate body with a primary interest in the Council. Its existence did relieve some of the pressure for tighter organization from Washington. On paper it looked effective, and it at least increased the flow of information among the agencies. But, as far as substantive leadership regarding pacification or as far as truly alleviating the competition for resources among agencies went, it is difficult to judge the Council a success. Even General Westmoreland who helped design it has observed in retrospect that "the Mission Council failed to provide the tight management needed for pacification." 51

49. Ibid.
All this is not meant to imply that Taylor was powerless or that the agency chiefs could disobey him easily. The situation was in no way comparable to that between Durbrow and Williams or even Nolting and Harkins. Ambassador Taylor was unquestionably the figure of authority in the Mission. What happened was not open defiance but rather a lack of positive leadership in pulling it together which was aggravated as the resources and manpower committed by all U.S. agencies grew. He appears not to have felt that firmer interagency coordination and direction were necessary. Taylor, furthermore, was weighted down with events in a momentous year that involved major escalation and an extremely unstable Vietnamese Government.

The major pacification effort in 1964 was the Hop Tac Program around Saigon which spawned a flurry of organizational proposals for the U.S. Mission. It grew out of a desire to concentrate on a few critical provinces, those of greatest import where the Vietnamese Government's situation was the most precarious.

Hop Tac had its roots in late 1963 when thirteen highly-contested provinces were singled out for special attention at the November 20th meeting at Honolulu of Mission and Washington officials. Even at this early date the focus was on the area around Saigon, and the Americans were able to persuade the Vietnamese to emphasize their pacification efforts there. By May 1964 the number of critical provinces was narrowed to eight, and

52. Interviews of General Westmoreland make this point clear. See for example Interview, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 4-5 February, 1973.
when the actual operation of Hop Tac was launched in September, it embraced the four provinces immediately adjacent to the capital. The concept of Hop Tac operation was to concentrate Vietnamese resources on this central core, expanding out in concentric rings as each successive area was pacified. The operation was not a success. From the beginning the Vietnamese viewed it as an American program. Its proximity to Saigon involved the forces assigned to it in Vietnamese political turbulence. The Vietnamese had a different conception of its strategy and what was entailed than the Americans. Above all, it had little military or pacification effect on the Viet Cong. The program drifted along more in name than in substance until in July 1966 even its organizational trappings were done away with. 55

Hop Tac did generate a series of proposals for organization of the U.S. effort that do bear examination. It came at a time when there was a sudden concentration of major changes in the U.S. Mission's senior membership, and the planning for it began during the same period that both Westmoreland and President Johnson were recommending to Lodge that the Mission effort be more tightly managed.

The original planning was done by the MACV staff and then presented by Lodge and Westmoreland to the Honolulu Conference with McNamara and Rusk in early June. 56 Central to the operational concept was military/civilian and U.S./Vietnamese unity. Even its name meant "cooperation." Civilian pro-

55. The Hop Tac Program, both in concept and execution has been well-documented. Richard Holbrooke's treatment of it in the Pentagon Papers (USVNR, IV.C.6., pp. 1-9) is probably the best unclassified source available. Official documentation is extensive and includes not only some of the earliest planning papers but detailed "progress" reports and evaluations.

56. Memorandum for Record, William Bundy, Subj.: Tuesday Afternoon Session in Honolulu 2 June 1964, 3 June 1964, TOP SECRET.
grams and officials were to follow the military forces into each area as soon as the security situation permitted.

U.S. advisory responsibility in each province affected was to be given to a single individual or "Team Captain" who would be military as long as security was a paramount consideration. CIA activities, however, were to be excluded from his jurisdiction. The U.S. team was then to form half of a joint U.S./Vietnamese group. This team concept was reinforced by the aforementioned visit of Westmoreland and other Mission members to Malaysia in mid-June. Alfred Hurt, the USOM Deputy Director, told Westmoreland that he agreed that in insecure areas the provincial "executive agent" should be military, but that the British "committee consensus" approach should be used also. There was no need, he felt, for a command relationship between USOM and MACV in each province since USOM was "only too ready to cooperate."58 The general substance of his reply was positive to the idea of more unified direction even if it was under the military. While this province team proposal never evolved into an effective mechanism, it is indicative of the concern felt in the Mission that provincial advisory efforts of the different U.S. agencies needed more unity. The proposal surfaced a year later again when an actual experiment with a team chief was tried in three

57. Message, Saigon 2478 to State, Lodge to Rusk, 13 June 1964, probably SECRET (Grp. 3). William Sullivan, head of the VNCC, told Rusk that placing the province team under the military advisor "may be advisable."--Memorandum, William Sullivan to Rusk, Subj.: Measures to Strengthen the Situation in South Vietnam, 5 June 1964, SECRET with attached draft Joint State/Defense/AID Message to Saigon, SECRET. See also Draft Working Paper, MACV Staff, Subj.: U.S./VN Province Task Force Executive and Administrative Mission (TEAM), 2 June 1964, SECRET. See also Letter, Westmoreland to Mr. Leonard, 29 September 1970.

58. Memorandum, Hurt to Westmoreland, 22 June 1964, SECRET.
scattered provinces.

Along with the province team idea, Lodge also recommended that Westmoreland be made the Mission's executive agent for the U.S. effort in all the critical provinces (this was before Hop Tac was narrowed down). This would have made Westmoreland the de facto American pacification chief. Hurt agreed to Lodge's plan also, though Westmoreland made it clear that he viewed his role in terms of consensus and coordination, not command:

> I intend to work through committee arrangements designed to provide a consensus approach. The point is that some designated individual must be appointed to exercise initiative in getting all interested parties together so as to effect an integrated program.

Later, Taylor did go ahead and designate MACV as the coordinator during the initial (i.e., military) phase of Hop Tac, but Westmoreland's authority never went beyond coordination, and as Hop Tac bogged down and the war escalated, this role had little meaning.

A joint U.S./GVN Pacification Working Committee was set up consisting of the MACV Chief of Staff, the Vietnamese Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and the Chief of USOM's Rural Affairs division which, while told to concentrate on the Hop Tac provinces, was also to keep track of all pacification problems. However, all problems requiring high-level policy decisions were to be referred to the GVN's Central Pacification Committee. There is little indication that this Working Committee did anything more than exchange viewpoints.

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59. Memorandum, Hurt to Westmoreland, 29 June 1964, SECRET
60. Memorandum, Westmoreland to Mr. James Killen, Subj.: Terms of Reference, 2 September 1964.
When the actual Hop Tac operation itself was launched in September, it did have a Hop Tac Council with a secretariat. This was a joint body with the U.S. component led by the Senior Advisor to the III Corps area, a U.S. Army colonel, and included representatives of all U.S. agencies. But, as with other organizational aspects connected with Hop Tac, it had scarcely more effect than the operation itself.

In November Westmoreland admitted to Ambassador Taylor that "the present pacification program is not progressing at all well under the present form of organizational and conceptual direction" and proposed that the United States assume operational control of the entire GVN pacification program. This would have involved a joint planning staff under the aegis of the Vietnamese National Security Council and the U.S. Mission Council with U.S. "watchdogs" in the Armed Forces Command and all ministries concerned with pacification to make sure that execution matched the plans. Ambassador Taylor did not adopt this, and instead chose the less radical alternative that Westmoreland also proposed—extending Hop Tac to the other three corps areas which was tried in 1965. Taylor who had his hands full with the Vietnamese Government's instability and sensitivity was not about to try such a course of action. What is remarkable is that Westmoreland proposed it at all. He had otherwise consistently opposed detailed, and especially visible, American involvement in the Government of Vietnam. While he did not specifically deal with U.S. organization in his proposal, its adoption would have given MACV more control over the U.S. side of the pacifi-

62. Memorandum, Westmoreland to Taylor, Subj.: Assumption by U.S. of Operational Control of the Pacification Program in South Vietnam, 14 November 1964, SECRET.
Meanwhile, the seeds of further disunity were being sown by the begin-
nings of what later was called the Revolutionary Development Cadre Program. Cadres of government personnel to go out and work in the countryside were scarcely new to Vietnam. The French had used teams of government workers and officials in rural pacification as did President Diem with his "Civic Action" cadres in the mid-1950's. Some government ministries, such as that of Information, had their own field cadres. In 1964 and 1965 there were several large pacification cadre programs underway, each of varying size and effectiveness.

The most important for the future was the Peoples Action Team (PAT) program. Started first in Quang Ngai Province under CIA sponsorship, it was the direct precursor of the larger Revolutionary Development Cadre effort. These teams originally were specially trained, with heavy emphasis on political indoctrination and motivation, Popular Force platoons that lived and worked among the people. They also were recruited and trained in the province where they worked. From 1964 to 1966 this program was expanded greatly, not only absorbing some of the other cadre programs but also recruiting new members. Its character was altered. The core of the 59-man teams, as they eventually grew to, was a large security component but not a Popular Force platoon. A National Training Center turned out more teams and sent the existing ones through refresher courses.

The PAT program, especially as originally conceived, reflected the CIA's organizational repertoire. But, it grew also as a result of a genuine perception that the U.S. and Vietnamese military were not devoting enough emphasis and resources to pacification, and that the military efforts
in this area were unsuccessful and inadequate to the character of the task at hand.\textsuperscript{63} Essentially the cadre program, which was quickly supported by the Mission's civilian components, became their pacification force structure. While some pacification staff officers in MACV felt that it would be better to give the same role to the Popular Forces and concentrate on improving them, the cadre program generated such strong civilian support that their viewpoint never was adopted. However, the cadre program, indeed all civilian efforts in the countryside, produced requirements for scarce Vietnamese manpower that directly conflicted with military needs. This became a major point of contention among U.S. agencies in 1965 and 1966.

Peer de Silva, the CIA station chief, responding to Westmoreland's proposal to have the U.S. assume operational control of all pacification, reiterated the concepts of the PAT program to Ambassador Taylor and strenuously objected to any thought of turning the cadre program over to the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense and MACV.\textsuperscript{64} Instead, the Vietnamese province chief should run the program with support by USOM not MACV. The CIA would assist USOM in this role from two to four years.

In late January 1965 De Silva formally asked the Mission to accept the CIA-developed cadre concepts and action program and designate USOM, with

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\textsuperscript{63} See for example, Memorandum, Peer de Silva to Taylor, Subj.: Problem of Dealing with VC Subversive Structure within the Province, and Its Relationship to the Province Chief, His Authority, and the Policing Agencies under his Exclusive Control, 19 November 1964, SECRET. For a USOM view of the same problem see Memorandum, Alfred Hurt to James Killen, Subj.: Problems, 5 November 1964, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.
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\textsuperscript{64} De Silva memorandum, 19 November 1964, \textit{op.cit.}, SECRET.
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initial CIA assistance, as the primary U.S. support agency. General William Depuy, then MACV's chief of operations, recommended to Westmoreland that MACV accept the CIA cadre program because "we cannot afford at this critical juncture to spurn any reasonable program having prospects of contributing to ultimate victory." But he did stress that the CIA should be asked to coordinate its programs with MACV. Westmoreland agreed to this position and maintained it even when faced with a substantial increase of the PAT program in April and May.

On April 26th the Mission Council approved an expansion of the PAT's which raised conflicts with military manpower needs. It also assigned responsibility for the program to the CIA with the provision that it would be gradually phased over to USOM's control. MACV was unquestionably placed in a peripheral role as regards the cadre and objected, asking to be included in the PAT program reporting at least and recommending that the manpower for the PAT's be charged against that to be given to the National Police, a civilian-sponsored program. This last point shows just how far the military were willing to go in support of civilian-sponsored pacification efforts, especially if these conflicted with their own requirements. The military also were objecting to having a separate advisory system, yet the civilians could legitimately point to the ineffectiveness of military

66. Memorandum, Depuy to Westmoreland, Subj.: "Doctrine of Pacification as It Applies to the Rural Population," 13 February 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
67. Mission Council Action Memorandum No. 92, 27 April 1965, SECRET.
68. Memorandum, BG Depuy to MACV Chief of Staff, Subj.: CAS Briefing On Its Action Program, 9 May 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
support for pacification. Taylor, who wanted to build up the Mission's civilian elements, decided to keep the division, and as both the military and civilian efforts in Vietnam grew, their mass (i.e., agency resources committed) moved them further apart.

In 1965 the Vietnamese created a Ministry of Rural Construction to handle pacification, particularly the various cadre programs which in November were entirely transferred to this office. Ostensibly a civilian ministry, it nonetheless was run by a military officer. This helped to preserve both U.S. military and civilian claims in having a legitimate interest in the pacification effort and the cadre program.

1965 was a turbulent, eventful year for the Americans in Vietnam. Regular bombing of North Vietnam began in February and in March the first U.S. ground forces came ashore at Da Nang. Following these two events the entire American effort mushroomed. By the end of the year the disunity in the Mission was, if anything, greater than at the beginning despite numerous proposals to reorganize during the year. The attention and emphasis of the U.S. military were drawn away from pacification in favor of the large-unit war, logistics, base development, and operating the U.S. forces. The civilians, now immersed in their own expanding pacification programs and feeling a widening conceptual gulf between the military war and what they were trying to achieve, asserted that while pacification organization might be tightened up, the program should be under civilian direction. The military, who were contributing most of the resources in advisors and materiel

69. From September 1965-1967 this was the able but mercurial General Nguyen Duc Thang. Originally it was called Rural Reconstruction.
and who are responsible for pacification's security, preferred to keep the existing organizational disunity rather than place their pacification assets under civilian management.

When McGeorge Bundy gave his important February report to the President which advocated a bombing reprisal program against North Vietnam, he had the following to say about pacification organization:

If we suppose that new hopes are raised—at least temporarily—by a reprisal program, and if we suppose further that a government somewhat better than the bare minimum is established, the most urgent order of business will then be the improvement and broadening of the pacification program, especially in its non-military elements.

The mission fully concurs in the importance of this effort. We believe, however, that consideration should be given to import modifications in its organization for this purpose. In particular we believe that there should be intensive effort to strengthen our program at the margin between military advice and economic development—in the area which implies civil government for the soldiers and police action for the aid mission. These efforts, important as they are understood to be, are somehow at the edge of vision for both parties. General Westmoreland and his people inevitably think first of military programs, though they have been imaginative and understanding about the importance of other aspects. Mr. Killen and the USOM people are centrally concerned with problems of aid and economic improvement, although they talk with conviction and energy about their increasing police effort. It remains a fact that its own organization for helping to provide real security for an area which has been "cleared" in crude military terms is unfinished business for the U.S. mission.70

Here, from the President's closest national security advisor was evidence that U.S. agencies were neglecting the important task that fell between the orbits of their organizational repertoires and that the Mission was inade-

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70. Memorandum, McGeorge Bundy to President, Subj.: The Situation in Vietnam, 7 February 1965, TOP SECRET.
McGeorge Bundy did not offer any substantive suggestions, and no organizational changes resulted from his observations, but what he said did reflect Washington's concern over the pacification program and the lack of unity among U.S. agencies. If his comments themselves did not lead to any changes, the next two months saw a series of proposals for pacification reorganization, all generated in Washington, some of which were directly related to his, and we may presume the President's, concern.

It was generally agreed, even in the Mission, that security had not been provided to the Vietnamese population except when the Government's regular military forces were operating in a particular area. This was undermining attempts at pacification. General Harold K. Johnson, the Army's Chief of Staff, discussed this with Secretary McNamara who told him that security was the Army's function and that the Army should take steps to provide it. General Johnson began to set up a small study team for this, but its efforts were superseded by those of Leonard Unger's interagency Vietnam Coordinating Committee which, stimulated by McGeorge Bundy's comments, was looking into the entire pacification program.

Meanwhile in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Rollen Anthis, the SACSA, on General Andrew Goodpaster's direction, advocated that the U.S. pacification advisory program be given a single chain of command and placed under General Westmoreland until pacification had progressed into the later,

more peaceful "development" phase. He recommended also that the military take over USOM's advisory function with the Vietnamese National Police. AID objected to this aspect and would only concede that the Mission might consider letting military advisors in the provinces and districts give operational advice to police-type units.

The Vietnam Coordinating Committee, under the stimulus of both Bundys, wanted a complete review of pacification concepts, security, and the advisory effort for the entire program. The questions they put to Ambassador Taylor themselves are an indication both of the state of the program and how poorly it was managed. They did propose that the Ambassador create an interagency "action group for pacification under a chief of staff to the Ambassador." It would have had both executive and directive powers.

William Bundy sent also a message of his own to Taylor summarizing the VNCC proposals and prefacing his remarks with the words: "As you are aware, there is intense interest at highest levels in maximizing effectiveness pacification program." Ambassador Taylor quickly replied saying there was no need to extensively restudy the theory and practice of pacification. Defects in the pacification program, he said, were the result of inadequate security and ineffective government not lack of understanding of

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72. Memorandum, Anthis to Goodpaster, Subj.: RVN Pacification, 24 February 1965, SECRET. General Goodpaster was at this time Director of the Joint Staff. Admiral F. J. Blouin, the Director of the Far East Region office of ISA, made a similar proposal a short time later—see Memorandum, Blouin to John McNaughton, Subj.: Vietnam, 2 March 1965, TOP SECRET (Grp. 1).


74. Ibid.

75. Message, State 1820 to Saigon, 251720Z February 1965, SECRET (Grp. 3).

76. Message, Saigon 2767 to State, 260746Z February 1965, SECRET.
the requirements of pacification. He did not even answer the organizational proposals. When William Bundy met with Alexis Johnson at Baguio in the Philippines in March, the latter was totally negative on the idea of MACV taking over the police advisory function or USOM’s role, and he reported that Westmoreland felt the same—a contrast from the General’s earlier positions.77

No sooner had Taylor batted away these proposals from Washington than he was faced with more from the same source. The Administration went through an intensive discussion on how to improve the effort in South Vietnam to take advantage of the effect of the air strikes against the North. Taylor was queried for his ideas on how to improve U.S./GVN performance with South Vietnam, and the VNCC developed its own suggestions.78 Taylor’s recommendations showed a preference to assign more pacification responsibility to USOM but avoided any organizational change.79 His views and those of the VNCC were combined and sent by Secretary Rusk to President Johnson as the "41 Points." One of these, a VNCC product, was that the government should study the possibility of establishing a "U.S. interagency action group directed by a senior Mission officer" who would report directly to the Ambassador.80 This group would have responsibility for overseeing

77. Memorandum for Record, William Bundy, Subj.: Highlights of Conversation with Ambassador Johnson at Baguio, 15 March 1965, TOP SECRET. This was sent to Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and others.
78. Message, State 2033 to Saigon, 19 March 1965, SECRET (Grp. 3).
79. Message, Saigon 3045 to State, 221023Z March 1965, SECRET.
80. Memorandum, Rusk to President, Subj.: Actions to Expand and Make More Effective Joint U.S./GVN Activities in the Non-Military Sphere in South Vietnam, March 1965, SECRET. See also Message State 2064 to Saigon, 23 March 1965, SECRET (Grp.3) which indicates that Rusk’s memorandum actually was sent to the President. It is curious that these 41 Points became known as Taylor’s 41 Points. Most were originally conceived by the VNCC with Taylor’s contributions definitely in the minority. Indeed, he rejected some of them later.
the execution of the U.S. pacification support effort and coordination of it with the Vietnamese. On April 1st, President Johnson approved all 41 Points, but within three weeks the Mission had killed the idea of an inter-agency action group saying that pacification guidance and coordination were already adequately handled by the Mission Council. 81

Unified interagency action for a particular aspect of the conflict however was not necessarily an impossibility. In May the Ambassador established the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) under the head of the USIS in Vietnam, Mr. Barry Zorthian. 82 He was given Ministerial rank and made responsible for the entire Mission's psychological warfare operations and press relations. For these matters JUSPAO was made the central point of contact with the Vietnamese Government. Zorthian's powers were directive and included execution; he was not merely a coordinator. USIS officers and those from all other agencies served under him. Indeed, he had more soldiers than civilians. JUSPAO as an organization was remarkably free of criticism. It was an interesting smaller precedent to CORDS for the management of programs that cut across agency lines.

Through most proposals for organizational change in 1964 and 1965 is the realization that the U.S. field advisory effort, particularly in the

81. National Security Action Memorandum No. 238, 6 April 1965, as reprinted in full in USVNR, IV.C.5., pp. 124-126. The rejection can be found in Memorandum, Leonard Unger to Chester Cooper, Subj.: Status of Non-Military Actions (Forty-One Points), 23 April 1965, SECRET.

82. HQS, MACV, Command History 1965, TOP SECRET, p. 253. This page is UNCLASSIFIED. Taylor's action did not spring out of a desert. General Harold Johnson, Taylor himself, and Mr. Carl Rowan (head of USIA) had recommended a series of improvements to the information and psychological warfare programs in Vietnam. The President specifically approved those of Mr. Rowan in NSAM 328.
provinces, needed to be pulled together. In connection with the origins of the Hop Tac Program a "Team Captain" in the critical pacification provinces was discussed but never adopted. In April however the idea was revived again. It reappeared when President Johnson advocated the experimental introduction of teams of U.S. officials into the Vietnamese provincial governments under unified U.S. leadership. This was but one of several radical proposals by the President. Supplemental details from the State and Defense Departments soon followed; there would be one or two test provinces in which the Army's province advisor would have responsibility for all U.S. activities in that province. U.S. Army civil affairs teams, "or other similarly qualified personnel," would help stabilize and run the provincial governments. This was before American troops had arrived in substantial numbers.

Ambassador Taylor's rejection of this was explosive and the idea was dropped immediately. Alexis Johnson did however say to William Bundy that it might be of value to have a single senior representative, military or civilian, in each province. At a hastily-called conference at Honolulu on April 20th, which the Pentagon Papers implied was arranged to soothe Taylor's ruffled feelings, Taylor did agree to experiment in three

83. Message, State 2332 to Saigon, McGeorge Bundy to Taylor, 151545Z April 1965, as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.1., pp. 117-118. The Army had considered this idea a month earlier, but the President's proposal does not seem to have resulted from any Army advocacy.
84. Joint State/Defense Message 9164 to Saigon, 152339Z April 1965 and Message, Department of the Army to COMUSMACV, 161459Z April 1965—both referred to in USVNR, IV.C.1., pp. 116-117.
85. Message, Saigon 3419 to State, Taylor to McGeorge Bundy, 17 April 1965 as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.1., pp. 117-118.
86. Message, Saigon 3432 to State, 17 April 1965, TOP SECRET.
provinces with team chiefs, one of which would be civilian.87

The team chief experiment began in May with a 90-day trial period. Three provinces were selected, and the chiefs were given their assignments based on the level of security in the province. MACV, the Embassy, and USOM provided the officers. What might have been a useful exercise was weakened at the start by the terms of reference given each chief.88 While he was made chairman of the U.S. Provincial Committee, he could exercise only general guidance over other agencies and could not restrict their members contacts with the GVN provincial officials. Disagreements that he could not resolve were to be bucked up to the Ambassador.

Even though the experiment was judged to be the most successful in the province headed by the MACV advisor, the U.S. military were in the lead to discontinue it, which is what happened at the end of August. General Depuy called it only partially successful and "inconclusive" and noted that it did not materially improve the overall province situation.89 Depuy's lack of enthusiasm appears to have been motivated by his own long-range solution of placing the entire military and civilian advisory efforts under the American division and corps commanders.90 The team chief concept however did not die. In two of the provinces the chiefs were kept on as "team coordinators,"

87. USVNR, IV.C.I., p. 120 and Memorandum, McNamara to President, 21 April 1965, TOP SECRET.
89. Memorandum, Depuy to Westmoreland, Subj.: Team Chief Experiment 31 August 1965, CONFIDENTIAL. See also Memorandum, BG James L. Collins to Executive Secretary of Mission Council, Subj.: Committee Report: Mission Council Memo #121, Item 1, 10 August 1965, SECRET.
90. Memorandum, Depuy to Westmoreland, Subj.: Team Chief Concept, 25 July 1965, CONFIDENTIAL. See also Memorandum, BG James L. Collins to Executive Secretary of Mission Council, Subj.: Committee Report: Mission Council Memo #121, Item 1, 10 August 1965, SECRET.
a weak designation that General Depuy still opposed.91 The concept was re-

stated at the Warrenton Conference in January 1966 (see next chapter); the

persistence of the underlying problem kept bringing it to life. The idea of

unified advice in each province was an integral part of several proposed re-

organizations and eventually was engraved as one of the most important

principles in the final CORDS structure.

Despite the recognition of Washington observers and most senior U.S.

officials in Saigon of the imperfections and disunity in the U.S. organiza-

tion at the province level, no agreement could be reached among the agencies

for a better solution. Characteristic of this was the recommendation of a

special Mission Council Working Group, set up by Ambassador Taylor to ex-

amine the organization of U.S. provincial operations, that no changes be

made in interagency working arrangements in province.92 Each would keep

their own chains of command. Despite the growing presence of U.S. tactical

units which further complicated coordination and had a significant, though

not always positive, pacification impact in areas where they operated, USAID

and JUSPAO field advisors were told only to assist these units "as appropri-

ate or directed by their superiors." Interagency liaison was the best that

could be achieved—a small accomplishment for a war where political and

military aspects were so interrelated.

In late July Henry Cabot Lodge returned to Saigon for his second tour

91. Memorandum, Depuy to Westmoreland, Subj.: U.S. Provincial Team Coor-

dination, 5 December 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.

92. HQS. MACV, Command History 1965, TOP SECRET, pp. 405-406 and Mission

Council Action Memorandum No. 125, 17 August 1965, SECRET which is

discussed in detail therein. These pages are SECRET. The Mission

Council approved the Working Group's recommendations.
as Ambassador, replacing General Taylor, who never had wished to stay more than a year. Lodge's inabilities as a manager had been well recognized during his first tour so the continuing disunity among the agencies in Saigon should have come as no surprise. However, lest there be a repetition of Lodge's problems with Harkins, President Johnson armed him with a letter of authority just as powerful as that given to Taylor:

...as Ambassador you exercise full responsibility for the work of the United States Government in South Vietnam. In general terms this authority is parallel to that set forth in my letter to Ambassador Taylor of July 2, 1964. 93

If the President had entertained any illusions that Lodge would use this mandate to manage the Mission forcefully, he might better have commanded that snowmen be built in the Sahara, for, as the Pentagon Papers have asserted, Lodge did not see himself as the administrator or manager of the Mission but as the President's personal representative in Saigon. 94 He just did not visualize his being responsible for operations of U.S. agencies in Vietnam. While the following was not directly related to pacification, it is a good example of the independence he permitted the agencies:

...I have learned of Zorthian's wire to Marks (the USIA Director), which of course he has the right to send, since I hold that Zorthian, like U.S. agency chiefs here, has and should have an open channel to his agency. It is a statement of Zorthian's opinion which, of course, was sent without my approval or direction. 95

93. Letter, President Johnson to Lodge, July 1965, as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 8-9.
94. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 8.
95. Ibid.
Richard Holbrooke has observed that "each agency could ignore him when he told them to do something and usually get away with it." The President's letter of authority was never used in part because Lodge does not appear to have challenged the military in their own area of concern. In September General Westmoreland told General Wheeler, the Joint Chief's Chairman, and Admiral Sharp, the Pacific Commander:

I have every reason to believe that he (Lodge) will agree to my approach in that there has never been any tendency by Ambassador Lodge to interfere in military matters or pre-empt my military judgment.

Lodge was willing to exhort, but in at least one case his exhortations better serve as a measure of his isolation from what was happening among U.S. agencies in the field. In December he told the Mission Council that:

...in general, relationships among U.S. advisors (at the provincial level) from all agencies are cordial and productive. Mutual goodwill and dedication to a common cause normally serve to balance the natural tendency of each advisor to see as paramount the activities with which he is most intimately involved...It is not the intent of this memorandum to prescribe formal coordination procedures, but rather to provide guidelines for improving existing procedures. Frequent meetings, joint planning, full exchange of ideas, and wholehearted cooperation can...enhance the total impact of U.S. assistance.

Ambassador Lodge's tour did begin with an interesting experiment. Lansdale, by then retired, was sent out with a small, hand-picked team of specialists to serve as an informal political staff for the Ambassador and to act as liaison between the Mission and Vietnamese officials responsible for pacification. To this end Lansdale was made Chairman of the inter-

96. Ibid. p. 10
97. Message, MAC 4642, 170215Z September 1965, Westmoreland to Wheeler and Sharp, TOP SECRET.
98. Memorandum, Lodge to Mission, Subj.: U.S. Provincial Team Coordination, 6 December 1965, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.
agency Mission Liaison Group which Taylor had established in May to provide closer coordination with the Vietnamese Director General of Rural Reconstruction (pacification) but which until Lansdale had been chaired by the Mission Coordinator. Lodge even named him as the Mission's Senior Liaison Officer to the Vietnamese Government in October, but this was a title only with no directive power over other U.S. agencies.

Lansdale had hoped to have Washington control of his mission transferred from the State Department to the White House, but it remained under William Bundy. He felt that the President and Lodge understood and supported his mission. It is indicative of the state of affairs in pacification that before he left for Saigon Lansdale termed his appointment a "desperation play" to see if something else would work. 99

Lansdale's mission was not a success. He was useful for his political contacts and sensitivity and his ability to gain the trust and confidence of Vietnamese officials. But for him his stay in Vietnam was a frustrating period. Basically, his solution of personal influence and inspiration on key Vietnamese leaders was out of step with the behemoth that the war had become. What probably would have been right for the 1950's was inappropriate in 1965 and 1966. The Vietnamese quickly discovered that his power was limited and turned to the large U.S. agencies with their vast staffs and access to resources. Lansdale's personal preference for sensitive political dealing ran afool of the Embassy's political section, and his own inability to manage was not compensated for elsewhere on his staff. 100 His efforts to

100. Interview, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 24 April and 8 May 1973. See also L. Maynard, op. cit., p. 35.
to deal with Lodge on issues that cut across agency responsibilities were re-
sented and frequently frustrated by the agencies, for he had no independent
operating authority, no funds, and no Washington constituency, an extremely
important factor, to back him up. 101 The Mission Liaison Group did meet
regularly and worked on producing interagency pacification plans. Its finest
accomplishment probably was the setting of the final design and unification
of the Rural Construction Cadre Program with the Vietnamese in November 1965.

In November Lansdale, who had recently been working closely with General
Thang, the Minister of Rural Construction, on the entire cadre program, told
Lodge that someone had to be put in charge of the U.S. cadre advisory effort
and liaison with the Vietnamese. 102 CIA and USAID wanted to limit MACV's
participation in cadre matters to observation since CIA was paying much of
the bill for the cadre. They also felt that MACV would overstaff and over-
complicate the effort. Lansdale realized that if he stepped into an opera-
tional role all the agencies would regard him as a usurper, challenging their
resources. He made his desires and capabilities clear when he said: "I can
represent you on policy, but am not in any position to undertake directing
operations." AID, he noted, wanted to assume a more prominent role in paci-
fication as it was faced with a Congressional debate on its future. To the
Mission Council, Lansdale recommended that CIA or USAID be assigned executive
responsibility for U.S. liaison with the cadre program. 103 Even the CIA,
USAID, and Lansdale could not agree on his proposals which had also included

102. Memorandum, Lansdale to Lodge, Subj.: Rural Construction Cadre, 29
November 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
103. Memorandum, Lansdale to Mission Council, Subj.: Rural Construction
Cadre, c. 5 December 1965 CONFIDENTIAL.
his office in a policy guidance role, and the matter was dropped mementarily. MACV objected to being shut out on the cadre question as the Rural Construction cadre duplicated some of the Regional/Popular Force effort and drained away precious manpower from the military. MACV also had the only fully-established advisory structure down to the district level; they would have to supply arms to the cadre; and the Rural Construction Minister was a military man with other military responsibilities.

Therefore consternation was provoked when two weeks later Lodge told Lansdale that he and the representatives of USAID and CIA were to be the only regular advisors to the Government of Vietnam on pacification and development, with USAID and CIA as the operating support agencies. MACV was to be pre-eminent in the military clearing phase but for the rest of pacification was only to support CIA and USOM. General Westmoreland, who was in Honolulu, was alerted by his watchful Chief of Staff, General William Rosson. As this was in progress, Lansdale informed the Mission Council that since Lodge had referred to him as the "principal coordinator and principal contact point with the GVN in the fields of pacification and development," he must be kept informed on pacification by all agencies involved. It is clear that he did not visualize himself as a directing administrator but only as the senior

104. Memorandum, BG Depuy to Westmoreland, Subj.: Rural Construction Cadre, c. 5 December 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
106. Message, MAC 6481, 162300Z December 1965, MG Rosson to Westmoreland, Subj.: Memorandum on Roles of U.S. Agencies in Rural Construction, CONFIDENTIAL.
107. Memorandum, Lansdale to Mission Council, Subj.: Rural Construction, 16 December 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
policy and advice coordinator. General Westmoreland strongly objected to Lodge about cutting MACV out of pacification citing the same reasons mentioned earlier and noting that such a move would merely split rather than assist the U.S. pacification effort. 108

Lodge replied that MACV was in no way being excluded and that the principal purpose of his memorandum to Lansdale was only to cut down on the number of contacts with the Ministry of Rural Construction. 109 After all, he noted, MACV was in a similar position with the Ministry of Defense, and the effort would remain integrated if MACV and the other agencies provided proper support.

Nothing ever came of this attempt at unity. Lansdale did not exercise any new authority; Lodge did not pursue his directive; and CIA and USAID, by virtue of the resources committed, remained the principal agencies in the cadre program, but MACV retained its say in the overall pacification effort particularly in any aspect that involved security. Shortly afterwards, there was a major interagency meeting at Warrenton, Virginia, the February Honolulu Conference, and President's designation of Ambassador William Porter as the single American in charge of pacification. Porter thus took over Lansdale's role. These events eclipsed Lansdale and added new dimensions to the effort to reorganize for pacification.

108. Message, HWA 343, 170415Z December 1965, Westmoreland to Lodge, Roles of U.S. Agencies in Rural Construction, CONFIDENTIAL.
Chapter III

THE FIRST REORGANIZATION

I wasn't at all reassured about what I heard yesterday. I have been concerned every time I have been here in the last two years. I don't think we have done a thing we can point to that has been effective in five years. I ask you to show me one area in this country...that we have pacified.¹

These harsh words of Robert McNamara exemplify the frustration that American officials, particularly in Washington, felt with the pacification program. After a brief period in which U.S. troops and military pressures against the North diverted the focus of U.S. attention, the Administration returned, slowly at first, to the problem of pacification. The war, they were forced to realize, could not be solved alone by military measures within the international constraints and fear of escalation operating at the time. Also, there was a widespread perception that the influx of American forces had reversed the steady decline in the South Vietnamese situation thus providing an opportunity for pacification to move forward. In addition, for both domestic and international reasons publicity and visibility were needed to offset the military programs. The U.S. and Vietnamese Governments began what Richard Holbrooke called the "Re-emphasis on Pacification."²

This re-emphasis was multifaceted and until the February 1966 Honolulu Conference it was largely internal to the government. One cannot pick a precise point in time when it began or devolve responsibility onto a single

¹. Briefing for General Westmoreland, 28 November 1965. TOP SECRET, as quoted in HQS. MACV, Command History 1965, TOP SECRET, p. 229. This page is TOP SECRET.
². This was the title he gave to his volume, IV.C.8., that he wrote for the Pentagon Papers (or USVNR).
actor or agency. The pressures for public visibility which culminated with Honolulu clearly and understandably came from Washington, especially the White House. Lurking at the back of the President's mind were the 1966 Congressional elections and, more importantly, those in 1968 for President. With some exceptions the same sources generated the internal re-emphasis, though in Vietnam itself the atmosphere in the Mission, especially among the civilians, was such that Washington's interest would fall on fertile soil.

Within Vietnam Ambassador Lodge was a key factor. While Taylor was not against pacification, Lodge from the moment of his return pushed it heavily both in the Mission and in his communications with Washington. If Lodge was not prepared to interfere in the military side of the war, his advocacy of pacification and support for the civilian side of the Mission encouraged other supporters of pacification to press their cases. The presence of Lansdale who had a long background in pacification was another signal. There is abundant evidence that Lodge deeply believed in this side of the war. However, he saw himself as an advocate to the President not as an "overall manager of the largest overseas civil/military effort in American History." He did not devise a unified, balanced strategy. The Ambassador, despite his personal and philosophic interest in pacification, did not extend this interest to setting priorities for programs and directing the field agencies under his command. His fine words, as we have seen with Lansdale in December 1965, were not followed up with action, and thus he failed to affect the operating Mission.

The civilian agencies themselves contributed to the re-emphasis. Not

4. Ibid., p. iii.
only were the various field cadre programs moving toward unification on the Vietnamese side, but they provided also a centerpiece and a focus for the civilians' efforts. Their resources committed to Vietnam were growing too and this naturally provoked them, and their home offices, to push more aggressively for the program toward which most of these resources were directed.

Another factor was the commencement of the policy of leaving much of the main-force war to the U.S. troops while giving ARVN the responsibility for providing security to pacification. General Nguyen Cao Ky, then Prime Minister, told Lodge as early as August 1965 that he favored this. Though it was not formalized until the Manila Conference in October 1966, in actuality, as U.S. forces arrived more and more ARVN units slipped into territorial security roles. While this process left the U.S. main-force effort more a separate entity, it did engage a growing proportion of the U.S. military advisors in pacification. It increased, with some truth, the justification for MACV's desire for a continuing and substantial role in U.S. pacification support. Not only did the military have a large advisory chain to nearly every province and district that far outnumbered the civilians', but their advisory chain to the Vietnamese Army, perhaps reluctantly, became increasingly enmeshed in pacification.

In Washington a renewed interest in pacification sprang up in many places. The Army's Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson, began a major study effort called PROVN or Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of Vietnam (see below) in mid-1965. Little more than a month

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5. USNVR, IV.C.9. (b)., p. 5.
after Lodge's arrival the State Department sent an important cable to Lodge, noting that there had been an informal high-level meeting on Vietnam and that the time had come to consider putting more steam into the pacification effort. While Westmoreland, and perhaps Lodge too, believed that this cable was the product of the "ivory tower environment" of the VNCC, it was actually personally drafted by William Bundy and cleared directly with McNamara and McGeorge Bundy. Believing that the enemy had settled down for a long, drawn-out war, Washington was asking how might the Americans and South Vietnamese most effectively employ their forces. They wanted Lodge to develop a specific plan for concentrating GVN forces on pacification while U.S. forces would handle large enemy units. They also suggested that pacification be a multi-faceted program, including such aspects as land reform, and be tried systematically in key areas with firm military commitments to security.

Lodge's reply showed that he had no intention of involving himself in military questions; these were matters to be left to General Westmoreland. He said also that he was not ready to provide a specific pacification plan at that point, yet he did not suggest a future deadline or even that he might begin work on one. Westmoreland had to reassure the Joint Chiefs Chairman that he was "not accepting any concepts or ideas that" were against his

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6. Message, State 753 to Saigon, 14 September 1965, TOP SECRET.
7. General Westmoreland's History Notes, 12-19 September 1965, CONFIDENTIAL, p. 6 in General Westmoreland's History File (29 August-24 October 1965), TOP SECRET. The characterization was Westmoreland's.
8. The message also suggested that the United States re-evaluate the effect and need of massive air strikes especially as regards their effects on civilians and questioned whether planned increases of U.S. troops should not be deferred. These naturally were bound to raise military opposition in Washington and Vietnam which of course they did.
9. Letter, Lodge to Westmoreland, 16 September 1965, TOP SECRET, with attached draft telegram in reply to State 753, TOP SECRET.
The general attitude in Lodge's and Westmoreland's replies was that of resistance to Washington interference. Westmoreland stated it quite plainly shortly afterwards:

This is a revert back to the situation of a year ago when Washington attempted to call all the shots, project all plans, and dictate how the war would be fought. I regret this development and will do everything I can to discourage this tendency.

Both he and General Wheeler were opposed to having the ARVN concentrate on pacification, and it would be over a year before this would become official policy and then only for one-half of ARVN.

From various sources the President was being encouraged to give more emphasis to pacification. In early November, for example, he received a trip report on Vietnam from the Editor and Publisher of Denver Post, Mr. Palmer Hoyt -- a personal friend, who urged that more effort and priority be placed on the pacification program. Johnson was impressed by the report and asked that it be circulated to his top officials.

Probably the strongest expressions to the President of dissatisfaction with pacification came from McNamara:

...pacification is thoroughly stalled, with no guarantee that security anywhere is permanent and no indications that able and willing

10. Message, MAC 4642, 170215Z September 1965, Westmoreland to General Wheeler and Admiral Sharp, TOP SECRET. See also Message, JCS 3428-65, 161914Z September 1965, Wheeler to Sharp and Westmoreland, TOP SECRET.
11. Westmoreland's History Notes, 12-19 September 1965, op. cit., CONFIDENTIAL.
12. Memorandum, McGeorge Bundy to William Bundy, et al., 3 November 1965, with attached trip report by Mr. Palmer Hoyt to President Johnson.
leadership will emerge in the absence of that permanent security.\(^\text{13}\)

and he added pessimistically that the odds were about even that:

we will be faced in early 1967 with a military standoff at a much higher level, with pacification still stalled, and with any prospect of military success still marred by the chance of an active Chinese intervention.\(^\text{14}\)

The result of this widespread renewal of interest in pacification and the pessimistic assessments as to its current status was to reopen the question of management on the U.S. side. During the following year and a half, improved management was a key aspect of pacification especially as perceived in Washington. Indeed, the Pentagon Papers volume on pacification focused more on U.S. management of the program than on the program itself.

From late 1965 on, there is a clear progression, which in hindsight appears more certain than it might have at the time to most observers, from separate agency pacification advisory programs to a unified effort in CORDS. The focus of this narrative also will perceptibly sharpen on one dimension -- that of how to manage the pacification program. At this point the reader must remember that the program itself, regardless of how loosely or broadly the concept was defined or conceived, by now was but one of four simultaneous and often disconnected war programs, the other three being the Air War, the U.S. ground force war, and the efforts of the regular South Vietnamese Army. Unlike the late 1950's, it was not the whole war. For this

\(^{13}\) Draft Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Military and Political Actions Recommended for South Vietnam, 4 December, 1965, TOP SECRET.

\(^{14}\) Memorandum, McNamara to President, 7 December 1965, as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.6.(a)., p. 25.
reason also the narrative largely excludes organizing for the entire war or the major question of Ambassadorial primacy, issues that were extremely important for pacification in 1965 and before. These issues rarely appear in the documents from 1966 on.

This "clear progression" of events leading to CORDS conveniently centers around three major allied conferences — Honolulu in February 1966, Manila in October 1966, and Guam in March 1967. In conjunction with each of these the U.S. pacification advice and support effort was reorganized.

The events surrounding these reorganizations will be covered in great detail. Detail is essential to the bureaucratic politics model, and the following will give some idea of its richness and complexity. Especially interesting are the positions various bureaucracies and their spokesmen took on proposed organizations and the marked similarity between predictable bureaucratic reactions and each agency's perception of the solution that is best for the program and the national interest.

The role of personalities was crucial. The events to be described centered on, and were indeed moulded by, three key individuals — the President, Secretary McNamara, and Special Assistant Komer. Of these, Komer was the most continually important, with McNamara coming to the fore in certain key instances. The President, except in the obvious and extremely important fact that his Special Assistant acts directly for him, appeared the least frequently. This is to be expected of Presidents, but it does not weaken his final import. He created the climate and the pressure for change, in the end deciding just how and when this change was to be accomplished.
It is also interesting to see a vast bureaucratic world, almost a government *Nibelheim*, that existed beneath the President and his closest advisors and agency chiefs. Often the two levels appear to be disconnected. Change at this lower level was glacial; it is difficult to find a "clear progression" there. This is not true at the President's level where the change to CORDS was logical, obvious, and related to the President, or his assistants acting directly for him.

Prior to the Honolulu Conference, a major interagency meeting on Vietnam took place at Warrenton, Virginia, in January 1966. Not only did this meeting foreshadow many of the later decisions on organization, but one can also say that it represents the apex of the efforts of the bureaucracies in Washington and the field to deal with the problem of organization on their level without Presidential direction. The agenda of this meeting and its results indicate that disunity among the agencies on pacification was still as strong as ever in early 1966.

In November 1965, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, led by Ambassador Leonard Unger, first raised the idea of a conference of working-level members of the Saigon Mission and U.S. agencies in Washington concerned with Vietnam. The conference proposal was preceded by a month of discussions among the Committee on the future course of the U.S. effort in Vietnam. 15

The major questions in the earliest discussions were the size of American programs, their degree of influence with the Vietnamese, their lack of coordination, and the need to set priorities among them. No common position was reached, and nothing was said that clearly provides a link with the future outcome of reorganization. Those concerned, both in Saigon and Washington, were still groping for a solution.

The Committee's discussions were continued, and on November 4, 1965, it sent a message to Saigon stating that it was essential to develop military and non-military programs "in complete coordination." The Committee also tried to move against the present trend of spreading programs by urging a hard, realistic look at, and halt to programs that did not have a "positive and measurable" impact on the population, did not show GVN support, and were beyond the GVN's capacity to absorb. It asked, in a deferential tone, for recommendations from Saigon.

At the November 17th meeting of the Committee, Chester Cooper, still on the White House staff, and Ambassador Unger proposed a meeting with Mission members to review programs and set priorities. The Committee members agreed that a general concept of pacification should be agreed upon with the Mission and that following this there should be a meeting to review programs and establish methods and machinery to keep them under

16. Ibid., "Notes on...," especially pp. 5-6.
18. Memorandum, Unger to Members of the VNCC, Subj.: Action Summary for November 17, 1965, SECRET, and the more detailed handwritten transcript of the meeting attached to the copy of this paper in Center of Military History files.
review. The fact that there was no general concept of pacification even at this late date is indicative of organizational malaise.

Ambassador Unger then called for a review of existing cadre programs (twelve of which were listed!) and asked that non-combat programs and actions be arranged around a defined objective. He re-stressed the necessity for priorities and the machinery to assign and follow through on them. 19

These stirrings toward reorganization received further impetus from outside the government when Henry Kissinger, then Professor of Government at Harvard University, returned from an official trip to Vietnam and met with the Committee on November 20th. He observed that the U.S. agencies had non-aggression treaties and little positive integration. 20 He saw the Mission Council as the only group pulling things together with the agencies "letting things go," and he remarked that programs were kept going with unqualified or even no personnel rather than being dropped. The night before he had met informally with a member of the Army's PROVN Study Group and more bluntly stated that the structure of the U.S. effort in Vietnam needed to be overhauled, that USAID management lines were hopelessly tangled, and that while U.S. Army personnel might be more capable in the job, it would not be in the best interests of the United States to have the military carry the entire burden. 21

19. Leonard Unger, Outline, Subj.: Vietnam Coordinating Committee Actions and Programs in Non-Combat Field, 19 November 1965, SECRET.
21. Memorandum, COL T. J. Hanifen for BG Bennett, Subj.: Debrief of Dr. Kissinger (19 November 1965), 20 November 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
Several days later, the Committee informed the Embassy that it viewed the establishment of agreed standards against which all non-combat programs should be evaluated as a major task that must be worked out by the Vietnamese and U.S. Governments. These standards were to be the basis of the Mission's assignment of priorities, allocation of human and material resources, and attention. Significantly, they added that machinery needed to be set up to implement this. Finally, the need for a meeting, to be held in December, was formally broached to the Mission for the first time.

Ambassador Lodge responded enthusiastically within a day to the idea of a meeting and stated that his representatives would be prepared to discuss all aspects of the U.S. effort. During the next two weeks preparations for the meeting progressed. A detailed concept paper on the application of resources to the war effort was sent by Unger to Saigon for comment, and shortly afterwards the Committee cabled a proposed agenda that dealt almost exclusively with organizational concepts and priorities and how to implement them.

At this point General Westmoreland was thinking in terms of committees and coordination. Before dispatching his representative, BG James L. Collins, Jr., to the Warrenton Conference, he told him that he wished to

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22. Message, State 1402 to Saigon, 221445Z November 1965, SECRET. See also Message, State 1403 to Saigon, 221446Z November 1965, SECRET which deals specifically with cadres and political action in the context of preparing for the conference.
23. Message, Saigon 1849 to State, 230906Z November 1965, SECRET.
24. Letter, Unger to William Porter, 29 November 1965 with attached Memorandum, Subj.: Concept for Application of Resources to Vietnam Conflict, SECRET. Saigon's comments are not part of the available record. See also Message, State 1512 to Saigon, 011236Z December 1965, SECRET.
see an interagency coordinating committee set up below the level of the Mission Council but chaired by the Deputy Ambassador. This committee would direct and execute pacification programs and activities but still be subject to agency approval with reference to the Mission Council in the event of unresolved disagreements. While he stated the need to integrate entire effort, he advised little more than coordination, not wanting pacification to be handled by a single Mission element and desiring that every agency retain its separate access to the Ministry of Rural Construction. These last two provisos are clearly tied into Lodge's earlier December attempt to designate Lansdale as the chief American spokesman with the Ministry of Rural Construction. They illustrate a consistent disinclination towards any directive unity for pacification in which the military would not be the directors.

The Conference, which blossomed in its size and the scope of its discussions, was postponed and took place from 8-11 January 1966. It was supplemented by additional meetings in Washington on a wide variety of non-military subjects. Attending were members of the VNCC, the Saigon Mission,

26. See "Tentative Schedule of Meetings for Vietnam Conference January 7-13," second draft, 6 January 1966, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. This paper lists the participants and the subjects of the preliminary and supplementary meetings. I have not been able to locate any minutes or summaries of these meetings, with the exception of the main conference itself and the January 13th meetings on political developments which is covered in a detailed memorandum from MG William P. Yarborough to the Army's Chief of Staff, Subj.: Report of Meeting of the Warrenton Group, 13 January 1966 at the Department of State, 17 January 1966, CONFIDENTIAL.
and other U.S. Government agencies in Washington.27

Chaired by Ambassadors Porter and Unger, the talks at Warrenton were devoted almost entirely to pacification, broadly interpreted, touching on such subjects as resource allocation, specific pacification programs and priorities, and concepts of pacification and overall strategy.

A major area of concern treated extensively by the Committee in the months preceding the Conference had been the development of a concept of pacification. The results, however, were disappointing, so much so that concept development is not even mentioned as a purpose of the Conference in the final report, despite its having been the first item raised by Ambassador Unger in his preliminary remarks.28 Proposed pacification concepts were discussed in detail, but the concept paper included in the final report merely restated enunciated GVN concepts with the useful but undeveloped additive that the Vietnamese Government should concentrate more on political action and linkage between the people and their immediate authorities.29 Because of the possibility of interagency conflicts, the conference did not adopt a far stronger and more detailed concept paper by

27. The most important documentary sources on the actual conference are: Report to the Principals and Ambassador Lodge from Ambassadors William Porter and Leonard Unger, Subj.: Warrenton Meeting on Vietnam, January 8-11, 1966, 13 January 1966, SECRET with extensive annexes; "Minutes of All Warrenton Agenda Discussions, January 8-11, 1966," SECRET; and Draft "Agenda for Meeting at Warrenton Training Center January 8-11," SECRET. A useful and detailed analysis is contained in USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 20-27. A list of the participants at the meetings at Warrenton is contained in Annex A to the conference report.
28. Ibid., Report..., p. 1 and "Minutes...," January 8, 10:00-12:30 hrs., p. 1, both SECRET.
29. Ibid., Report..., Annex C. SECRET.
Peer De Silva of the Central Intelligence Agency who, building on the experience of the PAT program, advocated a flexible pacification response that concentrated on security and improved government for people at the local level. De Silva forcefully emphasized the need to stop enemy infiltration and eliminate their clandestine infrastructure, indicating that far greater attention was imperative in these two areas.  

The conference also focused on priorities and resources and recommended the adoption of Chester Cooper's suggestion that a resource allocation expert with an appropriate staff be assigned to both Saigon and Washington.

Organization and coordination of all programs was the major unstated purpose of the conference. It was stressed heavily in the agenda, and the depth of comment and attention to these questions indicate a profound and growing concern about the U.S. and GVN apparatus to deal with pacification. Almost by nature as well as practicability the participants concentrated on the U.S. side of this problem, but no agreement was reached on exactly how to organize the Mission for pacification support.

Opening the discussions on U.S. coordination, Ambassador Porter advanced the official Mission view that the present system was adequate and that all was well. He saw field coordination to be essentially a question of "personality relationships" and said that "instances of failure of coordination are relatively rare." His views of the American

32. "Minutes...", op. cit., p. 3.
Saigon-level structure differed considerably from those of subordinate Mission members and officials in Washington:

The heads of agencies have developed a system of coordination of pacification activities. The Ambassador has complete control and no disagreements have arisen concerning policy and priorities. Whenever there is a need for a decision, one is always obtained and this decision is accepted. The principal officer of each agency fully understands U.S. Government policy and the importance of the Vietnamese effort. The Mission should be given a chance to operate. 33

Ambassador Lodge, speaking thus through his deputy, clearly was reluctant to make any change at all.

The various agency representatives presented solutions, most of which were designed to increase coordination and some of which recognized the need for centralized operational direction. A member of the Pentagon's International Security Affairs office briefly proposed that the Central Intelligence Agency take operational control of all agencies pacification efforts, but this was immediately discounted by the CIA representatives who said that their agency was not equipped to run such a large organization. 34

This was consistent with the CIA's desire to back away from large overt programs which were not in its institutional habitue. General Lansdale retreated from a suggestion by CIA Saigon station chief Gorden Jorgenson

33. Ibid., January 9, 15:00-17:00 hrs., p. 4. The source does not indicate that this statement is a quotation of Porter. However, textual examination makes the attribution certain and this is confirmed by BG James L. Collins, Jr., who was at the meeting. Porter did hint briefly at organizational problems during a press briefing a few days later -- See Dept. of State, Transcript of Background Press and Radio News Briefing, Friday, January 14, 1966, p. 2.

34. Ibid., p. 2.
that his Senior Liaison Office be given greater authority and control over pacification management. It is interesting that nowhere in the written record is there a proposal to give control of pacification to General Westmoreland.

All of the Saigon agency representatives wanted to keep their agency command channels and links with the Ambassador. Each also wished to keep their field programs separate. Advocates of tighter management were Washington-based, such as Chester Cooper of the White House, with the exception of the State Department which proposed for Saigon little more than a pacification coordinating committee. The Pentagon Papers observed with some justification, however, that Washington was far more prepared to tell the Mission to reorganize than they were to tackle improvements for their own house.

General William Peers, then the SACSA for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, advanced the most radical solution: all pacification activities would be placed under "one central control and direction," just as psychological warfare was under JUSPAO. Later in the discussions he recommended that there should be a second Deputy Ambassador who would have operational responsibility and who would supervise and direct all agencies pacification activities. MACV pacification advisors were to be completely separated from U.S. regular forces and advisors to the Vietnamese Army.

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35. Ibid., Morning Session, January 9, pp. 5-6.
36. USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 26-27 has a useful summary of different agency proposals.
38. Ibid., January 9, 15:00-17:30 hrs., pp. 3-4, and Report, op. cit., Annex D Attachment "SACSA Proposals."
instance, at least, an experienced general recommended a solution that his military background and current position would not have led one to expect.

The various proposals, none exactly alike, indicate the depth of feeling both in Washington and Saigon among most officials working on pacification. A general consensus was reached that control and management had to rest just below the level of the Ambassador, and that there must be one senior official in Vietnam concerned with this subject alone and supported by a staff. It was not agreed as to whether this person should be the present Deputy Ambassador, assisted by a staff, or another official perhaps a second Deputy Ambassador, and to what extent different agencies resources and operations should be placed under a single director -- which was the real issue. 39

Tackling the U.S. advisory effort at a lower level, the conferees decided that the Mission Council should consider designating U.S. team chiefs to head the advisory undertakings in the four corps priority areas -- a continuation of attempts in this direction that had been proposed and tried in 1964 and 1965. 40

Largely through the proddings of Chester Cooper, the officials at the Conference took up Washington organization and concluded that the present government machinery there was inadequate to handle Vietnam problems quickly and decisively. They advanced, as a possible solution, the idea of setting up the required "directing position" at a higher level, perhaps related to the National Security Council. Allied to this, Porter and Unger concluded

that it would be desirable for the proposed pacification official in Vietnam to have a "high-level point of liaison" in Washington. While none of these solutions were precise, they do point the way to decisions that would be taken after the Honolulu Conference.

The Warrenton Conference is not as noteworthy for what it accomplished in terms of specific programs and completed actions as for the ideas that were raised at it and the positions various participants and their parent agencies took on them. It was a prelude. At the very least the meeting was educational. It enabled officials from opposite poles to converse unhampered by the restrictions of formal cables and telephones. It let everyone stop and examine their work in a broader context. General Collins, reporting back to General Westmoreland, saw this interchange of ideas and assessments as perhaps the Conference's most important benefit. He implied that Washington officials were the pupils, but if this was true, the professors had but one eye open. The Conference foreshadows the organizational changes that were to follow in February and March. It also marks a vague watershed in initiative. The Mission, soon to be forced by the President's desire for publicity and tangible action onto a stage where the actor's positions and attitudes were amplified, increasingly came to react to proposals from above. During the following year the power and direction in pacification shifted to Washington.

Warrenton as a prelude is most easily seen in the similarity between the Conference recommendations and the designation of Ambassador Porter as

41. Ibid., pp. 4 and 6-7.
42. HQS. MACV, Command History 1966, TOP SECRET, p. 504. This page is SECRET.
the coordinator of U.S. pacification support a month later. The Conference participants arrived at a vague compromise, perhaps more a consensus of the necessary minimum, which excluded doing nothing yet eschewed a radical or decisive solution -- one that their Washington superiors were equally unwilling to press at this point.

On January 13th Porter and Unger met with McGeorge Bundy, McNamara, and State Under Secretary George Ball, and they "tentatively agreed" that the Mission's pacification official should be at the level of the Deputy Ambassador, and that this person would "supervise" the work of the subordinate agencies.43 At this point they were considering having two Deputy Ambassadors.44 They decided that McGeorge Bundy would discuss these changes with Ambassador Lodge during his forthcoming visit to Saigon. They also pondered the question of Washington organization to deal with Vietnam problems, but no definite decision was arrived at. The solution envisaged was in terms of upgrading the functions of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee Chairman and making him not only a coordinator but a director, giving him an interagency staff and access to the top officials in each agency. The conspicuous lack of desire to upset their own bureaucratic relationships in Washington is a worthwhile parallel to the same tendency of the Mission in regard to its own affairs that has been remarked on earlier.

44. Ibid.
Shortly after this the State Department developed a closely-held plan to create a Director of Vietnam Operations within the Department. The concept envisaged the Director as a manager of "all U.S. non-combat operations concerning Vietnam" with a Presidential mandate giving authority in these operations subject only to Secretarial or Presidential reference. While this office would be dominated by the State Department, the staff would draw on officials from other interested agencies.

This proposal never came to fruition, though it was not entirely laid to rest until the President's appointment of Komer in March (see below). This plan is however remarkable in that it was stronger and more decisive than any other advocated before or after by the State Department. Whether it ever had a chance of adoption or operational success is an open question. It would have been out of character for the State Department or its Secretary. The Department, traditionally primus inter pares among government agencies, was in no position to direct or supervise a field, action-oriented program to which its contribution of resources and personnel was far outstripped by three other competing bureaucracies. But the idea of centralization in Washington did not die. The President and his advisors could not adopt the State solution of one dominant bureaucracy or bring themselves to shake up radically the U.S. Government's structure, such as creating an independent supra-director for Vietnam. Yet over the next two months Secretary McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, realizing the necessity for some

45. Memorandum, William Bundy to Rusk, 26 January 1966, SECRET, with attachments: 1) Draft Cable to Rangoon and 2) Draft NSAM. I have been unable to locate the Draft NSAM, so a description of its substance is based on Bundy's memorandum.
sort of organizational strengthening, continued to advocate it with an already-receptive President. The March solution embodied in NSAM 343 (see below) was a direct result of their efforts.

At the same time the need for change was pressed with the President from another source. On January 19th, Mr. David Bell, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, submitted a thoughtful and candid trip report to Johnson on his early January trip to Vietnam, a report which incorporated some of the ideas raised at Warrenton. \(^{47}\) Administrator Bell, with an unusually broad view, saw pacification and not merely traditional AID programs as the main concern in Vietnam, and he added a special annex on the subject to a paper that already heavily emphasized it. What he said is noteworthy for its realistic, harsh assessment of pacification and its future. The President received some tough words, much the same as those in Secretary McNamara's reports, that contrasted sharply with the flowery phrases and promises soon to blossom from the Honolulu Conference:

> It is a striking and melancholy fact that no significant progress has been made in pacification for the past several years despite a great deal of effort...There is as yet, however, no basis for optimism. The pacification task is inherently very complex and difficult and will require years to complete under the best conditions. The new effort is still almost entirely on paper.\(^{48}\)

To a President necessarily occupied with the pressing political realities at home, assessments of no progress and projections of a seemingly unlimited

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46. Personal Interview with Ambassador Robert W. Komer, 6 November 1969.
47. Memorandum, Bell to President, Subj.: Non-Military Aspects of the Effort in Vietnam -- January 1966, 19 January 1966, SECRET, with Annex A, Subj.: The Problem of "Pacification" or "Rural Construction," SECRET. Two important Warrenton Conference members, Chester Cooper and Rutherford Poats (AID), had accompanied him.
48. Ibid.
future could not help but fuel his direct interest and action in pacification.

Bell went on to state that the problem of highest priority was to create a "tested and reliable system for 'pacifying' the countryside." He also advocated a Mission staff to deal with resource allocation and endorsed the pending proposal to send high-level teams from the United States who would be concerned with agriculture, health, and education.

For the purposes of this narrative his observations are most interesting and significant for the force and directness with which he came down on the side of strong management:

Neither the GVN nor the U.S. approach to the pacification effort, in my opinion, is yet strong enough or well organized enough to get the job done. 49

There were no strategy directives, he said, no integrated plans or schedules to show how U.S. agencies would actually assist pacification. He recommended that there be one single point of managerial responsibility for U.S. pacification support. His solution, somewhat weaker than his pleas for strong management, bears a definite resemblance to what actually happened a month later: Ambassador Porter, supported by a small staff, should be made responsible for the preparation of integrated plans and schedules and the supervision of their execution. He noted that General Westmoreland and the USAID Director were in agreement with this, with Lodge seeming "to receive it favorably."

49. Ibid.
In contrast to the growing pressures and high-level interest in a reorganization of the Mission that existed in Washington and among the Warrenton conferees, the reaction in Saigon, especially the U.S. Embassy, to any change was distinguished by open reluctance. Shortly after his return to Saigon, Ambassador Porter downplayed the moves to reorganize. Addressing a meeting of the Mission Liaison Group, he stated only that the "possibility" of a single manager was being discussed. The Mission, he said, would continue its support of pacification with the current organizational structure, relying especially on the Mission Liaison Group.  

One of the Warrenton proposals on organization died quickly when submitted to the Mission Council -- the designation of team chiefs for the U.S. advisory efforts in the four corps National Priority Areas. Ambassador Lodge informed Washington that the Council had rejected any field structural changes to accomplish this proposal except to adopt a suggestion by Westmoreland that the USAID Provincial Representative become the team chief for the An Giang Priority Area in the IV Corps zone. This was a small concession as of all the priority areas An Giang was singularly marked by the absence of hard civil/military coordination problems and was distinguished by the most complete rural security to be found in any province in Vietnam. Indicative of his attitude, Lodge reminded Washington that the Council, in previous consideration of a similar concept, had decided to use the words "team coordinator" rather than "team chief."

50. Memorandum, S. L. Karrick to Members of Mission Liaison Group, Subj.: Report of Meeting 27 January 1966, CONFIDENTIAL.

The Honolulu Conference of 7-9 February 1966 gave the American "re-emphasis on pacification" a marked shove forward both within the government and in the external visage presented by its spokesman. This conference which said nothing specifically about U.S. organization was instead a massive and highly-publicized build-up for the non-military war in Vietnam. President Johnson, realizing that the conflict was not only military and could not be won by those means alone, and beginning to feel the heat of critics at home, such as the Fulbright Hearings, and abroad, personally orchestrated a campaign to emphasize pacification. Putting such a spotlight on pacification could not help but lead to an attempt to improve the structure for dealing with it, especially in view of the chorus of complaints of visitors to Vietnam and Washington officials about this structure. By publicly committing himself to the program he not only got a jump on his critics but a wave of Presidential pressure went down into the bureaucracies. A new element had been injected.

Pacification and the non-military war dominated the Conference though both were set within the context of military pressure to defeat the enemy as a prerequisite. Significantly, however, the principal members of the U.S. Government were beginning to stress the inadequacy of conventional victory alone. As Lodge put it in his opening remarks:

52. Westmoreland's later views of Honolulu are interesting: "LBJ at Honolulu brought out civilian officials to give high visibility to the civilian side. It was the theme of the day. A lot of hogwash. It deterred any real centralized control of our effort which was our biggest problem" -- Interview with Mr. C. B. MacDonald, 2 April 1973. This appears to have the wisdom of hindsight, for Westmoreland clearly was only for central control if he had the control, and that was a position he was not advocating at this point.
We can beat up North Vietnamese regiments in the high plateau for the next twenty years and it will not end the war -- unless we and the Vietnamese are able to build simple but solid political institutions under which proper police can function and a climate created in which economic and social revolution, in freedom, are possible. 53

Honolulu brought pacification out of government cables and discussions and gave it a place in the sun.

Secretary Rusk and the President carried the new emphasis further, tying it into a three-faceted national strategy of military pressure, nation-building or pacification, and negotiations. Rusk saw pacification as a means of bringing pressure on the North Vietnamese to negotiate:

...anything that can cause them to realize that an epidemic of confidence is building could hasten the time when Hanoi will decide to stop this aggression. 54

The President made it clear that he wanted results:

Now, I want to have my little briefcase filled with these three targets -- a better military program, a better pacification program that includes everything, and a better peace program. 55

and in an unusually blunt statement, given that he was addressing not only his own officials but the Vietnamese as well, he said:

...Preserve this communiqué, because it is one we don't want to forget. It will be a kind of bible that we are going to follow. When we come back here 90 days from now, or six months from now, we are going to start out and make reference to the announcements that the President, the Chief of State and the Prime Minister made in paragraph 1, and what the leaders and advisors reviewed in paragraph 2...

53. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 36.
54. Ibid., p. 38.
55. Ibid.
You men who are responsible for these departments, you ministers, and the staffs associated with them in both governments, bear in mind we are going to give you an examination and the finals will be on just what you have done... how have you built democracy in the rural areas? How much of it have you built, when and where? Give us dates, times, numbers... larger outputs, more efficient production to improve credit, handicraft, light industry, rural electrification -- are those just phrases, high-sounding words, or have you coonskins on the wall...

Next is health and education, Mr. Gardner. We don't want to talk about it; we want to do something about it. "The President pledges he will dispatch a team of experts." Well we'd better do something besides dispatching. They should get out there. We are going to train health personnel. How many? You don't want to be like the fellow who was playing poker and when he made a big bet they called him and said "what have you got?" He said, "aces" and they asked "how many" and he said "one aces"...

Next is refugees. That is just hot as a pistol in my country. You don't want me to raise a white flag and surrender so we have to do something about that... 56

The fact that almost none of Johnson's specific wishes were carried out within his deadlines does not indicate a lack of Presidential power within the U.S. Government. First, some of his goals were naive and unrealistic, born of his remoteness from and lack of understanding of the problems. Second, the problems themselves, difficult as they were, had also to be solved through an imperfect Vietnamese instrument, one that might outwardly agree to but not willingly carry out the President's wishes. The GVN was soon faced with a major political crisis, the revolt in I CTZ. This overshadowed any sense of urgency that Johnson might have been able to generate by his exhortations at Honolulu. However, the setting of targets

56. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
at Honolulu exemplified the President's impatience with the status of pacification. The nearest and most amenable-to-improvement target for this impatience, given the difficulty of pacification itself, would be the American organization to deal with it. Only visible success could have stilled the pressure for reorganization.

Immediately in the shadow of the Honolulu Conference, President Johnson made two important decisions. Deputy Ambassador Porter was assigned the task of pulling together the Saigon Mission's pacification effort, and in Washington Mr. Robert W. Komer, a Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, was made a Special Assistant and given a strong mandate to supervise, from the White House, Washington support for pacification.

Following the Conference, McGeorge Bundy headed a group of Washington officials who continued on to Saigon. Bundy had permission from Johnson to give Porter wide authority over all parts of the pacification program. Concurrently, the President cabled Lodge:

I intend to see that our organization back here for supporting this (pacification) is promptly tightened and strengthened and I know that you will want to do the same at your end. I was impressed with Ambassador Porter...While I know that he is already doing so, I suggest that your designation of him as being in total charge, under your supervision, of all aspects of the rural construction program would constitute a clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu Conference really marks a new departure in this vital field of our effort there. We will of course be glad to give prompt support with whatever additional personnel or administrative re-arrangement this might require within the Mission or Embassy. 57

57. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
Porter's assignment was forced on a reluctant Henry Cabot Lodge, and Lodge's reply hinted at the difficulties that Johnson would have with organizational changes as long as Lodge was Ambassador. After defensively asserting that heretofore he had considered that Mission direction of pacification was working "pretty well" and that no public announcement was necessary, he agreed to do the President's bidding. But he added:

I assume that if Porter's new allocation means that I am so taken up with U.S. visitors that I am in effect separated from "rural construction," then we would take a new look at the whole thing. 58

Lodge did go ahead and designate Porter as having "full charge, under my direction, of all aspects" of U.S. support for pacification. Porter, on paper at least, had a powerful mandate though Lodge excluded military aspects of pacification as opposed to the wider responsibilities advocated by the President.

Porter was placed in an extremely difficult position. On one hand Washington was pressing him for results while on the other Lodge clearly did not envisage Porter's role in the same way Washington did. Porter, operating under the constraints of his boss, was unable to perform as Washington officials, especially the President, had hoped. Holbrooke left open the question of whether Porter did not pressure other agencies in Saigon because he knew he would not be backed by Lodge, or because he personally did not conceive of his role as a true manager. 59 However, the 1964 experience of David Nes, which shows strong similarities, indicates

58. Ibid., p. 56.
59. Ibid., p. 57.
that Porter would have had great difficulty regardless of how he saw his role. The path he chose to take was certainly made clear to the Mission Council shortly after his appointment:

"(Porter)...pointed out that the basic idea is to place total responsibility on one senior individual to pull together all of the civil aspects of revolutionary development. He sees this primarily as a coordinating effort and does not intend to get into the middle of individual agency activities and responsibilities. As he and his staff perceive areas which require attention and action by a responsible agency, he will call this to the attention of that agency for the purpose of emphasis; he intends to suggest rather than criticize..." 60

It is worth re-reading the President's instructions to Lodge and his conception of what Porter's role really should have been. The difference between reality and Presidential expectations was considerable. It is also important to note that such an outcome was not foreordained. The personalities of Lodge and Porter were critical. With Komer and Presidential support backing him in Washington, an assertive Ambassador and his Deputy could have done far more to unify the pacification effort.

If Porter's operation was not the success that officials in Washington had hoped for, then neither was it a complete failure. His efforts were the first step in a long process of getting the civilian agencies to work together. In addition, while Porter had no authority over MACV, General Westmoreland did designate his chief pacification planner, Colonel Joel Hollis, to act as an advisor to Porter with an office in the Embassy. Cooperation was such that Hollis' office often produced staff work that

60. Ibid., 57-58. This is from the Mission Council Minutes of 28 February 1966.
came out over Porter's signature. Hollis also was made MACV's single point of staff contact with the Embassy on pacification -- an additional improvement in coordination.

Porter had a small, though extremely able, staff, but its size, regardless of ability, just was not up to the task at hand. Ambassador William Leonhart, Komer's deputy, returned to Washington in May "full of admiration for Porter" but observed that while no one could do more with less, Porter was stretched too thin with too many duties including virtually all the usual Deputy Chief of Mission functions, most of which Lodge had promised the President to relieve him of. (See Chart III-1)

The Pentagon Papers detailed instances of each agency's unwillingness to change programs or divert resources in the directions Porter wished and concluded with:

In this situation, Ambassador Porter tried several times to get action, each time received enthusiastic, but generalized, words of agreement and support from everyone, and finally turned his attention to other matters; with the crush of business, there was always a more immediate crisis.

Some Washington observers, however, came away from Saigon almost euphoric. William Bundy said in March that the Embassy was in the best shape that he had ever seen it, and that Lodge was delegating major responsibility to Porter for pacification. Henry Kissinger, after an informal

61. Personal Interview with Mr. Charles M. Cooke, Jr., 5 January 1975.
63. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 61.
64. Memorandum, William Bundy to Under Secretary of State, et al., 14 March 1966, SECRET.
Chart III-1. U.S. MISSION ORGANIZATION FOR PACIFICATION, FEBRUARY -- NOVEMBER 1966
visit in August, noted that:

The organization of the Embassy has been vastly improved since my last visit. The plethora of competing agencies each operating their own program on the basis of partly conflicting and largely uncoordinated criteria has been replaced by an increasingly effective structure under the extremely able leadership of Bill Porter.65

In view of what the situation really was, their observations are a telling comment on how bad organization must have been prior to February. Their views, however, were not the ones carrying weight in Washington at this point. The real force on pacification in Washington was Robert Komer, and he was impatient and dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction was not with Porter personally but with the fact that not enough was being accomplished in pacification itself.

Komer's appointment as Special Assistant to the President for the "other war," the substance of which had been foreshadowed at Warrenton and hinted at by the President in February, was due directly to the urgings of Secretary McNamara and McGeorge Bundy.66 This innovation, consecrated in a National Security Action Memorandum in late March, gave him authority to direct, coordinate, and supervise in Washington U.S. non-military programs for peaceful construction relating to Vietnam.67 Komer's office was probably the nearest that Washington ever came to providing some sort of centralized management direction to the war. But, the military, by far the

65. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 58.
largest American element, were excluded.

His purview was wider than just pacification for he dealt also with issues such as port congestion and economic stabilization. As evidence of the imprecision in Washington on this subject, Komer, who was new to Vietnam, admitted later that he was not certain just what the "other war" was:

By God, we had a mandate to run the "other war." We didn't know what the "other war" was; nobody else did either. 68

Komer's instructions were most unusual if not unique for a Presidential assistant. He was told to manage and supervise, not just coordinate. Interestingly enough, this was put in at the urging of McNamara. 69 While managing military pacification programs had been excluded, the President still gave him considerable say in military business insofar as it affected the "other war":

I have charged him and his deputy, Ambassador William Leonhart, to assure that adequate plans are prepared and coordinated covering all aspects of such programs and that they are promptly and effectively carried out. This responsibility will include the mobilization of U.S. military resources in support of such programs. He will also assure that the Rural Construction/Pacification Program is properly coordinated with the programs for combat force employment and military operations. 70

Even the Mission had to support him, though instructions from him had to be issued through the Secretary of State. 71 Finally, the President made it

68. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
69. Ibid.
70. NSAM 343, op. cit.
71. In practice Komer used all agencies communication channels and often issued orders and instructions directly.
clear that Komer's power had substance by stating that "he will have direct access to me at all times." Komer stressed the importance of this open Presidential backing:

I would...add that the influence we had was, of course, largely a function of our direct relationship to the President, and my position on the President's personal household. Washington does move when the President, the White House, speaks. (If I had been in the State Department, I would have gotten)...nowhere...this is no criticism of State...one bureaucracy cannot manage several others...73

Operating under the White House umbrella, Komer became a powerful force in non-military Vietnam matters in Washington. With a small but highly-talented and unconventional staff, the "Blowtorch," as Lodge nicknamed him, began to prod, often abrasively and with unusual pressure, officials and agencies in Washington and Saigon. Porter in particular felt the heat. Komer made seven trips to Vietnam in the thirteen months he was in this position. While Komer succeeded and failed on a variety of specific operational issues (i.e., port congestion and increasing the number of Vietnamese pacification cadre teams), some of his major contributions were such as to bear fruit with the passage of time, their significance not being apparent at first -- laying the organizational groundwork for centralized U.S. advice on pacification and developing the conceptual basis for the program he was later to implement in Vietnam.

There is no question that Komer used his charter to the hilt, challenging even the military and urging giving priority to key pacification

72. NSAM 343, op. cit.
73. Personal interview with Ambassador Komer 6 November 1969.
programs at the expense of the military effort. Noting that U.S. civil/military relations were still inadequate, he told the President that:

Somehow the civil side appears reluctant to call on military resources, which are frequently the best and most readily available. I put everyone politely on notice that I would have no such hesitations—provided that the case was demonstrable—and that this was the express request of the Secretary of Defense.

Another contribution, and an important one, was to keep pacification squarely in the minds of senior officials, especially the President, and to provide a voice for pacification in the highest circles when decisions on the war were being made.

1966 also saw the publication of three major government studies, each of which explicitly or implicitly recognized defects of U.S. organization for pacification. The mere fact that they were made at all, and their subjects, testified to those defects. None were adopted by more than one agency, and in each case no follow-up machinery was created. The fate of these studies is one indication as to why a second reorganization would soon be underway.

The first was called PROVN or Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam. This study, developed by a select group of officers on the Army staff under the aegis of General Johnson, was the result of research done in 1965 and appeared in March 1966. It was an exhaustive, phased analysis of the whole problem of Vietnam and the American

74. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 65 which quotes from Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Komer Report on Saigon Trip, 19 April 1966, SECRET.
75. Ibid., p. 66.
response there. Among many items, it noted that no two U.S. Government agencies viewed the nation's Vietnam objectives in the same manner, and it stressed that pacification should be designated as the major U.S./GVN effort. PROVN made a series of detailed and explicit recommendations as to U.S. organization: 1) a Washington executive agent to coordinate Vietnam support activities in the United States; 2) that the U.S. Ambassador be the single manager in-country with two co-equal deputies -- one for U.S. military forces and the other for pacification; and 3) that there should be a single U.S. representative or chief at each level in the field below these deputies. PROVN never was adopted. It was an attempt at an ideal. Originally closely held within the Army it never received McNamara's support, and MACV which had numerous objections, ended by recommending that PROVN be reduced to a conceptual rather than action document. General Johnson however continued to stress its importance to those who would listen, especially Komer. In the course of time, many of its recommendations were adopted separately but not as part of the original whole.

The other two major studies were produced at the behest of Ambassador Porter. The first, called the "Mission Priorities Study," was set up in

76. Ibid., pp. 74-79.
77. Colonel Donald S. Marshall, a key PROVN author, attributes this to an inadequate briefing given the Secretary -- Personal Interview, 23 January 1975.
78. Message, MACV 18244 to CINCPAC, 271243Z May 1966, CONFIDENTIAL. This message and its authors who were junior staff officers actually were more favorable to PROVN than were General Westmoreland and his senior staff. The message was apparently intentionally phrased to be as favorable as possible without attracting Westmoreland's rejection. Regardless, no one in Washington or Saigon formally adopted PROVN. -- Personal interview with Charles M. Cooke, Jr., 13 August 1975 and Mr. Gerald Britten, 18 August 1975.
response to Komer's urgings in April that the Mission attempt to establish
a set of interagency priorities. While directed by a USAID official, this
study group was of interagency composition. Unfortunately, its list of pri-
orities was often vague, confusing, and included just about every aspect of
the U.S. effort in Vietnam. Its recommendations were used by AID for its
programs, but it had little impact anywhere else. The second was known as
"Roles and Missions" which was begun in July under an Army colonel working
for Porter. Again of interagency composition, this group attempted to
set out the roles and missions of each military and civilian force in
Vietnam. Yet when it was completed, each agency tended to object to the
parts which impinged on their institutional interests such as MACV's re-
}
seek to resolve the others. Porter allowed the study to wither with each agency adopting and pursuing only those parts of it that it wished to. 83

83. Colonel Robert M. Montague, Jr., Komer's assistant, says that Porter never even sent it to Lodge; knowing that Lodge would not push it, he saw no reason to send it up. — Personal Interview with the author, 6 November 1969.
Chapter IV

THE SECOND REORGANIZATION

Special Assistant Komer and his staff set in motion the events leading to the second reorganization when, in August 1966, they produced and circulated a most significant anticipatory pacification paper titled "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification."

It represents a codification of Mr. Komer's thoughts on pacification and its management after several months on the job. No other document so accurately reflected the future course of the U.S. pacification program both in its discussion of the program itself and its management. His discussions of the program are vital to comprehending his proposals for its management.

Mr. Komer began, as did virtually every high-level Washington official during these years, with a statement on the lagging status of pacification despite the fact that it was "an indispensable ingredient of any high-confidence strategy." He divided the problem into three main components: local security, breaking the Viet Cong hold over the people, and programs to win active popular support -- all of which reflected a stated emphasis on targeting the Viet Cong as the weaker and more vulnerable component of the enemy. Both the U.S. and Vietnamese Governments, in part due to a changed military situation brought on by main-force victories, were seen as

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1. Robert W. Komer, Draft 3 of "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification: Analysis, Concept, and Management," 7 August 1966 with attached Letter, Komer to John T. McNaughton, 10 August 1966. This paper was drafted first by LTC Robert M. Montague, Jr. and Mr. Richard Holbrooke with detailed guidance and extensive additions by Mr. Komer.
"psychologically ripe for greater emphasis on pacification." He stressed a personally recurrent theme, the need for pacification assets, and the possibility that proper management and orientation of these assets might improve the otherwise mediocre situation in the countryside.

To answer the question of how to step up pacification, Komer responded with a statement that can be taken as the cornerstone of the U.S. pacification program as it evolved under his aegis after 1966:

As pacification is a multi-faceted civil/military problem, it demands a multi-faceted civil/military response. No single program properly managed and supported would give us a breakthrough in this field. The path to both quick impact and accelerated progress is through better management, and coordination of the host of contributory programs -- most of them already in existence.2

His priorities reflected these views: more adequate continuous security for pacification areas to include improving local defense forces and diverting to pacification security regular Vietnamese Army troops not "gainfully employed" against enemy main forces; breaking the Viet Cong hold over the people; positive revolutionary development programs to win active popular support; the establishment of functional priorities for field pacification operations with work first in locales where the most progress was feasible; concentrating additional human and material resources on pacification; setting of more performance goals with adequate criteria to measure progress and a system to monitor it; expansion of security of key roads; systematizing the flow of refugees; and getting better control over the rice supply.

2. Ibid.
Implicit throughout this paper was a concept of mass, a concept that clearly bears Komer's imprint. The road to success or at least visible results was seen to be through a massive application and better management of GVN human and U.S. material resources. This, he believed, was the only solution when confronted with a large omnipresent war and a system, characterized by mediocrity, for fighting it. He also felt that pacification had to be pressed on a country-wide basis. Merely having corps priority areas or specialized local pacification cadre programs did not engage the Vietnamese pacification manpower and assets that existed in every province. He wanted pacification to have an impact throughout the country rather than in a few smaller areas.

Underlying this interest in mass was the realization by both the President and Komer that time was important. Quality was not shunned; they merely recognized it as impossible to achieve in an acceptable period of time. The war had been growing steadily, and while they knew that complete success in pacification probably was impossible, some turn-around had to appear. They had to make it clear that their side was winning.

Komer would continue to stress mass over the next two years. In February 1967 he stated it as clearly as ever:

While earlier pacification schemes were often well conceived, they lacked adequate resources for execution. This time the assets available are massive — much of the ARVN, over 300,000 RF/PF, over 400 RD Cadre teams, several thousand police, a growing intelligence effort, and increasing civil aid programs. By sheer weight alone, this mass application cannot help but produce significant results in 1967.3

3. Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Change for the Better -- Latest Impressions from Vietnam, 28 February 1967, SECRET.
Mass was not necessarily his preferred solution, but he realized that the Vietnamese and the Americans were fighting the war by this principle, and he accepted it because he could not change it. For all of these reasons pacification assets preoccupied Komer during his involvement in the program, and this struggle for them was a most important motivating force behind his desire to give pacification responsibility to the U.S. and Vietnamese military, since only they possessed and controlled the necessary resources.

The heart of the paper lay in its discussion of management which was seen not only as a key to success but also as a way to faster results. For the management of the U.S. side of pacification Komer proposed three alternatives. The first would have given Ambassador Porter full operational control over all U.S. pacification activities and merged field operations' staffs and advisors at all levels into coordinated teams under one chief with a direct chain of command from the Ambassador to the district.

The second alternative was, in essence, that adopted later in the year with the creation of the Office of Civil Operations under Ambassador Porter and the Revolutionary Development Support Directorate in MACV. This would have retained the present separate civil and military command channels but strengthened the management structure of MACV and the Mission by having a senior deputy for pacification in MACV and a unified field operations' staff under Porter controlling the pacification personnel of all U.S. civilian agencies at all levels.

The final alternative was to assign civil and military pacification responsibility to General Westmoreland. Discussion of the three alternatives
was biased deliberately in favor of this solution. The MACV staff would have been restructured to form an integrated civil/military staff under a civilian deputy to the commander with a single-manager pacification advisory team at each lower echelon. Komer recommended the Deputy Ambassador for this position.

"Giving a New Thrust to Pacification" had little immediate impact. Komer passed it to McNamara and his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, John McNaughton. He sent the paper also to the President, but there is no evidence of any reaction. Ambassador Leonhart carried it out to Saigon but received a uniformly negative reaction from Ambassadors Lodge and Porter. General Westmoreland, occupied with the main-force war, was unenthusiastic about any change, though he told Leonhart in effect: "I'm not asking for it, but if I'm told to manage pacification, I'll do it." Two and a half weeks later, perhaps with the knowledge of the proposals and counterproposals then floating in Washington (see below), Westmoreland saw his assumption of responsibility in a positive light:

I'm not asking for the responsibility, but I believe that my headquarters could take it in stride and perhaps carry out this important function more economically and efficiently than the present complex arrangement.

4. Personal Interview with Colonel Robert M. Montague, Jr., 6 November 1969.
5. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
6. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 72 and Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
7. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
8. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 6 October 1966, TOP SECRET.
However, Westmoreland's planning staff (J-5) studied Komer's paper and, with almost bureaucratic inevitability, came to the opposite conclusions that there were no new approaches to pacification in the paper that had not already been recognized by the U.S. Mission, that none of the three alternative organizational concepts would achieve the desired results, and that the present U.S. organizational structure was adequate. But when this planning staff was tasked with preparing an organization plan for the possible assumption of overall pacification responsibility by General Westmoreland, it came up with a two-stage variant on Mr. Komer's third alternative. The first stage would have seen a civilian chain of command to the districts. The second stage, to be implemented if the first was unsuccessful, would be to unify the entire field pacification effort under military officers at each level, but leave the MACV headquarters staff still split into civil and military pacification officers -- a concept that Westmoreland basically agreed to, though he did visualize a slightly tighter MACV staff relationship between the civilian and military components.

The above was strictly a planning exercise. There was no "conspiracy" by MACV to take over pacification. The weakness of the planning staff's alternatives indicate that even MACV at this point was merely reacting to Washington moves. General Westmoreland himself believed that military management was inevitable and that the logic of such a solution would eventually

9. Briefing, MACV J-5 for COMUSMACV and Chief of Staff, 19 September 1966, SECRET (Grp. 4).
10. Memorandum for Record, CDR D. O. Maxwell (MACJ53), 29 September 1966, SECRET (Grp. 4) contains some short comments made by General Westmoreland at the planning staff briefing on the study.
sell itself on its own merits. He wisely realized that the slightest hint of advocacy in this direction on his part would provoke the strongest adverse reactions from the civilian agencies both in Saigon and Washington.\footnote{11} It is a telling point against the Mission's civilian elements that they made no counterplans and initiatives, letting the Washington proposal drop with a flat "no" as if nothing more would come of it.

Events in Washington were one step ahead of even General Westmoreland's contingency planning. In early September, after Leonhart's return to Washington, Komer began an active campaign to have pacification responsibility given to the military:

Since military resources were 90 percent and the civilian were 10 percent, it was obvious that it ought to be put under the military. Moreover, Westy had the clout with RVNAF and the GVN. Next, the men in Washington who were really pushing hardest on Vietnam were Robert McNamara and his people, like McNaughton. If you wanted pacification to work, you wanted strong auspices behind it, and in my view DOD was far stronger behind pacification than State — not that State didn't understand it but the State people just weren't doing anything. In terms of getting programs going DOD was infinitely more dynamic and influential.\footnote{12}

Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton and Komer worked out the tactic of having McNamara make the official proposal for military assumption of pacification responsibility, the form of which was worked out by McNaughton's office.\footnote{13} The details were not exactly what Mr. Komer's

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{11} Personal Interview with General Westmoreland, 8 April 1975.
  \item \footnote{13} Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
\end{itemize}
office wanted, but this was not a disadvantage as the Secretary's proposal then took the first blast of fire from the civilian agencies.\textsuperscript{14}

The "McNamara" proposal was an incomplete one -- a strong concept yet unfinished in its details, perhaps deliberately so. All pacification activities and personnel were to be placed under a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in charge of pacification staffs in Saigon and the field.\textsuperscript{15} (See Chart IV-1) Left unanswered were whether the Deputy would be a civilian or a military officer and which activities came under pacification. This may have been deliberate so as to have an intended fallback "carrot" of a civilian manager.

Secretary McNamara never formally sent his memorandum to the President, though its ideas were discussed with him, and he indicated agreement.\textsuperscript{16} It then was staffed out to the State Department, AID, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA, USIA and Komer with predictable reactions. Only Komer and the Joint Chiefs concurred.

The State Department disagreed and cited the political nature of pacification, the military's failure in Hop Tac, the public and internal need to emphasize civilianization, and the desirability of soliciting the Mission's views from Saigon. In a revealing comment on the whole Porter effort, Leonard Unger stated that the "problem (of management)...would be better solved by putting Ambassador Porter in a position to carry out his full

\textsuperscript{14} Personal Interview with Col. Robert M. Montague, Jr., 6 November 1969.
\textsuperscript{15} Draft Memorandum, McNamara to President, 22 September 1966, SECRET.
\textsuperscript{16} Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
Chart IV-1. McNAMARA PROPOSAL FOR UNIFIED PACIFICATION ORGANIZATION, 22 SEPTEMBER 1966

- Ambassador
- Deputy Ambassador
- Chief of Station CIA
- Director JUSPAO
- Director AID
- COMUSMACV
- Other Staff and Command Responsibilities
- Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification

Pacification Staff
- Operations
- Plans
- Programs
- Support Coordination
- Reports

- Security
- Development
- Information
- Intelligence and Cadre

Pacification Command (4 Corps Pacification Directors)
- Security
- Cadre
- Development
- Information
- Intelligence

43 Province Pacification Directors
- Security
- Cadre
- Development
- Information
- Intelligence

243 District Pacification Directors
- Security
- Cadre
- Development
- Information
- Intelligence
responsibilities as originally envisaged."  

Rutherford Poats, AID's Assistant Administrator for the Far East, proposed a strengthening of Porter's position.  

His comment that "Porter should be given the job originally conceived for him" is another indication that reality had not lived up to expectations. Poats envisaged a pacification command structure with Porter directing separate agency staffs in Saigon and U.S. councils chaired, in the main, by military officers at the regional and province levels. The result would have been a Deputy Ambassador with a small staff, four powerful deputies, and a hierarchy of mini-Mission Councils at lower administrative levels -- a solution that put a high premium on coordination and did not provide truly integrated management.

Both the CIA and USIA opposed McNamara's proposed reorganization.  

to one CIA official this change raised the basic pacification questions of security versus popular involvement, of a military war versus a popular struggle -- should pacification aim at inspiring the local populace rather than relying on an imposed pacification by military power with civilian support. Another CIA official turned the full force of his arguments on

17. Memorandum, William Bundy to Under Secretary of State, Subj.: Responsibility for Pacification/Revolutionary Development Program in Vietnam (McNamara Draft Proposal), 27 September 1966, SECRET, (My emphasis). This memorandum was drafted by Unger, but there is no evidence that it was actually signed or sent forward by Bundy. The same views were cited by Alexis Johnson in discussions with Komer -- See USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 92-93. See also Memorandum, Alexis Johnson to Rusk, Subj.: Secretary McNamara's Proposal for Placing Pacification Program in South Vietnam under COMUSMACV: Action Memorandum, 1 October 1966, SECRET.

18. Memorandum, R. M. Poats, Subj.: Notes on McNamara's Draft Proposal, 26 September 1966, SECRET.

19. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 93.

20. CIA Memorandum, no title, no date (certainly late September or first week in October) in Center of Military History files.
Komer's concurrence (see below) rather than McNamara's original plan. The proffered organizational solution of a joint pacification staff under the Ambassador was, however, scarcely more feasible in view of the U.S. Mission's leadership and agency strengths and relationships. He stressed unified direction rather than unified management, a direction which would be obtained by giving control to a central authority above the level of the component agencies. He envisaged a sufficiently large joint staff to enable the U.S. Mission chief to supervise and direct the subordinate contributing agencies.

Komer made the advocate's formal reply to McNamara on September 29th. Stressing once again the primacy of local security and the need for resources, he said that the military were at that point much better set up to manage the large effort required. Coordination was no longer enough. While Komer did not indicate whether the Deputy in MACV should be civilian or military, he did feel that the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador must retain their primacy in overall pacification supervision. The new MACV Deputy, he observed, should control only field activities and Saigon field operations' staffs that would contribute directly to winning the village war, excluding overall economic policy, anti-inflationary programs, CIA efforts other than police and pacification cadre, and certain national USAID programs such as

21. CIA Memorandum, author unknown (deliberately blocked out), Subj.: Comments on Mr. Komer's Views on Pacification Management, 3 October 1966, SECRET. Textual analysis makes it certain that this was a CIA paper. The most barbed comments were reserved for the military, particularly MACV, whose previous attempts to train and motivate the RF/PF and ARVN and their leadership were addressed with undisguised scorn.

22. Memorandum, Komer to McNamara, 29 September 1966, SECRET.
medicine and education. Logistic support for pacification ought to remain with the parent agencies along with personnel, pay, administrative, and logistic support responsibilities. Komer concluded with the basic rationale for his recommendations:

To be perfectly candid, I regard your proposal as basically a means of bringing the military fully into the pacification process rather than of putting civilians under the military.23

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to the plan with marked enthusiasm though they made minor changes in the text of the proposed memorandum, one of which was intended to make absolutely certain that there would be no interference in the employment of regular U.S. combat units.24 They recognized that the new organization would mean increased support to pacification by U.S. combat and support forces.

Ambassador Porter meanwhile had arrived in the United States from Vietnam, and he expressed strong opposition to McNamara's proposal. He suggested caution, warning of a possible "serious reaction" from Ambassador Lodge if a quick decision was made in Washington on this issue.25 Porter soon cabled Lodge, warning him of the proposal and recommending that a

23. Ibid. Closely tied to this basic rationale was the realization that since governmental power in Vietnam resided in the military which was more attuned and responsive to advice from their American institutional counterparts, U.S. advice on pacification was apt to be more successful if presented from the U.S. military headquarters -- Memorandum, Ambassador Komer to the author, 15 August 1975.


25. Memorandum, Unger to Rusk, Subj.: Ambassador Porter's Views on Secretary McNamara's Proposal to Place the Vietnam Pacification/RD Program Under COMUSMACV, 2 October 1966, SECRET.
Mission study group evaluate reorganization schemes before any final decision.  

Shortly thereafter both AID and State Department officials wrote draft memoranda on this subject, neither of which were adopted or sent forward but which do represent a consolidation of their thinking. AID Administrator William Gaud proposed having a second Deputy Ambassador whose only function would be direction of the U.S. pacification program. He would have an interagency staff and would chair a Mission Revolutionary Development Council made up of agency deputy directors who would serve under Porter in their pacification capacities. Similar structures would be set up at subordinate advisory levels.

The State Department's solution was much the same -- a strengthened Deputy Ambassador directing pacification at all levels but leaving the execution to the U.S. agencies. MACV's corps, province, and district advisors would be commanded by the Deputy Ambassador's military director who also would coordinate with a Deputy COMUSMACV for pacification.

In the face of civilian opposition the President decided to defer a decision until the right psychological moment. Instead, he would allow the

26. Message, State 61251 to Saigon, 061933Z October 1966, SECRET (Grp. 3). Lodge's reply leaves the reader with the impression that this was the first detailed information he had on the proposal -- See Message, Saigon 7935 to State, 070424Z October 1966, SECRET.
27. Draft Memorandum, Gaud to McNamara, Subj.: Unified U.S. Pacification/Revolutionary Development Organization, 5 October 1966, SECRET.
civilians a short time to put their own house in order, a period of grace which he would use as a method to defuse the opposition. But, the mental commitment to unified management of pacification under the military by the President, McNamara, and Komer existed from September on.30

The Embassy's civilians continued to misread the way the wind was blowing in Washington. On October 8th, Porter told Lodge that the pressure for a swift decision on reorganization had now given way to "careful consideration." He also said that he felt that perhaps attention had been diverted somewhat in the direction of Vietnamese Army capabilities and performance especially for pacification.

Little did Porter know how wrong he was to be. On October 10th, Secretary McNamara, Under Secretary of State Katzenbach, General Wheeler, and Mr. Komer arrived in Saigon for a short visit, a prelude to the forthcoming Manila Conference. Because Porter was still in the United States on personal business, the Mission's pacification briefing for these visitors was left to his deputy, Ambassador Henry Koren, who had arrived only recently. Poorly prepared and weakly presented, his briefing did little to enhance the appearance of civilian pacification leadership.32 Komer called the experience a "fiasco" and feels it confirmed for certain McNamara's appreciation that pacification should be placed under the military. 33

29. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
30. Ibid.
31. Message, State 62666 to Saigon, 081901Z October 1966, SECRET.
33. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
The unfortunate Koren, soon to be sent to I Corps, assessed the meeting somewhat differently but had no doubts as to where McNamara's sentiments on organization and pacification now lay. He reported that the Secretary "expressed himself as utterly dissatisfied with progress on pacification" and that he felt the U.S. pacification organization was "incompetent" to deal with the problem. Interestingly enough, Koren also noted that McNamara said that he felt more to blame for the failure than anyone else. Lodge did privately make the point to McNamara that the main reason for the lack of pacification progress was that the necessary security was not being provided by the military. Lodge at this point thought the McNamara proposal was dead, but Koren was less optimistic, sensing that they had not heard the last of it.

General Westmoreland, summarizing his talks with McNamara during this visit, indicated the drift of events, yet he revealed also, once more, the caution and carefulness with which he approached the possibility of his assuming responsibility for pacification:

McNamara feels it is inevitable that I be given executive responsibility for American support of the Revolutionary Development program. He is convinced that the State Department officials do not have the executive and managerial abilities to handle a program of such magnitude and complexity. I told McNamara I was not volunteering for the job but I would undertake it if the President wished me to do so, and I felt we could make progress. He stated that he thought there would be an interim solution -- that they were giving the civilian agencies another try. He stated that if this does not work after approximately three

34. Letter, Koren to Unger, 15 October 1966, CONFIDENTIAL.
Upon their return to Washington, McNamara and Katzenbach presented their findings to the President separately. Katzenbach, while admitting the failure of the political and social aspects of the pacification program, hit squarely and with justification at the lack of sustained security as the major stumbling block and singled out both the U.S. and Vietnamese military for criticism. He proposed however only a strengthening of the existing separate military and civilian pacification support channels with overall command to remain under Porter. A second deputy would be assigned to Lodge in order to relieve Porter of the added burdens of non-pacification duties. Porter would have operational control of civilians working on pacification though administrative control would rest with their parent agencies. Katzenbach did however recommend that a high-ranking general be assigned as Porter's principal deputy, one who could assist in administration and coordination and who also would provide increased military stature for pacification. It is indicative of the drift of events that he added the proviso that should his civilian solution fail, this same general would be an ideal choice to take command of a single, unified structure under General Westmoreland.

McNamara, undergoing a difficult personal reappraisal of the war, was highly pessimistic:

35. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 17 October 1966, TOP SECRET.
37. See below, pp. 189-190.
I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon...we find ourselves -- from the point of view of the important war (for the complicity of the people) -- no better, and if anything worse off. This important war must be fought and won by the Vietnamese themselves. We have known this from the beginning. But the discouraging truth is that, as was the case in 1961 and 1963 and 1965, we have not found the formula, the catalyst for training and inspiring them into effective action.38

The solution, as he saw it, lay in:

girding, openly, for a longer war and in taking actions immediately which will in 12 to 18 months give clear evidence that the continuing costs and risks to the American people are acceptably limited, that the formula for success has been found, and that the end of the war is merely a matter of time.39

The Secretary made five recommendations concerning this strategy but that which he saw as the most important, and the most difficult to implement, was a successful pacification program. Komer recalled that the Secretary was particularly unhappy with the failure of Lodge, Porter, and Westmoreland to do anything in pacification despite heavy emphasis from Washington.40 If McNamara did not mention personalities by name, his general dismay and unhappiness were clearly apparent:

Pacification is a bad disappointment... (and)... has if anything gone backward... full security exists nowhere.41

He attacked directly or by implication the lack of sustained local security,

38. Memorandum, McNamara to President, Subj.: Actions Recommended for Vietnam, 14 October 1966 as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.6.(a.), p. 82. The phrase in parentheses is in the original.
39. Ibid., p. 88.
40. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 28 June 1971.
41. Memorandum, McNamara to President, 14 October 1966, op. cit.
the lack of attention shown it by the U.S. and Vietnamese military commands, the apathy and corruption of Vietnamese officials, the weakness of the Vietnamese Army in dedication, direction, and discipline, and "bad management" on both the U.S. and Vietnamese sides.

Secretary McNamara went on to advocate, but with only lukewarm enthusiasm, that the military and civilian pacification structures be left separate and that each side should be strengthened, with all civilian pacification activities placed under Ambassador Porter. But he warned:

...we cannot tolerate continued failure. If it fails after a fair trial, the only alternative in my view is to place the entire pacification program -- civilian and military -- under General Westmoreland. 42

Presented with these reports, the President acted. On October 15th he called together Vice President Humphrey, Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance, and General Wheeler. The President made clear his dissatisfaction with the present direction and execution of the pacification program. 43 He told the group that he was, however, unwilling at that point, to override the strong civilian objections, particularly from Dean Rusk and Henry Cabot Lodge, to a transfer to military control. In order to set the stage for future changes, he was emphatic in his desire for rapid action, indicating a period of ninety days in which the civilians had to produce acceptable results 44 and implying that responsibility might be

42. Ibid.
43. Message, JCS 6339-66, 172139Z October 1966, Wheeler to Admiral Sharp and Westmoreland, TOP SECRET.
44. Ibid. Wheeler says that Johnson directed Vance to draft for him a memorandum to establish this deadline. The author has never seen or heard elsewhere of such a memorandum, but the sentiments behind such a memorandum were disseminated if not an actual written document. The warning later was definitely put in writing in State 78865 (See below).
transferred if the status of pacification were to remain unsatisfactory.

This small meeting was followed immediately by a National Security Council
meeting at which the necessity for "speedy strengthening of the civilian
side of the program was made amply clear to all concerned." The President
gave the civilians one final opportunity to create their own organization
for pacification, though he never expected it to work.

Thus was born what became the Office of Civil Operations. That it
existed at all was due to strong civilian opposition to placing pacification
responsibility under the military. In a sense what was set up was merely a
logical halfway step between multiple and single managerial responsibility.

While on the surface this interim solution seems to be a common bureaucratic
compromise, in actuality the President regarded it only as a temporary move
to deflate civilian objections to a plan which he was already mentally com-
mitted. As Komer saw it in retrospect:

I said they can't do it in six months, but the
President said: "That doesn't bother me." He
deliberately gave them a very short deadline...
McNamara told him it wouldn't work. I told him...
it wouldn't work. So he stacked the deck.

45. Ibid. Wheeler's comment in this quotation may appear misleading as
the President really meant the entire program, military as well as
civilian. Wheeler also noted that this pressure would increase with
every day and was doubtful that a civilian organization could succeed
or even be put together at all. With this in mind, he recommended to
Westmoreland that there should be a high-ranking MACV staff member
concerned solely with pacification. MG Frederick Weyand and LTG Bruce
Palmer were put forth as possible candidates. He wanted MACV to have
both a man and a functional organization ready that could start with
as little delay as possible.

46. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
Shortly after the National Security Council meeting, President Johnson began his Asian tour, to be capped by a seven-nation conference at Manila where he met with Lodge and Westmoreland. Komer returned to Saigon for a week and warned Porter that there would definitely be a reorganization. He even left two key members of his staff to help Porter plan for it.49

With the President's approval, on November 4th, Rusk, McNamara and Komer instructed Lodge to reorganize the Mission for pacification, and they even told him how.50 They made it clear that this was the final chance for civilian management, going so far as to say that the proposed solution was a "trial organization." Porter, relieved of all other duties, was to command a unified civilian pacification structure which would be strengthened by the assignment of a two- or three-star military officer to assist in administration and liaison with MACV. Lodge was to have a second Deputy Ambassador. They concluded with one more warning:

We are most anxious, as we know you are, to make progress in RD. So this new organizational arrangement would be on trial for 90-120 days, at the end of which we would take stock of progress and reconsider whether to assign all responsibility for RD to COMUSMACV.51

49. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 108. The staff members were LTC Robert M. Montague, Jr. and Mr. Richard Holbrooke.
50. Message, State 78865 to Saigon, 4 November 1966, probably SECRET. The author was unable to obtain a text of this cable. However, the Pentagon Papers volume on pacification (USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 106-108) has a complete text of the advance version sent to the President in Wellington, New Zealand (Message, State 68390 to Wellington, 20 October 1966) which Holbrooke states was unchanged in the final instructions. The President probably decided to wait until after he had consulted with Lodge and Westmoreland at Manila before sending the final instructions.
51. Ibid.
Lodge replied two days later and agreed that some reorganization was necessary, but he blamed poor military security for the lack of substantial progress in pacification.52 He agreed to consolidate the civilian lines of command within the Mission under Porter, but he left no doubt that he was against having a second Deputy Ambassador. This was a position that Lodge steadfastly adhered to. Against the judgments of almost every other observer of this period, Lodge said: "Ambassador Porter does not now absorb substantial other responsibilities which distract his attention from revolutionary development."53

Again, McNamara, Rusk, and Komer urged Lodge to get moving on the reorganization, and finally on November 15th, Secretary Rusk tersely told Lodge that the President "wished to emphasize that this represents final and considered decisions and...expressed hope that the indicated measures could be put into effect just as rapidly as possible."54

This finally brought a response from Lodge, and two days later he and Porter told Washington what the new organization actually would look like.55 He made some changes in the original Washington concept. Acceding to General Westmoreland's wishes, he decided that there would be no MACV Deputy for Revolutionary Development; instead, Westmoreland would have a Special Assistant for Pacification. Porter, now with even greater pacification responsibilities, was not going to be relieved by another Deputy Ambassador. Lodge

52. Message, Saigon 10204 to President, 6 November 1966 as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 108-111.
53. Ibid.
54. Message, State 85196 to Saigon, 15 November 1966 as quoted in USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 112.
believed that other Mission offices could take over much of the business of running the Mission from Porter. He did not want Porter's position vis-à-vis the American community and the Vietnamese to be downgraded. Lodge and Porter proposed establishing a civilian Office of Operations, under a director (not to be Porter), which would consist of the personnel and activities of USAID's Field Operations, Public Safety (Police), and Refugee offices, JUSPAO's Field Services (less North Vietnam), and CIA's Cadre Operations Division.56 Civilians at the corps and province levels also would have a single director, thus reducing to two the channels of U.S. advice bearing on Vietnamese corps commanders and province chiefs.

In the meantime, and with sharply contrasting speed, General Westmoreland strengthened his headquarter's organization for pacification support. On November 7th he created the Revolutionary Development Support Directorate (RDSD) and named his former Secretary of the Joint Staff, Brigadier General William A. Knowlton, as director.57 General Knowlton recalled that Westmoreland thought of his appointment and the Directorate as conditional solutions.58 The Directorate would be an organizational stepping-stone to prepare for complete assumption of responsibility by the military, and that if this happened, Major General Frederick Weyand, invariably a clear favorite

57. Message, MACJOO 49907, 180045Z November 1966, CONFIDENTIAL (Grp. 4). Though this Directorate was part of the MACV operations staff (J-3), Knowlton was given direct access to Westmoreland on policy matters.
of both civilians and military for proposed military pacification positions, would replace General Knowlton.

Following consultations with Lodge and Porter, Westmoreland nominated Major General Paul Smith to serve as principal deputy and executive officer to Ambassador Porter. Smith replaced Brigadier General Willis Crittendenberger, who had been appointed to Porter's staff to serve as a deputy and a military liaison channel with MACV in August. Crittendenberger's appointment, reluctantly agreed to by Westmoreland and Porter at Komer's insistence, had not been a success. Porter gave him little to do and this, combined with passivity on Crittendenberger's part, produced few tangible results. The idea of upgrading military representation with Ambassador Porter's office was consistently a civilian one, Komer having broached it in September and Katzenbach strongly recommending it to the President in October. Lodge received formal instructions to this effect on November 4th, but this was followed by a disagreement between Porter and Westmoreland over the terms of reference for General Smith's job. Washington, particularly Komer's office, was unwilling to support Porter's desire for his deputy to have direct and effective access to the Vietnamese military and a supervisory role as regards civil/military planning. Komer's unwillingness to back Porter on this issue is an indication of how transitory he thought the halfway

59. Message, MAC 7242, 201240Z December 1966, CONFIDENTIAL.
60. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969 and Personal Interview with General William Knowlton, 26 January 1970.
61. Message, 282146Z September 1966, Admiral Sharp to Westmoreland, SECRET (Grp. 4) and Memorandum, Katzenbach to President, 15 October 1966, op. cit.
solution of OCO would be. The question dragged on into January, but Porter gave up and accepted a diminished role for his deputy. The issue disappeared as General Smith was in the job but a short time, and the position was not filled upon his departure.

Ambassador Lodge announced the reorganization to the Mission Council on November 21st and thus brought to a close over three months of complicated government decision-making on how the U.S. Mission should be organized for pacification support. In retrospect the decision appears, if not inevitable, at least to have a directing force behind it. This is even more true of the overall trend towards complete responsibility being given to the military. To produce the requisite results to stave off the November and March/May reorganizations would have stretched the capabilities of even the most ideal organization and dynamic personnel. The Saigon Mission, particularly its civilian element, never had a chance. The problems were too difficult and the directing officials unequal to the task.

Once the idea of military single management of pacification was raised by Mr. Komer with Secretary McNamara and President Johnson, they never discarded it. The halfway solution of the Office of Civil Operations, never expected to work, was seen not as a promising alternative but as a tool to wring acceptance from protesting bureaucracies and ambassadors and to smooth the way to eventual single management. The slowness with which the new

63. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 3 November 1971.
Office of Civil Operations was formed and the foot-dragging by Ambassador Lodge were but the final nails in the lid of the coffin of independent civilian direction of pacification.
Chapter V

THE THIRD REORGANIZATION:

THE OFFICE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS AND THE FORMATION OF CORDS

The Office of Civil Operations, the second attempt in 1966 by the President to solve the question of pacification organization, must be judged at least a partial success. It had no discernable impact on the actual course of the war against the Viet Cong during its short lifetime; its accomplishments were organizational and American, not revolutionary and Vietnamese. Nevertheless, it was an important halfway step, organizationally important to the formation of CORDS.

The structure and detailed concepts of operation of the Office of Civil Operations or OCO were developed largely by members of Mr. Komer's White House staff on temporary duty in Saigon with Ambassador Porter. However, contrary to Washington's intent that Porter directly run the new organization, OCO was made a subsidiary corporation under the Deputy Ambassador with a director reporting to him.

Since the February 1966 reorganization there had been recurring criticism that Porter had been unable to do his job effectively due to his involvement as Deputy Chief of Mission in managing the Embassy -- a condition

aggravated by Ambassador Lodge's open unwillingness to run the Embassy and the Mission except in broad policy spheres. When the time came to reorganize in October and November, President Johnson and his closest advisors were virtually unanimous\(^2\) that Lodge should have a second Deputy Ambassador for Embassy administration and functions who would enable Porter to devote his full time and energies to pacification and the new civilian organization which, they felt, ought to be headed by Porter.\(^3\) Lodge, reluctant to organize at all, refused to have a second deputy: "I do not want another Deputy Ambassador...There simply is no job for another Deputy Ambassador..."

Shortly thereafter, Lodge departed for nearly a month's vacation leaving Porter, who initially also was against having a second Deputy Ambassador, steadily mired in non-pacification activities -- an inexcusable lapse in view of Washington pressures for concrete action and the herculean job of setting up a large new organization. The President probably tolerated this resistance from Saigon for two reasons: he had already made up his mind about the eventual organization and also had decided on a change in Ambassadors.

Porter's office in OCO was seldom occupied. Matters were not helped by the new OCO Director's departure for a month's home leave in late December. In February Komer told the President of this unfortunate situation and stressed the need for a "full-time DCM as third in command," and he

\[^2\text{Rusk, McNamara, Komer, Under Secretary of State Katzenbach among others.}\]
\[^3\text{USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 107.}\]
\[^4\text{Ibid., p. 115.}\]
noted that Porter had come around to this view also. At this point the question was academic in view of the changes already in motion except that possibly the need for three strong and highly-ranked civilians was impressed on Lyndon Johnson's mind as he pondered the precise form the new organization was to take.

OCO's chief was given directing authority over all civilian Saigon staffs concerned with pacification and all U.S. civilian efforts in the field except those pertaining to clandestine CIA operations. Furthermore, he was to coordinate non-pacification civilian programs among the U.S. agencies in Saigon. While the Director was able to attend Mission Council meetings, he was not made a full member. This appears to have been an unfortunate stipulation in view of OCO's task of pulling together the independent efforts of several powerful agencies.

The Saigon staff of OCO was an obvious precursor of the future CORDS staff organization within MACV. (See Chart V-1.) There were six "functional" divisions -- Refugees, Psychological Operations, New Life Development, Revolutionary Development Cadre, Chieu Hoi, and Public Safety -- brought en bloc from their parent civilian agencies. Above them were the Executive Secretariat, the Management Division, and the Plans and

5. Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Change for the Better -- Latest Impressions from Vietnam, 28 February 1967, SECRET.
7. Its functions were internal management of the organization itself. A more accurate title "Management Support" was given its successor in CORDS.

Ambassador
  +-----------------+-----------------
  | Deputy Ambassador| Executive Secretariat|
  +-----------------+-----------------
        | Deputy Director |
        +-----------------+-----------------|
        | Management Division | Plans and Evaluation Division |
        +-----------------+-----------------|
          | Refugee Division | Psychological Operations Division |
          +-----------------+-----------------|
            | Director Region I | Director Region II |
            +-----------------+-----------------|
              | Province Representative | Province Representative |
              +-----------------+-----------------|
                | Revolutionary Development Division |
                +-----------------+-----------------|
                  | Director Region III |
                  +-----------------+-----------------|
                    | Province Representative |
                    +-----------------+-----------------|
                      | Chieu Hoi Division |
                      +-----------------+-----------------|
                        | Director Region IV |
                        +-----------------+-----------------|
                          | Province Rep. |
                          +-----------------+-----------------|


Evaluation Division. This latter division was by far the most important OCO staff section and had as its primary responsibility the development of the pacification policy, concepts, strategy, plans, and programs, along with evaluating and reporting on all pacification activities.

At subordinate levels -- region (corps), province, and even eventually some districts, civilian operations were placed under one man who was responsible in the end to the Director of OCO. The staffs in the four regions were similar to that in Saigon except for the addition of a Military Program and Liaison Division. Because at this point the Vietnamese Army division was still in their pacification chain of command, OCO assigned a Division Tactical Area Coordinator to each Vietnamese division. The province representative had as a rule at least six functional subordinates that paralleled the larger staffs covering the same program areas at region and Saigon.

Ambassador Porter chose L. Wade Lathram, the USAID Deputy Mission Director in Saigon, to be the Director of OCO, a choice narrowed considerably by the need to find a senior civilian already serving in Vietnam in order to make the transition as swift as possible. Whether Lathram was the right man for the task has been debated. General William Knowlton, later to be his deputy on the CORDS staff, felt that he was "an ideal choice" for this job based on prior military staff experience and work with AID's personnel office. Holbrooke judged Lathram to be "the wrong man at the wrong time, a methodical and slow worker with strong respect for the very inter-agency system that he was supposed to supercede." Lathram was competent,

9. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 122.
and probably did better than most others of similar rank and experience could have done. The situation, however, called for unusual and dynamic action.

The organization of OCO itself, no mean effort, was substantially a success. By combining the existing organizations OCO far outstripped any of its civilian antecedents in Vietnam in terms of size. Nearly one thousand civilians were employed, and OCO oversaw program funds totalling almost $128 million and 4 billion Vietnamese piastres.

Personnel choice and acquisition occupied much of OCO's time. They were necessary tasks and ones that were to help smooth CORDS formation, though the difficulties and contributions involved were not fully recognized by an impatient Washington. By early December, Porter and Lathram had decided on three of the four Corps (Region) Directors: Ambassador Koren (State) for I Corps, John Vann (AID) for III Corps, and Vince Heymann (CIA) for IV Corps. Vann, at this point employed by USAID and one of the most controversial Americans in Vietnam, was a bold choice in view of his past disagreements with the U.S. Army and the CIA. The II Corps position, originally offered to General Lansdale but rejected by him, was later filled by Mr. Robert Matteson (AID) in February 1967. The choice of civilian representatives in the provinces took much longer despite the fact that all of those chosen came from the provinces where they were already serving. Not until mid-January 1967, near the end of the original 90-day trial period,

10. Airgram, Saigon A-543 to State, Subj.: OCO Progress Report, 22 March 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
11. Letter, Porter to William Bundy, 3 January 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
were the representatives designated for each province.\footnote{12}

OCO, like many other offices in Vietnam, never had its full complement of personnel. By late February there were 485 vacancies out of 1468 positions.\footnote{13} The problem was not merely restricted to routine jobs. In March the Embassy requested Washington's "urgent attention" to critical current and impending vacancies in important managerial positions.\footnote{14} The difficulty of civilian recruitment for Vietnam was a continuing problem, neither new to OCO nor ending with its demise. Replacement of qualified field personnel meant substantial lead times for recruiting and training.\footnote{15} In the case of their U.S. military counterparts in pacification, the problem involved more a decision on resource allocation than a shortage of personnel.

In terms of personnel and funding OCO was predominantly an AID organization. USAID in FY 1967 was to provide 54\% of the U.S. dollar support, 78\% of the personnel, and 82\% of the commodities.\footnote{16} In addition, AID in Washington provided and financed the administrative support for OCO.\footnote{17} The Central Intelligence Agency was the second largest contributor, providing

13. Chart, developed by AID/Washington, Subj.: OCO Personnel as of 23 February 1967, CONFIDENTIAL. By mid-May this percentage had actually increased -- Message, State 196733 to Saigon.
15. State 196733, op. cit., noted that requirements for most new positions were not identified to Washington until the personnel were already required in Vietnam.
16. Saigon A-543, op. cit. CONFIDENTIAL.
17. Memorandum, William Hall for Komer, Subj.: OCO Financing and Support, 6 February 1967, and Memorandum, Komer to Hall, Subj.: OCO Financing and Support, 6 February 1967.}
44% of the U.S. dollar assistance though far lesser percentages of U.S. personnel, commodities, and Vietnamese piastre support. 18

OCO's relationship with other U.S. Government agencies was a mixed success. At least senior civilians in Saigon working on pacification were located together and seeing each other on a daily basis which was a boon to coordination and cooperation. Yet while OCO directed personnel and, most importantly, wrote their efficiency reports (but with comments by the parent agency), these same people were supported, paid, and housed by their parent agencies. The separate agencies retained funding and accountability for pacification programs despite their direction by OCO. While this undoubtedly made the transition to OCO simpler, separate funding did impede the flexibility of OCO in re-programming funds and resources to deal with unexpected, critical problems. The Director could not, for example, transfer funds from the RD Cadre Program to psychological warfare. 19

Interagency relationships, though an improvement in every instance over what had occurred previously, were often strained. Holbrooke asserts that OCO was "sniped and attacked almost from the outset by the bureaucracies" and cited the Saigon Directors of JUSPAO and CIA as being particularly possessive of personnel and programs with the result that their field representatives at times ignored the guidance of their nominal OCO directors. 20 The terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between OCO and the CIA showed just how carefully the latter guarded its personnel and assets by giving the

18. Saigon A-543, op. cit. CONFIDENTIAL.
19. Ibid. CONFIDENTIAL.
20. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 125.
RD Cadre Division Chief, a CIA official, and the CIA Station Chief wide
authority and veto power over the planning, programming, funding, and em-
ployment of the RD Cadre Program. 21

OCO was a strong step forward as regards the civilians' relationships
with MACV and the GVN. The civilians now spoke as one, though not always
as indicated above, which strengthened their position at all administrative
levels with their American military and GVN counterparts. Now Vietnamese
officials received basically just two channels of advice. Coordination with
MACV, especially in pacification planning, was made easier. Furthermore,
key civilians received managerial experience and stature that stood them in
good stead when OCO and MACV's Revolutionary Development Support Directorate
(RDSD) merged.

It is a comment on OCO's accomplishments that its leaders saw them in
terms of American criteria, organization, and coordination. 22 They praised
reporting systems and evaluating staffs, not what these were designed to
report on. Personnel selection, office consolidation, U.S. cooperation, and
advisor training programs were highlighted. GVN follow-up to pacified areas
and RD hamlet security, two of the most important building blocks of effec-
tive pacification, were emphasized as continuing problem areas.

It would be a mistake to criticize OCO for not accomplishing more,
especially in the way of concrete field results in the struggle against the
Viet Cong. The time allotted OCO was far too short, and even had the office

21. Memorandum of Understanding, L. Wade Lathram and John L. Hart, 10
February 1967, SECRET.
22. Saigon A-543, op. cit., CONFIDENTIAL.
worked to perfection, results in the field were dependent on many related organizations and problems at hand ill-disposed to quick improvement.

OCO is best viewed as a step, if not essential then at least convenient and useful, towards single management of U.S. pacification advice and support. The successful transition from civil to military responsibility was made far easier by the experience and organization that OCO provided.

Despite the formation of OCO the possibility of military assumption of responsibility for the pacification advisory effort always lurked in the background. As has been explained earlier, OCO would have had to produce results little short of the miraculous if the trend, fueled by the President and other officials in Washington, towards a military takeover was to be halted.

General Westmoreland appears to have realized the way the wind was blowing, though he was most discreet about it. In mid-December with the ink on OCO's charter scarcely dry Ambassador Leonhart had a long discussion with Westmoreland who, while denying any promotion of increased MACV pacification responsibility, indicated that he had no intention of being unprepared should it come his way.23 The General did make a revealing remark when he said that he did not believe that fragmented or even dual authority was best and that Washington might be ill-judged by history for not devising more clear-cut organizational authority and responsibility.

23. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 1 January 1967, TOP SECRET.
Leonhart returned to Washington and voiced much the same feeling to the President. After noting that the civilians and the military still could not agree on operational priorities for the war effort and allocation of resources, he said:

But I remain doubtful that we can get pacification moving quickly or effectively enough with the present organization or that we will have the requisite planning, retraining, and leverage applied to ARVN until MACV is tasked with a single responsibility for the pacification program.24

Copies of this report went to State, Defense, CIA and AID, but Leonhart's words seem to have raised little protest with the exception of a VNCC member who wrote to Ambassador Unger that he was "deeply troubled by the continuing and apparently growing pressure" to give pacification responsibility to MACV.25

On January 9th General Westmoreland reviewed a special MACV planning study on U.S. Mission reorganization in the event that pacification was turned over to the military,26 and soon after met with General Taylor and noted that Taylor was in favor of a Mission reorganization by which the military would have greater control.27

February was a shadowy month. OCO proceeded along its way, solidifying into a working organization. Mr. Komer visited Vietnam from 13-23 February

25. Memorandum, Robert Miller to Unger, Subj.: Possible Military Takeover of U.S. RD/P Effort, 11 January 1967, SECRET.
and was full of praise for OCO, calling it "a major step forward" and
pointedly stated that it deserved "full Washington backing by all agencies
involved," but he also made a strong plea for better management and cited
three requisites: "a vigorous top U.S. team in Saigon," "better civil/
military coordination," and "a more effective and coordinated GVN effort."28
The first of these was in line with both the President's and Lodge's own
wishes that he be replaced by a new Ambassador.29

He made these recommendations at the same time as the President was
considering a radically different American command structure for Vietnam
that would have given General Westmoreland far greater powers and responsi-
bilities than were proposed by Secretary McNamara and Mr. Komer in the sum-
mer and fall of 1966. On January 31st, General Wheeler told Westmoreland
that consideration was being given to reorganizing the Mission.30 Secretary
McNamara was thinking at this point of a "MacArthur-type operation," and both he and General Wheeler envisaged Westmoreland having control of
the civil and military efforts and devoting the bulk of his attention to
the former.31 McNamara does not appear however to have conceived Westmore-
land's role as pro-consular in regard to the Vietnamese. The proposed
reorganization applied only to the American house. Westmoreland would have
become "Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Forces, Vietnam." General Westmoreland saw

28. Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Change for the Better --
Latest Impressions from Vietnam, 28 February 1967, SECRET.
29. Personal Interview with Official X, 6 April 1975.
SECRET.
31. Message, JCS 1190-67, 140023Z February 1967, Wheeler to Westmoreland,
CONFIDENTIAL.
himself as having three deputies -- operations (General Creighton Abrams), political affairs, and economics and national planning. What the Ambassador's job would be or even whether there would be an Ambassador under this concept is not clear. McNamara discussed this plan with the President who indicated his interest and shortly thereafter asked General Taylor for his opinions. Taylor later told Wheeler that such a reorganization would be salutary from almost every point of view.

During the second half of February the concept was altered substantially, a development probably related to the forthcoming change of Ambassadors. Lodge, through Mr. Komer and probably by other channels, had made known to the President his desire to leave Vietnam, and the President and the State Department at this point were unsure of a successor. Now Westmoreland was under consideration as Ambassador Lodge's replacement with Secretary McNamara seeing him in one of two roles: as a civilian Ambassador or as Ambassador/Commander, U.S. Forces, Vietnam. General Wheeler opted strongly for the second solution for the sake of Westmoreland's military career, his military image, and his own belief that a military man could better coordinate the Mission -- an implicit admission of MACV's independence under the present arrangements and Ambassador Taylor's failure to alter this. McNamara questioned whether the second solution would not result in inadequate command emphasis on the Ambassador's non-military responsibilities, but General Wheeler returned to the concept of a

33. JCS 1190-67, op. cit., CONFIDENTIAL.
34. Message, CJCS 1527-67, 280022Z February 1967, Wheeler to Westmoreland, CONFIDENTIAL.
"MacArthur-type" operation with Westmoreland giving his main effort to the civilian side of the job which he felt was in the most need of improvement. At this point Westmoreland was thinking only of a field civil/military staff merger with coordination of the Saigon agencies resting in his hands.

In late February McNamara discussed these plans with President Johnson, and several days later both met with Secretary Rusk. At this meeting Rusk, while stressing that he had no personal reason against Westmoreland becoming Ambassador, did express concern about the U.S. effort being completely militarized when it appeared that the forthcoming Vietnamese elections would almost certainly result in a military President. This was the principal reason for killing the proposal. The chances of General Westmoreland's becoming Ambassador certainly were hindered by McNamara's recommendation, based on the wishes of General Wheeler and General Westmoreland, to the President that his field commander not be made a civilian Ambassador.

This attempt by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to alter substantially the American command arrangements in South Vietnam failed because of Secretary Rusk's opposition and General Westmoreland's reluctance to serve as a civilian. It does however lay bare the strong desire of Secretary McNamara and General Wheeler, coaxing a more cautious Westmoreland, to consolidate the U.S. effort in Vietnam, particularly

35. Ibid. CONFIDENTIAL. "MacArthur-type" operation was in reference to the Korean War where General MacArthur was senior to the Ambassador who served as his Political Advisor.
37. Ibid., JCS 1637, SECRET.
the pacification program.\footnote{Westmoreland in retrospect said that he was reluctant to take over the Ambassadorship as its political aspects should have been handled by an official experienced in them. -- Interview, Mr. Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 2 April 1973.} Having told Westmoreland that the proposal was dead, Wheeler said:

\begin{quote}
I regret this outcome because, while I consider we can eventually mount a successful pacification/PD program despite two channels of control and activity, I am convinced that a united effort under the control of one man would speed the process and enhance its effectiveness, both in the near-term and long-term.\footnote{JCS 1815-67, \textit{op. cit.}, SECRET.}
\end{quote}

Thinking among all three was more developed on pacification organization, and it does not appear that a great deal of attention was given to the far more sensitive and difficult problem of the rest of the Mission, despite the overall centralization that these plans implied.

Knowledge of these plans within the government was strictly limited. They may have been just some of several alternatives considered by President Johnson. Concurrently, he had mentioned to Komer that he might send him to Vietnam to head the pacification program.\footnote{R. W. Komer, \textit{The Organization and Management of the New Model Pacification Program -- 1966-1969} (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 1970), p. 52.} The decision pattern is further complicated by the fact that it was Secretary McNamara who first recommended to the President in February that Komer be made the head of the field pacification effort.\footnote{Ibid., p. 53.} Since both proposals came during the same period from the Secretary of Defense and since his concepts on how to handle the rest of the Mission (to say nothing of the howls and storms that would have arisen
from U.S. Government agencies and Congress in Washington) had the radical
proposals been adopted were largely undeveloped, it is probable that McNamara
made his stronger proposals in the knowledge that they would be found unac-
ceptable and the fall-back solution of Mr. Komer's taking over would be
adopted, the very solution he wanted in the first place!

Having discarded a controversial solution, the President began to settle
in on one that was less so in comparison. Pacification would be made General
Westmoreland's responsibility, but he would be given a civilian deputy to
manage it. The second half of this solution, a civilian deputy, went largely
unmentioned between Mr. Komer's August 1966 pacification paper\textsuperscript{42} and the
March conference at Guam. Though by the fall of 1966 the President had de-
cided to turn pacification responsibility over to the military, there is no
evidence that until February 1967 he was considering giving Westmoreland a
civilian deputy. He was certain on the general direction but by no means so
on its details.

Knowledge of the idea of a civilian deputy was limited to a small hand-
ful of high officials and almost certainly to none who might have opposed
it. General Westmoreland arrived at the Guam Conference only suspecting
that he might have a civilian deputy.\textsuperscript{43}

As a prelude to the Guam Conference, President Johnson announced on
March 15th that Ambassador-at-Large Ellsworth Bunker would replace Lodge;

\textsuperscript{42} See Chapter 5, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{43} JCS 1815-67, \textit{op. cit., SECRET}; General Westmoreland's Historical
Briefing, 25 March 1967, TOP SECRET; Personal Interview with MG
William A. Knowlton, 26 January 1970; and Personal Interview with
General Westmoreland, 18 April 1975.
that Ambassador to Pakistan Eugene M. Locke would be the new Deputy Ambassador; and that Mr. Komer would head the pacification advisory program in Vietnam. Komer, away on vacation at the time, was somewhat chagrined at Locke's appointment which made him the third-ranking civilian rather than the second. Komer had expected to be the Deputy Ambassador at the same time as being Deputy for Pacification to General Westmoreland. Unwittingly, Locke was moving into a non-job, for the new Ambassador was a manager and did administer, and with pacification given to a separate person, and soon to a different agency, the position of Deputy Ambassador had lost much of its raison de'être. Thus scarcely a week after he had decided against a complete military takeover, Lyndon Johnson had announced the partial solution, though the exact details remained to be worked out and the placing of pacification under General Westmoreland was not publicly announced until May.

The March Conference at Guam had been brewing for several weeks, but while outwardly it could be seen as one more in the series of joint conferences with the Vietnamese on the war's progress that began with Honolulu, it was more important as a gathering of American officials to discuss the state of the war, to introduce the new team for Saigon, and to begin to work out the organizational details of the U.S. Mission.

There were extensive discussions at Guam among U.S. officials over the Mission's organization with the principal proposal under consideration

44. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 14 February 1972.
45. Memorandum, Leonhart to Walt Rostow, 15 March 1967, SECRET.
46. One-half of the Conference was devoted to "U.S.-only" talks.
being that eventually adopted (see below). At the time Westmoreland noted a trace of Presidential hesitation: "...they were later put to the President who seemed to accept them in principle but stated he would refrain from making a decision until a later date." This indecision would last into May.

Westmoreland went to the Conference expecting to have his pacification staff officer, General Knowlton, be the new chief of a MACV staff section pulling together both the MACV Revolutionary Development Support Directorate and the Office of Civil Operations, but because of "extensive pressure" he had to accede to having Wade Lathram, the OCO Director, as the head of it. Knowlton who had already a good working relationship with Lathram agreed readily and the matter was settled.

Mr. Komer and his assistant Colonel Montague accompanied General Westmoreland back to Saigon and spent several days there working out the details of the reorganization and meeting with him on the 23rd and 24th of March to hammer out future relationships and terms of reference.

General Westmoreland, describing with understatement the final meeting on the 24th, notes that they "came to a meeting of the minds." General Knowlton and General William Rosson, MACV's Chief of Staff, saw Komer's proposed organization charts as a move by him to command U.S. battalions that supported pacification. This, according to General Knowlton, was a

47. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 25 March 1967, TOP SECRET.
49. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 25 March 1967, TOP SECRET.
major point of contention in these discussions. General Rosson's overly-alarmed presentation may have had something to do with Westmoreland's agitation. Rosson accused Komer of taking operational control and tactical direction of U.S. battalions away from Westmoreland, an allegation that is not supported by the available documents. In the charts in question the only possible indication of this was that U.S. regional and provincial pacification chiefs should control U.S. units "if (these units were) attached for pacification missions." Perhaps General Rosson had more reason to be alarmed over a key paragraph in the draft NSAM which said:

The Deputy will supervise the employment of all U.S. resources -- civil and military, and the conduct of all U.S. programs directly contributing to pacification (Revolutionary Development). Komer stated that this paragraph never was intended to include U.S. battalions but only U.S. advisory assets, and there is no other documentation extant that would support in any way the allegations presented by the two generals. This paragraph was however removed from the draft NSAM after the meeting on the 24th. The whole incident shows one more example of just how sensitive the U.S. military were in Vietnam to any hints of civilian involvement in troop command and tactical operations.

More significant however is what General Westmoreland and his future deputy did agree on -- a series of guideline concepts that set the pattern

51. Draft charts, Subj.: Organizational Schematics, March 1967. These were written by Komer and Montague and copy 2 is noted: "Used for Westmoreland Meeting."
53. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 14 February 1972.
for the subsequent U.S. pacification support structure in Vietnam.\footnote{This paragraph is based entirely upon Draft Concept Paper by Mr. Komer and Colonel Montague, Subj.: Organizational Concepts Governing Integration of Civil/Military Responsibility for Pacification (RD) Under COMUSMACV, 23 March 1967, SECRET. This is a most important basic document on CORDS organization. The xerox copy used by the author has General Westmoreland's handwritten revisions and a notation by Mr. Komer saying: "Westy's copy, as revised by him 24 March '67."} The American role would continue to be one of advice and support; the task of pacification would remain essentially Vietnamese. The U.S. pacification advisory effort would have a single manager at each level from Saigon to district with one chain of command, one official voice when dealing with the Vietnamese, and integrated civil/military planning, programming, operations, evaluation logistics, and communication. Every effort would be made to effect a smooth transition by melding the existing civil and military structures. The entire Office of Civil Operations would be transferred en bloc to the new organization. Significantly, they agreed that Mr. Komer was to manage and supervise and should have full liaison with the GVN agencies concerned with pacification. He and the civilians beneath him were not to be political advisors or mere coordinators. He would operate in a manner similar to a component commander; his pacification organization would resemble a subsidiary corporation. As a corollary principle to civil/military unity, positions were to be filled by the best man available, regardless of whether he was civilian or military. The phasing of the reorganization was to be careful and cautious; certain functional programs, mostly those brought from OCO, were to use a "program manager" concept; and civilian agency staffs and budgets were to be continued to be used at least until FY 1969.
The transition in Mission organizational relationships originally was planned as a two-stage operation, but the final structure in June more closely resembled the original first stage. This stage had the advantage that with the civil and military staff sections still relatively intact and identifiable it would be possible to make a smooth switch back to a civilian advisory effort should negotiations with the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese force a U.S. military reduction and withdrawal.

In March Komer envisaged for himself a greater policy role in the resource allocation, training, and other activities of all Vietnamese forces affecting pacification. This basic point was not obtained by Komer probably in deference to General Abrams, the new Deputy COMUSMACV, who was to have ARVN as his primary responsibility. Komer asked for and received a direct channel of technical supervision to the regional pacification advisors and their provincial subordinates, though his command line ran through the U.S. military field force (corps) commanders.

Westmoreland and Komer also worked on a draft NSAM prepared by Komer. The General's changes were small in number, with the exception of the removal of the controversial paragraph quoted earlier, and served mostly to formalize without question his own primacy and responsibility in pacification as opposed to that of his new deputy. The changes put some restrictions on what would have been an unusually free-wheeling subordinate, even by Mr. Komer's standards. 55

55. The author has examined five different versions of NSAM 362 from March drafts to the final. Textual changes and marginalia enable one to determine often who made the changes and when.
On the 24th Komer left Saigon for Washington where events appeared to be moving toward a swift decision and announcement. Three days later Komer sent the draft NSAM to the President noting that Secretaries Rusk, McNamara, and Vance, General Wheeler, and Ambassador Bunker were in agreement with it. Secretary Rusk and Komer however insisted that Ambassador Leonhart, who was to take over Komer's White House office, receive the full mandate previously held by Komer, a twist that was only grudgingly accepted by the President. Komer made it clear to the President that he expected to be General Abrams' equal, except when General Westmoreland was absent, and that he must have "free access to Bunker (who insists on it)." At McNamara's urging he ruled out his also managing civilian non-pacification functions, such as anti-inflation and port congestion, in order to fully focus his energies. Finally, in view of press speculation, Komer urged the President to move quickly and permit an announcement as soon as it could be coordinated with the Saigon Mission.

The President delayed, and the decision remained unannounced until May because of a combination of several factors. Ambassador Bunker for personal reasons was not ready to go to Saigon, and President Johnson wished him to

56. Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Shift of Pacification Responsibility, 27 March 1967, SECRET, with attached draft NSAM, Subj.: Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development), CONFIDENTIAL.

57. Memorandum, Walt Rostow to Rusk and McNamara, Subj.: U.S. Role in Vietnam Pacification, 27 March 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

58. Comparisons of the various drafts of the NSAM indicate that McNamara made only one substantial change -- he removed a phrase that required Komer to report through COMUSMACV to the Ambassador. In practice Komer always retained this access.
announce the change once he was at his new post. In addition, official Washington was deeply engrossed in a major U.S. force-level decision. Finally, the President himself was still not certain about Komer and Leonhart's roles. He was leaning towards having Komer divide his time between Saigon and Washington. On April 20th Komer urged the President to decide, at least in time for Komer to be in Saigon by May 1st. As evidence of President Johnson's uncertainty and wish to keep options open, Komer at this late date was still presenting three alternative organizational schemes: the solution worked out during and following the Guam Conference, Komer as director of a larger OCO, and the two-hatted approach of his handling both the Saigon and White House pacification jobs. The idea of Komer heading a larger OCO was thrown in only as a contrast to the other two and to push the President into a decision. It was one that would have been far more acceptable to the civilian agencies. There is however no evidence that this solution was under serious consideration by the President. Komer did not even feel it necessary to comment further on it, but he did strongly recommend against the two-hats idea and left no doubt that he preferred the Guam solution.

The President still had not signed the NSAM when Komer arrived with General Abrams in Saigon on May 1st. Not until nine days later, with events in Saigon already in full swing, did President Johnson relent and promulgate NSAM 362. General Westmoreland was charged with U.S. civil/military support

59. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 128.
60. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 14 December 1971.
61. Memorandum, Komer to President, 20 April 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
of pacification in Vietnam and Mr. Komer was made his Deputy with the personal rank of Ambassador. The President gave Ambassador Bunker full jurisdiction over any inter-agency issues in Vietnam arising from this change. He retained Ambassador Leonhart as Special Assistant to the President. At the end, Johnson admonished:

I count on all concerned -- in Washington and in Vietnam -- to pull together in the national interest to make this arrangement work.62

It is interesting that, unlike his treatment of OCO, he imposed no deadlines.

Mr. Komer's arrival in Vietnam and the issuing of NSAM 362 marks a most important turning point in the U.S. pacification advisory effort. Washington had held the initiative for over a year; the Mission carried out the pacification program, but the force, the policy energy, emanated from Washington. By mid-1967 as Komer puts it, "the problem was one of field execution, not Washington organization...the real problems were not in Washington any longer but in Vietnam...we could not manage the 'other war' from 11,000 miles away."63 With his arrival in Saigon and the creation of the new, unified management structure, the torch was passed back to the Mission, and Washington became an on-looker, monitoring but not initiating programs in pacification.

President Johnson's decision to place pacification under the military and create CORDS was a significant act of policy. Few organizational

63. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
changes have had such an important and discernable impact during the Vietnam War. Its effects would be felt for the rest of the war, not merely among U.S. bureaucracies but with the Vietnamese and in the actual course of the war. Looking back over his action, one must ask, in summation, why he did it.64 First -- pacification cut across every agency's line so much that normal government coordination was inadequate. Military and civilian tasks were inextricably interwoven. Second -- the scale of the problem escaped the bounds of the civilian agencies resources, especially personnel, and managerial competence. In general, they did not have the ability, perhaps even the desire, or the experience to deal with such a vast program. Their organizational background did not prepare them for it. But finally, lest this narrative appear to place the civilians continually in a bad light, both the President and Komer realized that for more than any other reason pacification was failing because of inadequate military security. They understood the civilians' contention on this point, but proceeding from it they also knew that the only way to force the military to take pacification more seriously was to engage its chain of command in direct responsibility, a point which Komer skillfully played up with General Westmoreland. Beyond the obvious quest for military resources, they also sought by this decision to give military operations a political meaning, supporting directly rather than indirectly a more politicized strategy. The

military did not respond and alter overnight, nor was this intended. The end result however was to force a significant, if not permanent, change in its institutional repertoire. No other U.S. organization in Vietnam, civilian or otherwise, was altered to the degree that the military were by this decision.
Chapter VI

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION: SETTING UP CORDS

The decision which had been in the offing for nearly a year finally was made. The President, in order to defuse opposition, gave the civilians one final opportunity but structured it so that his preference for a unified civil/military effort would be adopted eventually. If this was bargaining, then he stacked the deck.

It is important also to observe what happened after the President made his decision. Was it implemented in the fashion he desired? I will contend that it was, but that success was due as much to a fortuitous combination of personalities as any other factor. The same decision carried out by a different chief with a different commander and a different Ambassador probably would not have produced the same results regardless of Presidential emphasis, regardless of the organizational arrangements. The key, therefore, to successful implementation was as much the officials he chose to implement it as the decision itself or his own interest. This, of course, does not imply a weak President, for the power to appoint whom he chooses to fill key positions is a vital, and perhaps under-emphasized, aspect of the Presidency.

In contrast to most of the organizational decisions that the President made during the war, he rarely reappears as an actor in the story. He did not have to continually back Komer up. He did not have to switch officials again after six months or a year. He did not have to remind his Administration. This is not to say that carrying out his decision was a smooth event. There was resistance from both the civilians and the military; yet there was compromise also. But, problems were handled below the President's level.
Indeed, the change was so successful in this regard that President Johnson effectively downgraded Komer's old White House office. The need for it, so apparent in 1966, simply did not exist with the same urgency as before.

If the decision was implemented successfully, it was not accomplished easily or overnight. By no means was the final outcome as foreordained as it appears in retrospect. Creating CORDS and having it do the job that the President intended was a major accomplishment. There were formidable bureaucratic and organizational problems. It is to this story that I now turn.

I dislike the term "The Other War." To me this is all one war. Everything we do is an aspect of the total effort to achieve our objectives here.1

With these words to his first Mission Council meeting, Ambassador Bunker set the tone of his administration. The American effort never became one war, and the architects of the new reorganization deliberately left out interagency problems that were not related directly to the pacification program, but Ambassador Bunker drew the United States effort in Vietnam more closely together than at any time since the mid-1950's. Pacification advice and support was by far the most apparent manifestation of this.

As has been seen earlier the new Ambassador was a latecomer to these developments. The train was set in motion long before the public announcement which presented the change as his decision. However, he did not hesitate or delay but strongly supported the reorganization.

If the Ambassador had needed any prodding, he certainly got it when Komer arrived the next day. The new pacification chief took a wider and more dynamic view of his concerns than his title would indicate, and he was not about to let the massive military staff submerge him. He immediately recommended that Bunker leave no doubt that civilians were running the Mission despite the placing of pacification under General Westmoreland. To put a swift imprint on the Mission, Komer urged that the Ambassador focus on three crucial problem areas by demanding prompt "action programs" for the transition to an elected GVN, for the "revamping" of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, and for improving the pacification program. After consulting with Westmoreland, he also recommended that the Ambassador create from the Mission Council a smaller "Executive Committee" to discuss the most sensitive issues. This was put into effect; the Committee's membership consisted of Ambassador Bunker, Deputy Ambassador Locke, General Westmoreland, and Ambassador Komer.

Behind Komer were Colonel Montague and John Vann urging him to strengthen his position by concentrating and insisting on key issues such as command of pacification personnel, authority to organize pacification staffs from Saigon to the provinces, and a channel to Ambassador Bunker. While Komer's activity

2. Memorandum, Komer to Bunker, Subj.: Completing the Transition, 5 May 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).

3. Ibid., and Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 30 March 1972. Komer suggested the Executive Committee as he felt that the Mission Council was too unwieldy and notes that Bunker used it almost from the beginning. After the regular Council meetings the four principals, occasionally joined by others, would adjourn to the Ambassador's office or to lunch to discuss the more sensitive issues. General Westmoreland noted that the meetings were ad hoc and not institutionalized — Personal Interview with General Westmoreland, 18 April 1975.

4. Memorandum, (Montague) to Komer, Subj.: Tactics, 6 May 1967.
was typical of the man, both he and his staff were genuinely apprehensive that if the civilians in pacification did not assert themselves, they would gradually be pushed under in the military command and lose their power to press pacification against competing priorities and interests. And, as Colonel Montague put it: "your leverage goes down day by day after you are no longer Special Assistant to the President." 5

So the new Deputy for Pacification landed in Saigon on the run, and he never stopped. To help create the most powerful pacification support organization possible, he also set out to bring such new areas as support for the paramilitary forces and the anti-Viet Cong infrastructure efforts, under his purview. He wrote the pacification section in Ambassador Bunker's weekly message to the President; he went to MACV commanders' conferences; he would make comments to Bunker and Westmoreland on issues such as proposed troop operations or GVN political development that scarcely were within his bureaucratic purview; he would make private proposals to the Ambassador for programs to be levied on MACV and other Mission agencies. Above all, he was determined not to be lost in a huge military machine; he would act like a four-star general and insist on being treated as such. 6

Soon after his arrival, Komer sent Bunker draft cables to Washington explaining the concept of reorganization and the proposed method of announcement along with a schedule of steps to implement the process. 7 Making but

5. Ibid.
6. Even to the point of having the MACV Chief of Staff design for him special four-star license plates!
7. Memorandum, Komer to Bunker, 6 May 1967, SECRET, with Tab A -- Subj.: Two Cables to Washington in Response to NODIS Septel 184979, and Tab B -- Subj.: A Schedule of Steps Required to Complete the Exercise.
minor changes, Bunker sent them on to Washington which approved and returned
them with little alternation on the 10th of May.\footnote{Message, Saigon 25028 to State, 081220Z May 1967, SECRET and Message, Saigon 25029 to State, 081225Z May 1967, SECRET. The State Department's reply, transmitting the approved texts is: Message, State 190928 to Saigon, 091020Z May 1967, SECRET.}

On May 8th, Komer again reminded the Ambassador of his proposed action
program in pacification, indicating that while he would be working on it
anyway, the Ambassador might want to assert a personal interest by formally
requesting such a program. And in a statement that is indicative both of the
man and his method of operation, he added:

\begin{quote}
Let me add \textit{privately} that such an action program is
far more urgent and important business than a pro-
longed Steering Committee exercise on how we might
effect marginal logistic economies and perhaps save
some men and money. Results are the ultimate economy.\footnote{Memorandum, Komer to Bunker, 8 May 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).}
\end{quote}

The Steering Committee exercise referred to here was an idea first suggested
by Komer and greeted with great enthusiasm by Bunker and Westmoreland. They
envisaged taking a close look at reducing the degree of duplication and over-
lap among MACV and civilian agencies dealing with pacification. Mr. Komer
quickly lost interest once it became clear that the real savings were going
to be small and it was not going to be worth the extra time spent. He let
the idea die quietly.\footnote{Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 12 May 1972.}

Meanwhile, on May 9th President Johnson signed NSAM 362, and the State
Department passed on the final text to Saigon.

From the outset the Ambassador kept the impending reorganization as much
of a secret as possible to forestall press speculation and possible criticism.
Rumors and hints of change flowed freely however in OCO and MACV. Another worry, but one that happily proved unfounded, was that the news of a military takeover would jolt civilian morale and result in resignations. Komer sensed both civilian morale and press speculation as potentially serious problems to be tackled by leaning over backward to emphasize civilian leadership and the powerful roles that civilians now would play. As one of his assistants noted:

If, however, the civilians refuse to exercise the authority they are now being given, if they refuse to accept the control necessary -- in fact, only if they themselves relinquish their powers will the military in fact take over. 12

Civilian authority was exercised, and events belied the reasons for this apprehensiveness.

The Mission's leaders also gave careful attention to countering possible press and public criticism of the reorganization as a militarization of the U.S. effort. They stressed Komer's role as a manager and the fact that the new staff structure would have a civilian head with OCO absorbing MACV's pacification directorate. Westmoreland even constructed the acronym "CORDS" so as to give the greatest prominence to the word "civil." 13

On May 11th the Ambassador met with the press in Saigon and announced the reorganization, stressing heavily the desirability of single management and his interest in pacification. He made it clear that he too would be involved:

11. Memorandum, Mr. Mac Deford to Komer, Subj.: A Well-Kept Secret, 9 May 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4). One source of his noted that knowledge of the change was "all over Region III."
12. Memorandum, Deford to Komer, Subj.: Suggestions for Regional Director's Meeting, 9 May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
I intend to keep fully informed personally about all developments in this field, and to hold frequent meetings with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer for the purpose of formulating policy.14

At the MACV Commanders' Conference at Cam Ranh Bay on May 13, Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland dwelt extensively on the new organization, each stressing that pacification was now a single program, part of a larger combined civil/military effort with one manager -- the Ambassador. General Westmoreland candidly stated that a "major goal will be to avoid personal conflicts or friction" and highlighted the importance of civilians in the new structure.15 Ambassador Komer talked of the use of mass, of no single solution but many programs unified in a "comprehensive package approach." For the first time, one of these conferences was devoted almost entirely to pacification.

For the next ten days the focus of organization shifted to the discussions of the Steering Group on Organization for Revolutionary Development Support. With Komer as Chairman, this group set about the mechanics of reorganizing U.S. pacification support activities under Westmoreland.16 Against the recommendations of a previous MACV planning study, Komer insisted that the Steering Group approach the integration as a three-step process, going slow on areas that would raise more complicated interagency problems, such as

14. Statement by Ambassador Bunker at Press Conference, Saigon, 11 May 1967 (my emphasis). This statement was drafted by Komer and approved by Westmoreland.
psychological warfare operations and intelligence, or those where absorption into MACV would adversely affect civilian morale or be inconsistent with the Ambassador's May 11th announcement.17

The first step was to create a unified organization consolidating civilian and military pacification activities under General Westmoreland with a single chain of command down to the district advisory level. This was to be accomplished in thirty days. The second and third steps involved the functional integration of such civil and military activities as transportation, communications, logistics, intelligence, medical support, public safety, and psychological operations. No completion dates for these two steps were specified, and many of their aspects were never achieved. It would appear that Komer stated these long-range objectives because he had to but without great enthusiasm or firm expectation that they might be achieved.

Komer and his assistants insisted that the MACCORDS staff (the merged OCO and RDSD) be an operating agency with command authority against the recommendations of the military members of the Steering Group.18 A second key issue was whether the Deputy to COMUSMACV could deal directly with the MACCORDS staff on pacification matters that did not involve the interests of other MACV staff sections. This was never spelled out specifically but the

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17. Memorandum, Komer to MACV Chief of Staff, Subj.: Terms of Reference for Steering Group on Organization for RD Support, 12 May 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).
final directive gave Komer such wide authority over pacification that he could easily interpret his pacification command authority as he saw fit (see below). In practice he dealt directly with all lower echelons involved in pacification. Not only did he go around the MACV Chief of Staff and work directly with the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, Wade Lathram, but he and his assistants often went straight to Mr. Lathram's individual staff sections and members. The facade of working through the Chief of Staff was usually preserved, but was more often than not one of formality rather than substance.

Perhaps the biggest stumbling block during the reorganization process was how to organize pacification at the regional or corps level. This had a number of aspects: should the CORDS regional staff be an operating agency; should the regional Deputy for CORDS directly control the province teams; would the ARVN division advisory teams be in the pacification chain of command; what would be the role of the corps Deputy Senior Advisor (military); and who would control the advisors assigned to ARVN units on pacification support missions? This last issue was more important than it might appear at first glance as nearly half of the Vietnamese Army battalions were supposed to be supporting pacification.

On March 23rd Ambassador Komer sent General Westmoreland his proposed organizational arrangements. These arrangements were in the nature of a

19. Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, Subj.: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities within MACV, 23 May 1967, UNCLASSIFIED, with attached staff study: Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, Subj.: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities within MACV, n.d., CONFIDENTIAL, with five enclosures.
compromise by order, imposed on the members of the Steering Group, especially on those aspects already mentioned in connection with regional organization. Komer and his assistants generally sought as much independence and power as they thought was necessary or calculated he would be able to obtain. The entire exercise of the Steering Group had far less importance than the available documents would indicate.\(^{20}\) It put a stamp of compromise harmony on concepts and ideas about the organization that Komer brought with him to Vietnam. Where the Steering Group's recommendations did not agree with these concepts, they were changed. Komer had steered his ideas on the new organization through the first of several bureaucratic shoals.

This is not to say that the new pacification chief had everything as he wished. At General Westmoreland's insistence he was made Deputy to COMUSMACV not Deputy COMUSMACV, and hence was deputy for just one function. Unlike General Abrams, he operated across the broad range of MACV staff sections for pacification only. Westmoreland wanted to be certain that there would be no chance of a civilian in command of U.S. forces should, for some reason, both General Abrams and he be absent.\(^{21}\) Formally at least he had to operate through the U.S. military Corps Senior Advisors on many issues.

Komer's presentation to Westmoreland masked the sharp divergences of opinion among members of the Steering Group. He allowed that "the plan is by no means perfect, but represents an optimum balancing of pros and cons" and that it was "the best interim scheme."\(^{22}\) To deal with the not fully-settled

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21. Ibid.
problems of regional/corps organization, he recommended that the proposed directive be issued subject to objections by the U.S. Corps Senior Advisors and MACV staff sections — thus throwing the burden of changing an established directive onto the potential opposition. Three days later General Westmoreland, who was determined to give CORDS every chance to succeed, called Komer in to discuss the proposed implementing directives, made only minor changes in them, and approved their publication.23 He discussed them with Ambassador Bunker who gave his concurrence, and on the 28th of May the MACV Chief of Staff published CORDS' implementing directive.24

Ambassador Komer had wide power to manage the U.S. pacification program:

Specifically, he is charged by COMUSMACV with supervising the formulation and execution of all plans, policies and programs, military and civilian, which support the GVN's Revolutionary Development program and related programs.25

The absence of limitations and specifics in this directive as to Komer's role meant that the role of the Deputy to COMUSMACV for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (DEPCORDS) came to depend to a great extent on personalities.

The directive greatly expanded the pacification support role handled by one organization from those tasks previously handled by OCO and RDSD. In particular, Komer obtained the tasks of advising the Vietnamese Government on

23. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 31 May 1967, TOP SECRET.
25. Ibid.
two key aspects of pacification — local security and destroying the Viet Cong's political/military infrastructure (see below).

To have civilians fully operating in a military chain of command probably was unique in U.S. Government history. (See Chart VI-1.) Certainly it never occurred before on this scale. Ambassador Komer was the first Ambassador in U.S. history who not only served directly under a military commander but also had command responsibility for military personnel and resources. CORDS was an organization with military and civilians intermixed, each writing the efficiency report of the other. Finally, at each administrative level, pacification advice and support were under one man.

Komer himself had a small personal staff that served as an informal brain trust and eyes and ears for the pacification chief along with being a short-cut channel of communication for more junior members of the larger CORDS organization. This staff was headed by his hand-picked deputy, an Army major general, George I. Forsythe, who helped to smooth military feathers ruffled by the unconventional actions of Komer and his assistants. As Forsythe later put it:

...the whole arrangement was like a grain of sand in an oyster. Like the oyster, the bureaucracy set out to encase the irritant. But Komer was not about to become a pearl.26

CORDS principal Saigon staff, called "MACCORDS," operated under the MACV Chief of Staff as a regular MACV staff section alongside J-2 (intelligence), J-3 (operations), and others. Its chief, Wade Lathram, now became the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS. His staff's responsibilities included all

26. Interview, Mr. Charles B. MacDonald with Forsythe, 16 June 1973.
Chart VI-1. U.S. MISSION AND MACV HEADQUARTERS STAFF RELATIONSHIPS AFTER THE FORMATION OF CORDS, JUNE 1967
aspects of pacification planning, support, and advice to U.S. and GVN officials. By the Directive, MACCORDS also had MACV staff responsibility for economic warfare and U.S. forces civil action. Most important, Mr. Lathram supervised "the execution of plans and programs for U.S. civil/military support of" pacification.27 MACCORDS was an operating agency not only a staff section. Komer had won a major victory.

The staff under Wade Lathram was initially similar to that in OCO; indeed the new CORDS organization was designed specifically to make the transition as effortless as possible with most of the personnel doing the same jobs they had done before but with a different supervisory structure. (See Chart VI-2.) Six functional divisions, such as Chieu Hoi and Refugees, were transferred in their entirety from OCO (and hence from AID and CIA) with some military added. Management support remained largely civilian. The most extensive intermingling of military and civilians occurred in the command sections and in the Research and Analysis, Plans and Programs, and Reports and Evaluations Divisions.

Without discussing each program in detail, it is worth noting the breadth of programs that CORDS now embraced and who formerly had been responsible for them: New Life Development (AID), Chieu Hoi (AID), RD Cadre (CIA), Montagnard Cadre (CIA), census grievance (CIA), Regional and Popular Forces (MACV), refugees (AID), field psychological operations (JUSPAO), Public Safety (AID), U.S. forces civic action and civil affairs (MACV), RD reports and evaluations (all agencies), and RD field inspection (all agencies).28 CORDS also assumed

Chart VI-2. ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF FOR CIVIL OPERATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

AC of S CORDS
Deputy AC of S CORDS

Assistant for Operations

Executive Secretariat

Management Support Division

Planning and Analysis Division

Plans and Programs Division

Reports and Evaluation Division

Chieu Hoi Division

New Life Dev. Div.

RD Workers Div.

Refugee Division

Psychological Ops. Div.

Public Safety Div.
coordinating responsibility for pacification-related AID programs such as rural electrification, hamlet schools, rural health, village/hamlet administrative training, agricultural affairs, and public works. As time went on CORDS expanded its purview even further. With few exceptions, all U.S. programs outside of Saigon excluding regular U.S. and GVN military forces and clandestine CIA operations came under CORDS operational control.

One important exception was land reform which USAID insisted on retaining within its purview. Though this originally was one of Komer's eight high-priority action programs, he was "out-maneuvered" by USAID and gave up trying to bring it under CORDS.29 Busy with many other bureaucratic battles at the same time, he was not able to win this one. CORDS did however retain an interest in the program, and later it became an important aspect of the Vietnamese Government's pacification effort in the early 1970's.

In most aspects the CORDS organization in each region (or corps) mirrored that at MACV headquarters. (See Chart VI-3.) The regional Deputy for CORDS (DEPCORDS) was a full-fledged deputy to the U.S. Corps Senior Advisor, who was also the U.S. corps commander. Once more one sees the same words: "supervising the formulation and execution of all military and civilian plans, policies and programs..."30 Komer and his assistants, against the misgivings of General Westmoreland, felt strongly that the regional Deputy for CORDS should be in an operational not staff position and definitely should

29. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 22 April 1975.
30. MACV Directive 10-12, op. cit.
Chart VI-3. CORPS/REGION ORGANIZATION AFTER THE FORMATION OF CORDS, JUNE 1967

Force Commander/Senior Advisor
  Deputy Force Commander
  Deputy for CORDS

Chief of Staff
  Force General Staff
  Asst. Deputy for CORDS
  Deputy Senior Advisor (mil)
  Management Support
  Plans and Programs
  Reports
  Chieu Hoi
  New Life Dev.
  Rev. Dev.
  Refugee
  Psyops
  Public Safety

U.S. Units

Province Senior Advisor

District Senior Advisor

Coordination - Military and CORDS Matters

Operational Control when unit assigned an RD Direct Support Mission
not be subordinate to the U.S. corps commander's Chief of Staff. Komer took as a model the Corps Deputy Senior Advisor who was in charge of the entire advisory program to the Vietnamese Armed Forces in the corps and who functioned as a "component commander" reporting directly to the Corps Senior Advisor. A key to CORDS ability to function was this autonomy that he obtained for its field efforts -- largely on the advice of John Vann, the DEPCORDS in III Corps. The model solution proposed in Directive 10-12 left the Chief of Staff with only one area of concern -- the separate corps general staff. A variant, allowed for the III Corps area, installed the Chief of Staff immediately beneath the U.S. corps commander and his two deputies.

The U.S. war effort at the corps level and below now was divided into three distinct components: the U.S. forces, the advisory effort to the Vietnamese Army under the Deputy Senior Advisor, and the pacification support program under the Deputy for CORDS. The Deputy for CORDS was served by the Assistant Deputy for CORDS, or in the case of III Corps the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, who headed a civil/military staff that paralleled closely the MACCORDS structure at Saigon.

Since the Vietnamese Army was so heavily involved in pacification support, the corps Deputy for CORDS supervised the Deputy Senior Advisor for all aspects of Vietnamese military support of pacification. To reinforce this, the U.S. Province Senior Advisor was to have operational control of all U.S. advisors to Vietnamese units attached to the Vietnamese Province.

31. Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, 26 May 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4). This was a key element both of CORDS success and of the ability of the civilians to preserve their power and exploit the access to military resources and personnel that the new organization provided.
Chief for support of pacification.

The province advisory teams, unified under a single chief called the Province Senior Advisor, were responsible directly to the regional Deputy for CORDS. Thus Westmoreland and Komer settled a major point of contention with a lengthy bureaucratic history — should the advisory teams to the Vietnamese Army divisions be in the pacification chain of command? Removal of these teams from the chain of command ran counter to a steadily growing trend, supported by MACV, to have the ARVN division commanders control all province-level activities. 32 Both PROVN and the "Roles and Missions" studies of 1966 flatly recommended removing the ARVN division from the pacification chain of command, 33 since the division headquarters would not give pacification and province affairs the attention they deserved. The division was in many respects a superfluous link; most GVN civilian ministries, including the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and U.S. civilian agencies did not have representatives at this level. Proponents of a stronger GVN provincial government also supported a change. Finally, as a matter of organizational principle, Komer did not want his key province pacification advisors under the direct control of military superiors whose advisory role was oriented towards large-unit combat.

In the May discussions on this point General Abrams, the MACV staff, all U.S. corps commanders, and General Knowlton, Lathram's deputy, recommended

32. Memorandum, Richard Holbrooke to Ambassador Leonhart, Subj.: Reorganization of the United States Mission: An Appraisal So Far, 6 June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
33. Ibid., and USVNR, IV.C.8., pp. 132-133.
against removing the division advisors from the U.S. pacification advisory structure. Knowlton felt that with the assignment of ARVN battalions to pacification, the division commanders now were taking a more active interest in pacification and that the American example of removing advisors from the chain would not necessarily make ARVN follow suit. General Westmoreland, to the surprise of some skeptical civilians, decided in Komer's favor on this issue, and henceforth the division advisory teams were involved only in routine administrative and logistical support for the military members of the province teams. Westmoreland continued his support on this point, despite his personal doubts, later in 1967 when he supported Komer's effort to persuade the Vietnamese to make the same changes on their side and remove the ARVN division Commander's control over province chiefs. The Vietnamese moved slowly but did as Komer wished in 1968. At this point it is worth remembering the rejection of these changes when they were proposed by PROVN and "Roles and Missions" in 1966. This is one of many examples where CORDS managers were able to reach back into past reports and studies that never had been acted upon, pull out some of their recommendations, and get them implemented.

The pacification support structures at province and district were easily determined and generated little argument. (See Chart VI-4.) The province and district teams now had a single team chief. The regional Deputy for CORDS, with the concurrence in each case of Ambassador Komer and General Westmoreland, chose the Province Senior Advisors who were split roughly in half between military and civilians. The civilians in this position would

34. Personal Interview with MG William A. Knowlton, 26 January 1970.
Chart VI-4. PROVINCE ADVISORY TEAM ORGANIZATION AFTER THE FORMATION OF CORDS, JUNE 1967
have a military deputy and vice versa. The Province Senior Advisor chose the District Senior Advisor, but with the approval of the regional Deputy for CORDS. Most of the District Senior Advisors were drawn from the ranks of the MACV sub-sector advisors. This was for reasons of security plus the fact that there were no civilians stationed in many districts. In the most secure districts civilians headed the CORDS advisory teams.

At this juncture Komer and Westmoreland put off two difficult decisions. They left the IV Corps organization as it was to await specially-tailored instructions as this area had both the largest civilian advisory structure and the smallest U.S. military elements. They also decided that for the moment there would be no changes in administrative/logistic support for CORDS. Each agency would make the same contributions in funds and personnel, with the same support arrangements, as they had prior to May.

At the beginning of June, Ambassador Komer traveled to each of the four corps headquarters to lay out the new organization to the U.S. commanders and their staffs. In general there was little resistance to the provisions of the new CORDS directive, but he did feel it necessary to stress heavily that the regional Deputy for CORDS supervised all U.S. support to pacification, to include the Deputy Senior Advisor in activities affecting pacification.

At each corps he left a list of recommended Province Senior Advisors.

In mid-June the three U.S. corps commanders submitted detailed plans

35. MACV Directive 10-12, op. cit.
36. Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, Subj.: DEPCORDS Trip to I-FFORCEV, 5 June 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).
for pacification organization in their respective areas. Each commander made some modifications to the principles stated in the CORDS directive, the most serious coming from General Stanley Larsen, the II Corps commander, who recommended, in essence, a dual chain of command for the Province Senior Advisor (for military matters it would run through the division advisory teams and the corps Deputy Senior Advisor) and a rating scheme for province advisors that directly involved the Deputy Senior Advisor. With these exceptions, which soon were rejected, they all adhered remarkably to the spirit, and in the case of the U.S. Marine commander in I Corps the letter, of the directive.

On June 25th, Komer asked Westmoreland to approve four changes in the directive that would: let the corps Chief of Staff coordinate the efforts of the pacification and military staffs, set up the basic organization for all the corps, create an Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS in the U.S. Army's headquarters to replace the section that had handled civil affairs and civic action, and designate the former OCO Deputy Regional Director as Assistant Deputy for CORDS, rather than Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS,


38. Ibid., Larsen memorandum to Komer.
to emphasize his operational as well as his staff responsibilities. He asked also for permission to disapprove some of the Senior Advisors' proposals as "inconsistent" with the CORDS directive. General Westmoreland concurred, and Komer sent out the implementing instructions to the Senior Advisors the next day. Thus the corps organization for pacification was standardized. As with the decision on the anti-Viet Cong infrastructure effort (see below) and the MACV staff arrangements for CORDS, General Westmoreland backed his new deputy at a critical juncture with a critical element in the chain of command. The principles of the CORDS directive were not to be watered down, and thus he sent a signal, albeit one that would need reinforcing later, to all subordinate echelons.

Despite this however, the MACV commander kept a wary eye on his new subordinate. After the IV Corps visit in early June, Komer had told Westmoreland that his "next major step will be to review and approve the organizations in each of the" corps. Westmoreland replied tersely: "I will approve (corps) organizational arrangements."  

39. Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, Subj.: Organization for CORDS in CTZs, 25 June 1967. This memorandum originally had three tabs on corps recommended organizations, changes to the CORDS directive, and changes to the corps proposals -- none of which can be located. Most of the substance of the tabs can be gleaned from the memorandum and from the messages sent the next day by Komer to the four Corps Senior Advisors.


41. Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, Subj.: DEPCORDS Visit to IV Corps, 7 June 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).

42. Ibid. See the COMUSMACV routing slip of 8 June 1967 to Komer that is attached to this memorandum. The slip is UNCLASSIFIED.
Though Westmoreland let Komer devise the corps arrangements for pacification and supported him over the Corp Senior Advisors, several months were needed to establish firmly the working relationships. Komer wished to control all pacification matters, referring only the most important to General Westmoreland and wanted to accustom the Corps Senior Advisors to working directly with him rather than Westmoreland. He felt it was important to set an example on this point for the entire organization.

As of mid-August, there were still problems:

My ability to contribute...is as yet hampered by the fact that my role and relationship vis-a-vis subordinate and coordinate echelons is not adequately defined. Nor am I sure as yet that I have your own full trust and confidence, which I have had from all my previous superiors but which I recognize takes time.

Again the issue was that at times General Westmoreland, the MACV staff, or the Corps Senior Advisors were bypassing the pacification chief. Komer wanted Westmoreland to tell the Senior Advisors, the U.S. Army Vietnam staff, the MACV staff, and the Vietnamese Joint General Staff to come to him first on "all pacification business," relying on him to refer major issues to his commander. In retrospect Komer took a mellowed view of this issue:

Westmoreland was not used to having an active deputy. The corps commanders or staff would come to him and discuss several issues, one of which would be pacification oriented. Then Westmoreland would give guidance and I would not hear about it until later.

44. Letter, Komer to Westmoreland, 11 August 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
45. Ibid.
46. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 30 March 1972.
In time this difficulty was ironed out by the combination of Komer's assertiveness and Westmoreland's growing trust. Actually, Komer began to exercise responsibilities that belonged to the Corps Senior Advisors. CORDS developed a semi-independent chain of command. The Senior Advisors were occupied with the large-unit war and delegated most pacification business to their own Deputy for CORDS. Most of CORDS operational affairs went through the unwritten Komer (or MACCORDS) -- corps DEPCORDS -- province team channel, though certain issues such as money and manpower (especially if they concerned personnel or materials not already under CORDS control) had to be dealt with through the Corps Senior Advisors.

Basically the corps commanders left us alone. In practice the pacification business was run autonomously. This had a great deal to do with the success of the organization.47

The CORDS organization for IV Corps is best treated as a separate case. This region had far fewer U.S. troops, and the only major U.S. ground force stationed in the Delta, parts of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division, were under the operational control of the American III Corps commander. On the other hand, the Delta area had not only the largest advisory effort but also the largest civilian advisory effort. It was the one corps where Komer and Westmoreland gave serious consideration to naming a civilian as the Senior Advisor and not merely the Deputy for CORDS.

In May Komer proposed Mr. Barry Zorthian, then the head of JUSPAO, as

47. Ibid.
Senior Advisor, and Westmoreland agreed wholeheartedly. To the surprise of both Zorthian turned down the job, and the idea of a civilian Senior Advisor fell through because it was difficult to find another civilian with the requisite experience, rank, and acceptability to the military. John Vann, the III Corps DEPCORDS who could have handled the job, was ruled out for the latter reason though much later in the war he did serve as the first and only civilian Corps Senior Advisor under MACV, but then in II Corps.

The organization in IV Corps was different from the other corps in that here the corps command channels devolved in only two broad lines: the ARVN and the pacification advisory efforts. The Senior Advisor was given an extra month to revise his organization, and the resulting structure and principles adhered to the general guidance as laid down in the CORDS directive. (See Chart VI-5.)

Thus Komer and Westmoreland established the organization of CORDS which remained unchanged, except for minor alterations, during the next five years.

The remainder of this chapter continues the tale of managerial and organizational development but mixes it with some discussion of the field programs

48. Memorandum, Colonel Montague to Komer, Subj.: Early Decisions/Actions, 13 May 1967, and Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 15 June 1972. There is almost no documentary evidence on this proposal. Komer says it was all handled verbally.

49. In July Komer, who wanted to emphasize IV Corps because of its pacification importance, even suggested General Bruce Palmer to be the senior American there, but Westmoreland kept Palmer on as his overall Army commander. — Memorandum, Komer to Westmoreland, 9 July 1967, SECRET (Grp. 4).

50. Message, COMUSMACV 21016 to Senior Advisor, IV Corps, 261245Z June 1967, Subj.: CORDS Organization for IV Corps, CONFIDENTIAL, (Grp. 4).
Chart VI-5. U.S. ADVISORY ORGANIZATION IN IV CORPS AFTER THE FORMATION OF CORDS, JULY 1967
themselves and CORDS effect on the Vietnamese Government. Implementation of
the President's decision was not merely the mechanics of setting up the new
organization and publishing directives. What followed Westmoreland's direc-
tive was as important to implementing the decision of President Johnson as
establishing the organization itself. If CORDS had not become a successful
bureaucracy, its survival would have been doubtful. Even the most ingenious
organization charts could not have saved CORDS if it had not been aggressive
and innovative or if it had not demonstrated its own competence and ability
to get results from the Vietnamese it advised and supported — this latter
point being the fundamental motivation for the President's action.

As it is not the intention of this dissertation, I wish to avoid a
lengthy defense of CORDS, its programs, or their effect on the Vietnamese
and the war despite any personal impressions that I might entertain. But,
one cannot escape a crucial factor in implementation which was the perception
(a word that cannot be stressed too heavily in this instance), by those
within the government who could pass judgment on the new organization, of
its success and that of its programs. This perception of success was vital.

Unlike the case of OCO, the President sat back and let CORDS develop.
CORDS was in place as a functioning element in far less than the ninety days
allotted OCO, but affecting the Vietnamese and the war's progress itself were
more difficult problems and results in these areas came slowly over the next
several years.

As mentioned earlier, Washington influence on pacification dropped off
perceptibly after CORDS was established. For one, the President did not
allow Ambassador Leonhart the same influence that his predecessor had en-
joyed, and after the 1968 TET offensive Johnson's interest in pacification
waned. In addition, Komer fell victim to what one might call the "man-in-the-field" syndrome:

...I didn't want them telling me how to run something which over a year I thought I had learned how to run.51

He adopted what he called the "Westmoreland" view: "we're the field commanders; give us the resources; we'll do the job."52 Regardless of whether he did know better than Washington, it is interesting that he showed much the same resentment towards Washington agencies and officials that Taylor, Lodge, and Westmoreland had shown before him. The phenomenon appears and reappears throughout this narrative and its preparatory researches; indeed, it seems to be universal -- field managers intensely dislike Washington involvement in their business.

Komer did however take pains to keep his Washington fences mended, and to make sure that those in Washington who counted understood what he had done. Not only did he personally brief Secretary McNamara during his July visit on the new CORDS organization and its plans, but he rode back to Washington with him to make sure that his viewpoint would be heard, especially against some of the civilian agencies that had resisted the formation of CORDS. He also made sure to see the President.

An important source of Komer's strength was the implicit recognition that he was the President's man. He could, for example, on his return trips to Washington see the President immediately -- a fact that conferred great bureaucratic power. Though Komer never used this source of strength himself,

51. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 7 November 1969.
52. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
his previous position and perceived closeness to the President still existed as a definite reality. This was however a mixed blessing, for the permanent power position of CORDS depended more on its field relationships than on far-away Presidential ties. Unless the survival of the new organization or its policies was at stake, too much Presidential help would have been a hindrance. This was one more facet of the decline or at least eclipse of Washington influence. Komer, though not wishing to dispense completely with his White House aura, moved to become an integral part of the Mission and Westmoreland's headquarters. Not only was this a boon to his own working relationships with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker, but it helped CORDS itself survive the later changes in leadership, especially the exit of Lyndon Johnson.

One major problem that needed resolution was CORDS relations with the Agency for International Development. The new pacification organization scarcely was established before AID attempted to whittle it down and retrieve some of its own programs. Though AID's monetary contributions were far smaller than those of the Department of Defense, the Agency did not want to fund programs not under its own control. Citing a confusion in AID's role in Vietnam, William Gaud, the Administrator, proposed to Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach that the CORDS program be more narrowly defined with AID removed from Congressional accountability for activities that had been transferred to MACV. Police advisory activities in particular should return to AID's purview.

Here was a clear attempt by one agency, reacting in terms of its own organizational imperatives, to subvert the President's decision. Komer sent off a sharp response to Gaud observing that he was discouraged that AID should raise questions of bureaucratic and Congressional difficulties. Pacification could not, he said, be sliced to fit agency jurisdictional and budgetary alignments in Washington, a division that had plagued past efforts. He also noted that CORDS had merely taken over AID's OCO programs and no more, so why should objections now be raised. Had Gaud been successful in this move, the result would have been a military pacification program with civil/military separation rampant again. McNamara, Bunker, and Komer firmly resisted this, and AID was left with the same accountability and managerial responsibility for pacification programs now under CORDS as it had had before Gaud's attempt. In practice, CORDS and MACV had field (outside Saigon) responsibility and accountability for pacification programs that formerly had been under USAID in Saigon.

AID never accepted relations with CORDS as settled. Funding and accountability continued to concern its directors. Komer had problems trying to get the Agency to correspond directly with CORDS on pacification business and not go first through the Saigon USAID office. But in general

54. Letter, Komer to Gaud, 30 June 1967, SECRET.
55. This matter was handled entirely below the level of the President -- Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 April 1975.
57. Memorandum, James P. Grant to Gaud, Subj.: Background for Your Meeting with Ambassador Bunker on Thursday, November 16 at 9:30 a.m., 15 November 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
58. Letter, Komer to James P. Grant, 11 December 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
the relations did work, and AID did support CORDS.

Pacification cut across separate agency and bureaucratic lines. If General Abrams as a deputy covered a wider field of staff responsibilities within MACV, Komer made up for it by ranging in and out of other agencies business, even commenting on and involving himself in intelligence and AID issues that were not strictly within the purview of pacification. General Westmoreland, though always wanting it understood who was in command, allowed his pacification deputy a remarkable freedom of action. The personal flexibility of Westmoreland, combined with Komer's ability to capitalize on it through the absence of an intervening command layer, permitted the Deputy for CORDS to run an unusual, innovative program within what otherwise might have been the overly strict confines of a military staff. Komer has acknowledged Westmoreland's importance in this regard:

...the way (Westmoreland) handled the thing was one of the basic reasons why CORDS worked. I think Westmoreland deserves a great deal of the credit for the decentralization...delegation of pacification management, and the support he gave after I got out there, on every issue that did not involve taking something away in the way of forces.59

Reporting channels demonstrate the flexibility of CORDS operation. For Komer the new job meant a readjustment from the heady days of complete access to the President. On the day of Komer's arrival in Vietnam, General Westmoreland told him firmly that he would not compromise on his reporting to anyone else, which Komer fully agreed to.60 Komer assured him that he was not serving two masters.61 Ambassador Bunker in his opening press conference cited a

59. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
60. General Westmoreland's Historical Briefing, 33 May 1967, TOP SECRET.
61. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
single reporting channel to him on pacification as one of the benefits of the new organization.

In reality the situation was more intricate. Bunker indicated as much when he went on at his press conference to say that he personally would stay abreast of pacification developments and meet often with the MACV commander and his pacification deputy. The placing of Komer on the Mission Council and even more importantly on its "Executive Committee" assured that pacification views to the rest of the Mission and in particular its chief would come directly from the man operationally responsible and not be filtered through a third person. This preserved a formal channel to Bunker.

Komer however sought more than formal channels. In March he had stressed to the President that he should have "free access to Bunker (who insists on it)." The direct channel to Bunker was not set down by directive, but General Westmoreland and the Ambassador agreed to it. In practice, especially as time went on and the General and his Deputy became more used to each other, Komer's access to Bunker became a natural occurrence. This channel not only kept an interested Ambassador intimately informed, it also immeasurably eased the transaction of daily business by increasing flexibility, and it gave Komer and the pacification program advantages when dealing with other U.S. agencies in Saigon or Washington. He had two points at which he could apply pressure on an issue.

63. Memorandum, Komer to President, Subj.: Shift of Pacification Responsibility, 27 March 1967, SECRET.
64. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 30 March 1972.
Communications with Washington were another matter. McNamara made it clear that Komer was expected to work through normal channels, and Komer himself knew that he would soon become unacceptable to the Ambassador and General Westmoreland if he went over their heads and dealt directly with the Secretary of Defense or the President. Yet, paradoxically, an important source of his strength, especially in 1967 as he formed CORDS, was the general feeling that he was "Lyndon's boy" and that he had a direct line to the White House.

While the President wanted him to communicate directly, Komer became increasingly reluctant to do so as he feared jeopardizing his close personal relationships with Westmoreland and Bunker. During his first months in Vietnam, he did communicate with the President and Walt Rostow, but in nearly every instance this was done with obvious reluctance and only in reply to White House initiatives or at the Ambassador's behest. These communications moreover were in the main answers to queries for his personal views on various non-pacification subjects. In all, what could have become a serious problem was resolved by the new Deputy's forebearance and his chiefs' growing trust and flexibility. After October this type of communication appears to have dropped off completely. Meanwhile the power position of Komer and CORDS and his relationship with General Westmoreland had stabilized with Komer fully managing pacification. Following the 1968 TET Offensive, Washington interest in pacification fell sharply, reducing even further any occasion for this

65. Message, OSD/SECRET 7253, 022144Z September 1967, SECRET.
type of communication. 66 What happened is a good example of the adjustments that must be made and have to be taken into account when the President sends one of his assistants, a man accustomed to direct contact with the highest level, to a field position where operational officials stand between him and his former chief.

Technical and staff channels on strict pacification and personnel matters remained open to Washington agencies, Ambassador Leonhart's White House pacification office, and field elements below Saigon with, for the most part, none or only the most routine perusal and clearing by the formal intervening command echelons. On pacification matters Westmoreland and Bunker allowed Komer and CORDS to use State Department, AID, and CIA communications channels.

One of CORDS great strengths was the close contact through formal and informal reporting and communications mechanisms that parts of the CORDS structure had with each other. This was a two-way flow, from the district advisors to Mr. Komer and the reverse. Members of CORDS command frequently visited the field, and key field officials, such as the Province Senior Advisors, would talk with Mr. Komer or his closest assistants if they came though Saigon.

CORDS headquarters also maintained an office of U.S. and Vietnamese evaluators who made lengthy trips to the field. They acted as an extra-bureaucratic intelligence source on the situation and the success or failure of pacification programs in the countryside. They were encouraged to dig

66. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 30 March 1972.
for and report freely on problem areas. While these reports, and indeed this whole evaluation operation, frequently raised the hackles of subordinate commanders and CORDS officials, Komer and his successor, William Colby, protected and expanded this office.

On pacification matters Komer and the CORDS staff communicated directly and indirectly with all levels of the Vietnamese Government including the President, Vice President, and Prime Minister. Though this communication occurred from CORDS inception, it increased dramatically following the 1968 TET Offensive when CORDS assisted in the nationwide recovery effort. These contacts and working relationships that it developed with the Vietnamese Government were a fundamental wellspring of CORDS strength as an organization. Not only did this enhance CORDS' ability to get results from the Vietnamese but it gave CORDS a strength and a usefulness within the Mission that other elements did not possess. No other agency or office during the entire American involvement possessed such regular, active, and working relationships with the Vietnamese at all administrative levels from Saigon to the district. What is more, this contact had a continuity that went beyond any one personality, a welcome change from a problem that so often plagued the U.S. advisory efforts in Vietnam.

I have dwelt at length on these aspects of communications as they are indicative of what must be termed an unusual flexibility within a well-established bureaucratic structure. Credit belongs not only with those in pacification who pushed it but equally with those who permitted it, often despite resistance and opposition in their own staffs.

One of CORDS' great strengths was that its leaders went out aggressively
to bring under its purview programs of vital importance to pacification which heretofore had been the province of other agencies and in at least two cases had been languishing with token or low-priority attention. They deserve special emphasis here.

The first program was advising and supporting South Vietnamese local troops, the Regional and Popular Forces. In the early 1960's advisory responsibility had been transferred from AID to MAAG, but since then it had always taken a back seat to the more conventional and glamorous advisory work with the ARVN regular forces. Because of ARVN reluctance and inability to support pacification on a sustained and systematic basis, pacification clearly needed its own security forces. Komer recognized that these local forces represented an enormous and under-utilized source of manpower for security of the rural population. He felt that it was better to take these assets, already in existence and organized on a local, territorial basis, and improve and expand them rather than to attempt a long, slow build-up of RD cadre and police to accomplish the same end.

The MACV staff, perhaps because it wished to let someone else tackle a difficult and flagging task, offered no resistance to moving the advisory effort for these forces from MACV's operations office to CORDS. The transfer was accomplished effortlessly. After this was done, CORDS set up a large advisory and monitoring system for the local forces.

No single organizational maneuver of Komer's was more important to the eventual course of pacification. Bureaucratically, this strengthened CORDS as an organization, more than doubling its complement of advisors, but far more important it gave CORDS leverage with the Vietnamese and resources to
build up the indispensible security component of the Vietnamese Government's pacification program. This security component soon became larger than the regular army. By its very responsibilities this greatly increased CORDS independence, legitimate areas of interest, and Vietnamese officials whom it could influence. This move on the U.S. side also enabled CORDS to press for a corresponding reemphasis and reorganization on the Vietnamese side which was accomplished in late 1967 when General Thang, the Minister of Revolutionary Development, was appointed Vice Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff and put in charge of the Regional/Popular Forces and pacification. Komer thus had a clear opposite in the Vietnamese military chain of command, and the first step had been taken towards unifying the pacification effort on the Vietnamese side. This provided a welcome contrast with an unsuccessful attempt in 1966 by General Thang with the full support of Komer and Porter to do the opposite -- take the Regional/Popular Forces out of the Army's command and put them under the Ministry of Revolutionary Development.

The second advisory program was the Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX) Program which later became the Vietnamese Government's Phoenix, or Phung Hoang, Program. Komer devised it as an attempt to get the Americans and the Vietnamese to focus on a vital, but hitherto neglected, element of the Viet Cong -- its political/military command and administrative cadre. Such a program had long been regarded as essential to the defeat of the Viet Cong. As we have seen, pacification theorists from the days of the French onward regarded this as crucial. All U.S. and GVN agencies agreed to its importance, but existing efforts were diffuse, uncoordinated, and unequal to the task. Even MACV agreed with the need to centralize the effort that
was falling between the efforts of several U.S. and GVN agencies.

Komer felt that the CIA knew more about this problem than MACV, whose main interest was order-of-battle intelligence, and wanted the new advisory effort to be under CIA leadership but subject to his close, personal supervision as an integral part of CORDS. This meant the creation of a new organization within MACV and one that would have a CIA man as its operating chief and be competitive with MACV's own intelligence office in an area (intelligence) in which throughout U.S. history civilians and the military have often disagreed. To make matters even more difficult, the new office, with its CIA leadership in key positions, would control an advisory program whose members would be overwhelmingly military in numbers. It should come as no surprise that the MACV intelligence office wanted to head this new effort themselves and strenuously resisted Komer's proposal.

At a crucial meeting in July 1967 General Westmoreland overruled the MACV staff in Komer's favor. Komer felt that this was what really put CORDS "in business":

...we had a session in Westy's office, with myself and all the generals. They had all sorts of objections to Phoenix...The Chief of Staff, representing the staff with all the other generals nodding their heads wisely, said:

"The idea of attacking the infrastructure makes sense, but this scheme you have which calls for a combined, civil/military effort, bringing CIA expertise onto the scene and having a civilian director under you, and you're chairman of the board of the Phoenix corporation, and all that sort of thing..."...all these nice gimmicks that we had put in there, the staff just thought that was terrible. You couldn't spare the people; the military shouldn't participate, but at the same time J-2 should run it. It should be run as a regular military operation. But after they had gotten through with these limp explanations, Westy turned to
me and said: "Bob, what do you think about these criticisms?" Well, I held forth for about ten minutes, and if I may say so myself, I absolutely destroyed them. First of all, they didn't know anything about the problem, whereas I'd been working on it for eight or nine months, and they had tried their best to throw some monkey wrenches into the works.

I'll say this for Westmoreland, he turned to the Chief of Staff, in the presence of all the generals and said: "The Ambassador is right...I think we ought to do it his way." And that was it. They all filed out, and from that time on my power position was solid...And I remember psychologically marking that as the time when Westy made it clear that when I had a good case, he was on my side.67

Not only did CORDS gain a new program, new responsibilities, and new areas of bureaucratic purview, but Westmoreland sent an unmistakable signal to the rest of his command -- pacification had the commander's full support, and it would be a force not easily controlled by the MACV staff. From the point of view of bureaucratic innovation, the result was interesting too. With organizational repertoires and interests stacked against it, few would have given Komor's proposal the slightest chance of adoption. Yet Westmoreland backed it against the recommendations of the rest of his staff, proving not only his personal flexibility and adaptiveness but the importance of personality against organizational determinism. Finally, the anti-infrastructure advisory program was a microcosm of the larger CORDS organization -- the intermingling of military and civilian advisors with the military being more numerous but the civilians holding important directing positions. One of the most disunified American programs was welded into a genuine civil/military

67. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komor, 6 November 1969.
effort. As in the case of the division advisors and the local forces, the U.S. reorganization was able to push a similar one on the Vietnamese side.

CORDS also at key points in the war managed and created programs that increased its responsibilities and reputation, within the U.S. Government at least, for competence. When the 1968 TET Offensive hit South Vietnam with its hammer blows, Bunker and Westmoreland asked CORDS to take the lead in a nationwide recovery effort that not only dealt with problems no other U.S. agency was able to handle but in the process developed for the organization an intimate working rapport with the Vietnamese Government. CORDS also conceived, planned, and then stage-managed a major GVN pacification offensive in late 1968 to take advantage of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese weakness following upon their own 1968 attacks. This organizational aggressiveness was a key factor in CORDS' ability to survive and prosper, particularly once high-level Washington interest had waned. CORDS grew not only big and powerful but useful at the same time. Both these programs were among CORDS' most successful, and they illustrate the delayed nature of the payoff from the May reorganization. Though this payoff was not immediately apparent to many in the first months of CORDS, when a national emergency struck or a strategic opportunity presented itself, the United States was able to react with a functioning, unified organization closely tied to and able to influence all levels of the Vietnamese Government. In both of these also, the experiences gained in the programs themselves cemented relations between CORDS and its Vietnamese counterparts.

Throughout this dissertation I have stressed the dissatisfaction that many observers and U.S. officials felt with the lack of unity of the U.S.
effort for pacification. The situation was no better, if not worse, on the Vietnamese side. By early 1967 the Vietnamese military, the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and numerous civilian ministries, such as those dealing with health, education, and police, were all involved in pacification. Each possessed chains of officials stretching down into the provinces, and no one was giving a pacification focus or unity to their undertakings. The situation was complicated by bureaucratic heritages and political problems that made the U.S. side seem simple by comparison. Countless American officials were aware of these complications but could accomplish little except in the case of the creation of the Ministry of Rural Construction (later Revolutionary Development) in 1965 which pulled together the pacification, but not the ministerial, cadre programs. An explicit rationale behind the CORDS decision was that this move on the American side would encourage the Vietnamese Government to bring unity to their own pacification program. From the outset Komer set out to accomplish this, but it was a long, slow road to travel. The aforementioned movement of General Thang, the Minister of Revolutionary Development, to the Joint General Staff, was one step in this direction. Conspicuously disunified sub-programs, such as the anti-infrastructure efforts, were his targets also. But the real key to unity on the Vietnamese side, he felt, was to engage the Vietnamese Government at its highest levels directly in pacification, to lift the effort from the purview of any group of ministries and create a national pacification council with the President as its chief and run directly by the Prime Minister. Komer began this effort, and William Colby kept pushing it until he was rewarded with success in 1969 when President Thieu established the Central Pacification
and Development Council.

A vital element in the viability of this change was the full-time working staff that was set up to serve the Council. Under a Vietnamese general this staff actually managed the pacification program, so much so that the Americans began to fade into the background -- part of the original intent of the U.S. advocacy for the Council. A wish that had been but words in the months of a succession of American officials for many years finally became reality.

CORDS was remarkable for the degree to which disparate U.S. Government agencies were welded into a functioning civil/military organization. Komer had stressed the need for this since 1966; pacification, he felt, was neither civil nor military but civil/military. When CORDS was set up, terms such as "non-military actions" or the "other war" left the official vocabulary. The military did contribute much more of the manpower and resources, but most of the key policy-making and directive positions were held by civilians. This, combined with the aggressiveness of the civilian leadership, did much to allay the fears of civilians that the May decision meant that they would be swallowed up and smothered by the military. After several months of working together the distinctions between military and civilians began to break down. For the civilians CORDS was an invaluable managerial and operational experience of the type few of them had been exposed to before. Both civilians and the military gained a better understanding of each other.

68. General Cao Hai Hon.
69. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 April 1975.
Because CORDS was not a fully institutionalized bureaucratic structure with career patterns, promotional loyalty, and lengthy terms of service, and because most officials would return to their original agencies, the basic personal orientations were still toward these agencies. The leaders of CORDS did however go out of their way to see that service with CORDS was treated by the agencies promotion boards with the same respect as that given functions normally felt to be the essence of each contributing bureaucracy. What is most important is that in operations in Vietnam the members of this new bureaucracy began to identify more with pacification than with the traditional roles of their parent agencies — this despite the fact most planned to return to traditional jobs in these agencies.

Many civilians feared that with CORDS they had been captured by the military. Just as strong a case can be made that the reverse happened. In terms of sheer material resources pacification had direct access to such items as military engineers for construction and road building, military transport, and the far larger funding sources that the Department of Defense possessed. One has but to observe funding trends to see what this meant for pacification. Bearing in mind that much of the Defense Department contribution went for assistance and support to the Regional and Popular Forces which accounts for most of the phenomenal disparity in contributions even in FY 1967, the military share steadily increased. And yet the following percentages by no means reflect the relative weights of military or civilian policy influence:
Between FY 1968 and FY 1970 AID's contribution declined from $70 million to $41 million while DOD's share jumped from $485 million to $729 million. By consolidating the effort in 1967, the President and Komer obtained for pacification a vast increase in funds under one manager.

It is more difficult to assess to what extent the formation of CORDS affected military policies, emphasis, and attention. In May President Johnson was not just making an organizational change. He wanted action on pacification and from the military as well as the civilians. From the foregoing, the strength of CORDS within MACV should be obvious. Furthermore, by having a powerful, institutionalized advocate, with outside ties, inside the headquarters, pacification began to influence military operations and policy in a way that it had never been able to do when it was the province of separate and sometimes hostile agencies and when the military were not held directly responsible.

This is not to say that pacification supplanted military operations. Numerous examples can be found long after 1968 to show that the military often continued to do exactly what they knew best with no heed for the consequences to pacification or the Vietnamese. But military actions did have

70. CORDS Fact Sheet Prepared for Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing in February 1970.
to take pacification into account, and more often than not these actions began to be shaped and influenced by pacification considerations. It is instructive in this regard to look at the MACV planning guidance for senior commanders. It underwent some rapid changes. The directive issued in May 1967, just prior to the formation of CORDS, heavily emphasized main-force, offensive operations. In it pacification was treated last in discussions of the situation, and support for pacification was the seventh of seven objectives. By the end of October the same directive said that the key to the overall concept is "sustained territorial security for pacification." Pacification now was discussed second under "situation," and it became "objectives" numbers two and three, ahead even of "invade enemy base areas" which had long been a favorite of the U.S. Army. The joint U.S./GVN combined campaign plans reflect this same trend.

When a series of extraneous factors, the 1968 TET Offensive and the gradual U.S. withdrawal for example, began to alter the war, CORDS was on hand with a program to fit these changes. CORDS also was institutionally adaptable enough to change in 1970 and 1971 to an emphasis on development rather than security, an adaptation of the type which AID found impossible to achieve during the entire war.

Looking back over the implementation of the President's decision, one must stress that it was remarkably successful, far more so than any official

in Washington, including the President, could have hoped in May 1967. The fact that the President does not appear again in this tale of organization is an indicator of how well his wishes were carried out. CORDS worked well enough and built up enough momentum to last until the 1973 Cease Fire despite shoals of bureaucratic vicissitudes, a growing lack of civilian agency backing, and a complete change of the original personalities.

This change of personalities is perhaps the most interesting, for as much credit belongs to the individuals as to the organization they created. Komer's working relationship with Westmoreland became closer and more relaxed, but Westmoreland returned home to be Army Chief of Staff in May 1968. General Abrams replaced him, and immediately a cold wind blew on his pacification deputy:

I'm also afraid that our semi-public arguments about pacification in the presence of our subordinates are giving them the impression we're seriously at odds. I can even sense a decline in staff responsiveness. Nor are the Corps Commanders, DEPCORDS, or FSAs going to be as responsive to me if the word gets around that you think they ought to have a great deal more leeway. One quite senior officer even told a senior officer of mine recently to "remember what suit you wear."74

This change affected particularly the free-wheeling operational style of Komer and his organization, though not pacification itself which Abrams supported as fully as his predecessor. Washington's attention to pacification waned severely after the shock of the 1968 TET Offensive, and this was a subtle signal that Komer's power was not quite what it had been. When

Clark Clifford visited Vietnam in July 1968, Komer found that he had little interest in pacification. By the end of September his frustration had grown to the point that he accepted the President's offer to become Ambassador to Turkey and left Vietnam a month later.

With President Johnson's departure from office shortly thereafter, CORDS was on its own and had to live by its efforts alone. Komer had hand-picked William Colby as his potential successor and brought him out to be trained on the ground. From early 1968 Colby served as Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, so the transition went smoothly. Colby was by nature a different personality from Komer and stuck more closely within the boundaries of pacification. If Abrams reduced the independence of CORDS, he did not stifle it. In a sense, each man was right for his period -- Komer to establish the system and Colby to keep it running in a changed situation. CORDS was assisted by the fact that as U.S. forces withdrew pacification became a larger and larger component of the total American effort. The new administration kept it going because, along with Vietnamization, pacification provided the alternative to U.S. troop involvement.

CORDS was a large-scale organization, a sharp departure from the smaller efforts of the past. It was however in tune with what the war and the U.S. response had become by 1967. Rather than to plead for tidbits of manpower, resources, and attention from the military war, CORDS, in essence, became a better bureaucracy, acquiring power by aggressive innovation and force of personalities. It got resources and attention from the U.S. military by the

75. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 30 March 1972.
76. Personal Interview with Ambassador Komer, 6 November 1969.
only way possible -- working from within as part of the structure. It was not revolutionary, but it was flexible and innovative as new organizations often are. CORDS was less bound by the constraints of the more established agencies. It was not afraid to take on new responsibilities, and it was adaptable. Most important, it was an organization with one purpose -- pacification. It did not dilute its efforts by other major tasks. Lastly, in the implementation of President Johnson's decision, one must stress again the role of personalities. Without Komer and some of his key assistants there is a good chance that CORDS would have failed. Ambassador Bunker's influence was important too. He not only strongly supported and backed CORDS and pacification, but he also did not interfere in the conduct of its operations or its contacts with even the highest levels of the Vietnamese Government. General Westmoreland, more organizationally flexible than his successor, was vital. He accepted, at times tolerated, and almost always supported this unusual, quasi-independent organization and gave it the necessary freedom to operate.
Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused on the President for two reasons. First, he is a key protagonist in the bureaucratic politics paradigm and the main source of contention over its validity. Second, in the events related in this study, he was the agent of change, the sole actor able to force resolution of the organizational and managerial impasse among the agencies of the government below him.

What lessons can be drawn from the evolution of U.S. organization and management of its pacification advice and support program? Four immediately come to mind: the importance of active Presidential interest and involvement, the key role of the individual in making and carrying out governmental decisions, the rejection of bureaucratic/organizational determinism, and the possibility of change in even the most complex and difficult bureaucratic situations. The emphasis of these four conclusions is on how to make the government work despite bureaucratic politics and organizational response.

Before discussing these in detail, it is worth emphasizing that when this evolution is examined chronologically, two significant decision thresholds appear -- 1961 and 1966. The former was a critical year. President Kennedy made decisions on U.S. organization for Vietnam that set the pattern for the rest of the war, although at the time Vietnam was not at the center of the government's attention and few realized the significance of these decisions. Rather than have a small task force tied directly to the White House or a single director to unify U.S. operations, he retained the
traditional agency system and set up a conventional military command. These
decisions were not accomplished with great dispatch or out of any open President-
dial preference, but they had profound and lasting implications for Ameri-
can war management. No one agency or individual in either Washington or
Vietnam was given overall authority. With the Ambassador's power circum-
scribed by bureaucratic resistance or personal inclination, each agency per-
severed in its own approach to the war, and, because of their size and ag-
gressiveness, the military preserved and increased their domination of opera-
tions and operational emphasis. The lack of organization and clear political
management helped to ensure that a political approach to conducting the war
would remain secondary.

The second key year was 1966. With the United States now massively
involved and Vietnam consuming more of the government's attention than any
other issue, President Johnson became actively interested in pacification
and set out to improve the U.S. and Vietnamese efforts. He established the
White House pacification office and began the steps that led directly to
CORDS and later to parallel GVN organization and management changes.

Despite their separation by time, the decisions of 1961 helped to con-
dition those made in 1966. In a sense, the President was a prisoner of the
system set up in 1961 in much the same way that one administration is locked
into the on-going weapons systems generated by its predecessors.¹ The al-
ternatives presented to Johnson in 1966 were moulded by the existing

1. Graham Allison and Frederic Morris, "Armaments and Arms Control:
Exploring the Determinants of Military Weapons," Daedalus, Summer
structure of quasi-independent agencies and their powers. The CORDS
decision recognized bureaucratic realities and the strengths and weaknesses
of the respective agencies and was tailored to fit them.

Between 1961 and 1966 many complaints about the inadequacy of U.S.
organization reached the President. Yet until he acted, until his prefer-
ence was established, little happened. Officials in the bureaucracies, even
some White House Special Assistants, sought solutions, but without the uni-
fying force of the President and without a special office close to him con-
tinually pursuing the issue, they remained fragmented. Finally, when Presi-
dent Johnson did decide to place pacification under the military, he had to
manipulate the resisting bureaucracies and reluctant subordinate officials.
He was, however, able to follow through on his preference and see to this
major managerial innovation that in one way or another went against the
organizational grain of every agency involved.

The "Introduction" asked why it took the U.S. Government so long to
produce a remedy for managing the U.S. role in the pacification program.
American leaders up to and including the President were aware of the pro-
gram's deficiencies, and nearly all of them gave at least lip service to
the importance of pacification in their public declarations. Yet, for six
years little happened and the program was allowed to drift between the orbits
of different agencies. A bureaucratic politics interpretation might answer
that the President was enmeshed in a web of bureaucracy, unable to force
compliance with his wishes, trading off inaction in this area for compliance
in another.
The answer is both in the bureaucracies and the President. On the bureaucratic level the participants were incapable of resolving the impasse over organization between their agencies and incapable of arriving at and then implementing a solution. At this level, the years were replete with struggles and solutions that failed for pacification management. There was little forceful or sustained input from the President. Each agency saw the war and U.S. strategy in terms of its own organizational procedures. While pacification involved every agency, none of them saw it as their central mission in Vietnam. Although most officials realized the need for more unity, left to themselves, they could not transform intentions into outcomes. The resulting disunity is a perfect illustration of Allison's "organization process" model, and the record is replete with instances of organizations and officials behaving exactly as Allison and Halperin predicted they would. Furthermore, possible attempts at unity ran against a strong but unwritten U.S. government principle that civilian and military agencies dislike treading into each other's business. With the President only involved peripherally and his attention turned elsewhere, bureaucratic conflict and bargaining were the dominant state of action. While successive U.S. Ambassadors can be rightly faulted for not bringing more forceful leadership to bear or achieving more unity, they, too, faced formidable problems since each agency could appeal Mission decisions back to its Washington constituency. Even

Ambassador Taylor probably would have had to appeal for Presidential assistance if he had really tried to centralize U.S. operations and strategy or pacification management in Vietnam despite his strong letter of authority.

Thus at the agency level below the President the actors were unable to reach a solution on organization. This should be no surprise. Though the military/Defense Department were far stronger as organizations with far greater resources, the civilians, whose strength in Vietnam grew proportionately, were aided by their agencies' power in the U.S. Government and by the fact that the top civilian leadership saw pacification as a predominantly civilian program and did not want to cloak the entire U.S. effort in Vietnam in military garb. The bureaucracies' strengths, though not equal, were balanced enough so that, unless one of them succeeded in winning the President to its side or unless the President intervened forcefully on his own, no resolution was possible.

The President was the key actor, for he resolved this impasse. What emerges is not the picture of roi fainéant but rather a lack of Presidential focus on the problem. Neither Johnson nor Kennedy perceived organization and management as having the importance they have received in hindsight. This is not to heap blame on either, for a President cannot and should not attend to every detail in government. The failure was first of all the fault of those who served the President. This said, why did the President not intervene and resolve the problem?

President Kennedy in 1961 exhibited no clear thread of preference, although he did not discourage the gradual swing of power to the military/Defense position late in the year. He was presented with a variety of
alternatives but there is no indication that he preferred any one of them. Organizational structure did not occupy his mind; he seems to have been far more concerned with people and performance than with the precise forms organization should take.\(^4\) He may have recognized that problems existed but not seen any better solution than to continue with an expanded agency system, letting more and more power devolve into the hands of subordinates whom he trusted such as Secretary McNamara. Secretary Rusk, to the distress of some of his subordinates, also figured in by backing away from Vietnam and permitting McNamara to assume gradually the leading role in Vietnam. Combined with President Kennedy's growing trust and confidence in the Secretary of Defense, Rusk's attitude helped to determine why the managerial system grew as it did, and this system, left without strong outside regulation, evolved exactly as could be expected.

No one agency or actor would ever be permitted to be in complete command; yet, because of personalities, size, aggressiveness, and willingness to act (even if the action was wrong), the Defense Department and the military took the leading role. As power became more entrenched in the largest bureaucracy, it not only determined the overall U.S. strategy and resource allocation for the war, but it also made the military the logical candidate and the pre-eminent contender for pacification support responsibility as the issue came to resolution in 1966 and 1967.

This lack of Presidential preference was extremely important. One cannot make a case for the omnipotence or inevitability of the bureaucratic

politics/organizational process models if the President did not express himself with any force on the issue or pursue with any vigor the wishes he occasionally expressed. Also, Kennedy's actions were understandable. Beset with problems then far more important than Vietnam, it was not illogical that he would overlook U.S. management and organization in Vietnam and leave the details to his subordinates.

President Johnson continued this same lack of clear preference until 1966, although he occasionally toyed with ideas of U.S. military government in Vietnam. While aware of the management problem in the U.S. Mission, he does not seem to have focused on it until 1966. When he voiced a preference or when he was presented with reports on U.S. disorganization by his closest aides, he did not follow them up. Why did he not take a more active role?

One reason may be found in the gradualism inherent in the U.S. approach to the Vietnam War. The size of the U.S. effort crept up slowly enough so that the separate agency system was strained but not broken apart. Closely tied to this was the abundance of resources available to each agency and the government. Since all could have more, it was easy for the Administration to put off decisions on organization and centralization that would have meant stepping on bureaucratic toes. Before 1966, the costs of waste and the advantages of major organizational change did not seem to warrant disrupting the normal processes of government.

Allied to this indirectly were considerations of domestic politics. In a war where the leaders were unsure of public support, reluctance to

5. Personal Interview with McGeorge Bundy, 17 July 1975.
interfere severely in the bureaucracies and create a probable outcry from their allies in Congress may have played a role. Furthermore, both administrations were most unwilling to paint the conflict as a full-scale war. Major bureaucratic reorganization would have signaled visibly to Congress and the public more gravity than they cared to exhibit.6

Psychologically, Johnson perhaps wanted to avoid facing the reality of war.7 His style of governing may have been influential also. Apparently obsessed with secrecy, Johnson seemed bent on keeping tight personal control over the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.8 Thus, the only powerful office dealing with Vietnam to supervise other agencies, Komer's Special Assistant office, was set up in the White House and run by an aide always directly and closely responsible to Johnson himself.

Another reason for the lack of focus on pacification organization and management was that pacification was perceived as the GVN's business rather than as a job Americans could or should do. This government-wide outlook delayed the coming of the moment when the U.S. Government and the President would see pacification advice and support as worthy of the investment of attention and resources that it required.

Finally, the time frame affected Presidential perception. Until 1965 Vietnam was not a major consumer of his and the government's attention.

6. Closely related to this view is Gelb's assertion that each President did what he construed to be the minimum necessary action for passing on the burden of Vietnam. See Leslie Gelb, "Vietnam: the System Worked", Foreign Policy, No. 3 (Summer 1971), pp. 140-167.
7. This view is elaborated by Chester Cooper. See Chester Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1970), p. 413.
8. Ibid., pp. 412-417.
Only after the United States' involvement reached a massive scale did organizational and management problems begin to be addressed with real urgency.

These reasons, however, all lead to the basic factor — perception. To see these events in terms of perception is in accord with John Steinbruner's hypothesis of "uncommitted thinking." There was only a slow dawning in the President's mind of the need for a true reorganization in addition to a change of personalities. Since true Presidential pressure had to be exerted to free pacification from its organizational and managerial morass, the perception of the urgency of need, which would then lead to committed thinking, was the key element in explaining the changes of 1966. From this perception flowed the steps that lead to CORDS. Because Johnson does not appear to have perceived the need in forceful enough terms, he did not want to upset the agencies or interfere with his Ambassadors and how they ran the Mission. Both Lodge and Taylor were politically strong, the former especially so because he was a Republican serving in a Democratic war. The President felt that he needed them there at that time and was reluctant to force them on an issue such as organization. This is not an argument in favor of a bureaucratic politics interpretation of events, for in 1966 and 1967 when he realized the need and importance of reorganization, he was willing to override the civilian agencies and even some within the military. He prodded Lodge openly and eventually had him leave Vietnam. This was done at a time when the President

was daily faced with growing criticism and when his perceived political needs should have been greater.

In covering the period of 1966-1968, this dissertation addressed a different question. Once the President perceived the need for reorganization and better management, how did he go about achieving it?

The real jolt of Presidential interest in pacification came with the Honolulu Conference in February 1966 after the first flush of attention to the military war diminished and criticism of the war effort began to mount slowly at home. This interest naturally gravitated toward the U.S. advisory organization since that was the one area amenable to early repair because the United States did not have to work through the Vietnamese. Organization was also a subject that Americans were most at home with.

The bureaucracies and officials below the President furthered this interest by their own recognition of the urgency of the problem of organization. Nearly every key actor but Ambassador Lodge admitted that something had to be done, and their estimates reached the President through several sources. Yet for all their interest, they were by no means agreed on a solution.

President Johnson's appointment of Porter in February 1966 ran closely in tune with the recommendations of the Warrenton Conference -- a bureaucratic consensus. Komer's White House assignment in March reflected the forceful urging McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, both of whom realized that such an office had to be located in the White House and that it had to have directive and supervisory powers.
The contrast between the results of these two changes is instructive. Porter did not see organization and management as important issues but chose to continue operating within the prevailing agency system, challenging neither his immediate boss nor the bureaucracies he was supposed to oversee. Komer, on the other hand, viewed institutional change as essential to the success of pacification and that became the focus of his efforts. Close to the President and attuned to his needs, the White House pacification office provided the force and impetus in U.S. advice and support over the next year. It forcefully pushed government agencies in Washington and the Mission in Saigon. The office codified three organizational alternatives for U.S. pacification support in the field, presented them to the President, and began the process of moving the subordinate agencies. One cannot overestimate the importance of having an advocate sitting next to the President, tied directly to him, and perceived by the Chief Executive as his personal instrument. The presence of an aggressive agent for change turned a persistent magnifying glass on the problem and gave the Chief Executive a specific solution.

While Johnson decided on the overall form of reorganization in September of 1966, he still moved carefully. Ambassadorial and civilian agency opposition ran high. Rather than directly implement the change, he manipulated the resistance and defused any possible Congressional criticism by giving the civilians another chance (OCO) while deliberately setting an impossible deadline of three months in which to achieve results. When the final

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decision came, opposition was muted and chastened.

That the implementation of the decision to give pacification to the military worked so well was due to four factors. First were the personalities of those who carried it out. If Bunker and Komer had behaved like their predecessors, the new organization would either have ground to a halt or have been submerged and lost in the enormous military headquarters' machine. That would have violated the President's wish to make pacification a civil/military effort and not one or the other. Yet, if Westmoreland had been rigid and inflexible, the civilians would have departed from the organization or been forced often to throw issues up to the President. Instead, because of a fortuitous combination of personalities, organizational problems never once returned to the President's level. Although one can question the success of the pacification program, it is hard to fault the implementation of Johnson's decision from his point of view -- it was carried out exactly as he wished and it left him free to turn to other concerns.

The second factor affecting implementation was the open injection of Presidential interest. By choosing one of his Special Assistants and placing the Washington pacification office in the White House instead of the State Department, Johnson made his own involvement clear. The active, aggressive role he permitted Komer to play is another indication of his interest. If he had not desired this, the "Blowtorch" would have been quickly extinguished. This interest contrasts greatly with that he had for the SIG/IRG (NSAM 341) system set up the same month and which he scarcely used.11 The lack of

Presidential interest was also a major reason for the withering of the White House pacification office after CORDS was set up. The force of perceived Presidential interest carried through to the actual CORDS operation in Vietnam. While Komer may have felt constrained in using his White House connections once in the field, their mere existence added substantially to his position in the Mission.

The fact that the decision took into account bureaucratic strengths and the realities of each agency's capabilities was a third and most complex factor. The CORDS decision was generally in concert with what the largest and most powerful bureaucracy, the Department of Defense, wanted. What would have been the result if President Johnson had turned all of pacification management over to civilians with strong directive powers over pacification programs, including those of the military? Who can gauge Westmoreland's reaction if over half of his field advisors and their Saigon staffs had been torn away and strong civilians, both willing and able to interfere in detailed military business, had been placed above him? Would the military have sabotaged implementation by non-compliance, foot-dragging, or appealing back to their Washington base of support with its strong roots in Congress? The President might have chosen such a course, but enforcing compliance would have sorely taxed his energies.

These points raise the question of whether Johnson indeed avoided the real test of Presidential power by not taking the military on. Yet while we cannot know for certain what went through the President's mind as he decided to give pacification support responsibility to the military, there is little doubt that he chose the most bureaucratically feasible solution, and
that it was constructed in such a manner as to end up providing an extraordinary and subtle degree of control over the military. This is a key point. Giving formal responsibility meant that the military had to perform; yet placing a strong civilian as the operational deputy meant that the officers could not just run off in the direction that their service affiliations and inclinations would have let them. Far more than the civilians, it was the military who were eventually co-opted, and there is no doubt that they underestimated the effect that Komer and CORDS would have upon them. The result was the capture of enormous military personnel and funding resources and the ability to influence military operational emphasis from within. Thus, the structuring of the solution to take advantage of bureaucratic strengths and realities had much to do with its success.

In connection with this last point, it is interesting to observe how much the CORDS decision was conditioned by existing structures and power relationships. The war and the separate agencies had become behemoths; Johnson did not have the extra-bureaucratic Lansdale alternative available to him as did Kennedy; he had to work through the instruments available. The weight of past accretions and on-going programs was such that by 1966 Komer's operational definition of pacification was determined by what programs were already underway for security, development, and winning popular support. His concept of mass recognized exactly how the GVN and the United States were fighting the war and which organizations had the power and ability within this context. This conception and this view of reality

12. See Appendix II, p. 22.
drew Komer and thence the President into the CORDS solution.

Finally, implementation succeeded because CORDS leaders, particularly Komer and his two key assistants, John Vann and Colonel Montague, played bureaucratic politics with great skill, following the same four bureaucratic strategies that Sapolsky later identified in his study of the Polaris program: differentiation, co-optation, moderation, and managerial innovation.13 They set out to give pacification identity and visibility, building morale and concentrating on one mission only. They lured officers away from other jobs, changing career patterns so that service with CORDS would count equally as that with regular prestige branches. Offices were brought to CORDS from other staff sections. Yet, they did not challenge the military directly in certain key organizational roles and strategies such as the large-unit war or the air war except when these had immediately deleterious effects of pacification. CORDS, with a certain amount of bureaucratic rambunctiousness, acted as part of the MACV headquarters and not as an office apart. By perceived managerial innovation and competence, CORDS developed the reputation for handling its own affairs, even shouldering other burdens where necessary, and hence it was allowed relative freedom from much day-to-day oversight and interference.

The history of the U.S. Government's attempts to organize for pacification advice and support make possible a series of inferences about the role of the President.

The first is that the President must forcefully perceive the need for a solution. Many issues never attain his level and are fought out and resolved among the bureaucracies. This is a question of information which was not usually the case with pacification management. But other issues are brought before the President either as specific decisions to be made, such as the options presented by the Gilpatric Task Force, or as more generalized information on a problem without an exact resolution requested — witness the repeated complaints about U.S. organization from the Forrestal-Hilsman period on. Often the President will express a wish, usually briefly, and then not follow it up, or say nothing, storing the issue away and letting it die. Decisions that entail political costs and risks usually get put off until the President is persuaded that their urgency (1) overrides these costs and risks and (2) merits his detailed involvement. Thus the real issue is competition for the President's time, attention, and perceived political capital. Bureaucratic politics does exist as a reality confronting the President and every official beneath him. But when the President becomes involved, the outcome is not foreordained on issues that he deems important. His perception, a variable, eliminates predictability and determinism.

The second is the importance of the President's choice of officials, a major and underemphasized power of his office and a vehicle by which he can manipulate the government beneath him. He can choose men who are responsive to his wishes and needs. This is obviously true of his White House staff and his Cabinet officials. He can also inject at least some of his choices down into the operating bureaucracies as he did with Komer in 1967. Used with forethought, this capability gives the President a measure of power over the subordinate organizations.
A third observation is that the President is rarely involved in details. The most precious commodity in the U.S. Government is the President's time. Too many other issues are continually pressing at him from all sides for him to take detailed interest in more than a few for very long. This applies especially to implementation. It is on this phase of any action that the President must either find the time to oversee results himself, and such instances are extremely rare, or he must set up some mechanism to follow up his decisions. This can be done through his White House staff over a broad range of issues as Kennedy did, through specially responsive and trusted cabinet officers, or through ad hoc delegations of power from the President to officials or offices closely tied to him as Johnson did with Komer in both 1966 and 1967. This lack of involvement means that many issues will be resolved on the basis of bureaucratic politics, organizational response, and lower-level compromise unless the President's personal staff monitors events closely and brings Presidential influence of the threat of his intervention to bear.

This last point brings one to another observation -- the importance of Presidential Special Assistants. If they are aggressive and skillful at their job, they can demonstrably inject the will of the President into the workings of the bureaucracy. They are a major tool by which the Chief Executive can manipulate the rest of the Executive Branch. They can oversee implementation. An able Special Assistant, with any Washington experience, develops his own set of sympathetic sources in the bureaucracy. He does not have to depend solely on conditioned reports from the agencies, none of which are monoliths anyway. These Special Assistants can inform the President and then either get him to act or act for him, or they can go ahead,
speaking in the President's name and reflect what they perceive to be his intention. This last practice is a daily fact of White House life; the staff would grind to a halt waiting for the President's word if this were not possible. But it is still a risky business, for at any moment a recalcitrant cabinet officer may call the Special Assistant's bluff and take the issue to the President if he feels strongly enough. So the successful Assistant is one who can confidently reflect the President's views without forever having to consult him. Fortunately, cabinet officials do not make it a regular practice to question the word of the President's staff, so its members can often play a strong role in reaching decisions and overseeing their implementation. Thus a President who wants to spread his power as widely as possible in the Executive Branch will continually reinforce the impression that these Assistants speak for him.

However, the officials he appoints to important posts throughout his Administration can also be a major constraint on the President. He can directly control his own staff, but many cabinet and sub-cabinet officials are chosen for political reasons that conflict with strict managerial competence or total loyalty to the President. If they do not arrive with their own base of support, many develop it on the job with the bureaucracy they come to identify with. Nowhere is this problem illustrated more clearly than in two of the President's choices for Ambassador to Vietnam -- Lodge and Taylor. For various reasons, the President needed each far more than they needed either their positions or the President. Until well into Lodge's second tour, these reasons weighed heavily on the President's mind, and he continually backed off from a direct confrontation with either of them. Finally, when Johnson was persuaded that the necessity for organizational change and
a fresh Ambassador outweighed his original reasons for appointing Lodge, he acted. But the length of time he took shows what a constraining factor powerful subordinate officials can be, especially those with direct ties to domestic politics.

In addition, the President, when dealing with subordinate officials, faces a restraint common to the head of any large organization. Almost any action that the President wants carried out must go through a subordinate appointee to whom the President has supposedly entrusted his confidence. Capable or influential people are not going to stay long in jobs where they do not have some freedom of action and sense of responsibility. Too much Presidential interference, whether by himself or his staff, will soon violate this. This was most graphically shown in the resentment that the field representatives in Saigon felt toward "Washington interference." It is natural for those on the ground, seeing problems with daily immediacy, to resent advice and direction from remote officials in Washington. This tendency appears to be universal, and it is telling that Komer, who aggressively prodded the Mission while in Washington, was quick to resist interference as soon as he reached Saigon. While this resentment by field officials was never directed at the President himself, it did fall on his appointed officials and sometimes even on those in the White House itself.

A key lesson from the U.S. experience with organization and management for pacification has been the importance of the individual as opposed to organizational or bureaucratic determinism. This is not to say of course that organizational and bureaucratic factors are not constantly at work and
do not affect many decisions. In a majority of instances one can look back at an event and see their effects. But, the intervention of personality makes prediction difficult if not impossible. Several examples prove this point.

If he had followed the normal bureaucratic rules, Dean Rusk would have zealously guarded the primacy of State over Defense in Vietnam. Not only did he fail to assert State's leadership role as *primus inter pares*, but on several occasions he was perfectly willing to let the Defense position prevail against the wishes of his departmental subordinates. As much as any other single factor, two Presidents let Defense have the pre-eminent role in Vietnam because of their confidence in Robert McNamara. The same department in another's hands might not have produced the same result. Komer, whose organizational background was CIA and White House, hence civilian, recommended and then actively pursued placing pacification under the military. Westmoreland, on several key organizational and conceptual issues, went entirely against what an organizational model would have led one to expect and overruled his most senior staff in Komer's favor. Even General Peers, the Joint Chiefs' top counterinsurgency staff officer, recommended at the Warrenton Conference that all military advisors be placed under a civilian Deputy Ambassador. In many cases officials will behave as their organizational background or responsibilities would suggest. But others, whether simply because they believe another solution is better or for reasons not related to organizational influences or bureaucratic bargaining, will defy straight predictability. Where one sits does not always determine where one stands. Key bureaucratic actors will go against their organizational grain.
Bureaucratic behavior is not consistent. Zeroing in on these inconsistencies offers a way to accomplish change and centrally directed action.

In another sense the importance of the individual is a constraint on the applicability of the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms. The calibre, character, and flexibility of the official appointed to a post are key factors. Lodge and Taylor had the opportunity to unify the Mission but neither chose to do so. Beyond question, Lodge's inability was due to his own personality, not to any habitual State disinterest in administration; William L. Sullivan, who ran a tight wartime Mission in Laos and who insisted in controlling the massive air war, certainly did not show the effects of State's well-remarked lack of stress on management or unwillingness to take on the Defense Department. In his White House position and at CORDS, Komer was critical to the ability of both officers to function as the President intended. Merely operating out of the White House was also no guarantee of success, witness the fate of the Special Group/Counterinsurgency or of the White House pacification office after May 1967; nor was the mere stamp of Presidential approval adequate as the Vietnam Coordinating Committee showed. The organizational structures devised were important but only with the right men to lead them. For this reason the history related in this dissertation

is not just one of changing organizational structure but of overall management -- an area where the individual is still the critical component.

At the opening of this final chapter I noted two conclusions which hitherto I have not addressed directly. The first is a rejection of bureaucratic/organizational determinism and the second, closely tied to the first, is the possibility of achieving change in even the most complex and difficult bureaucratic situations. I have already observed how important Presidential perception of the need for a decision or action is and how the individual will again and again defy predictive modeling. If however one rejects determinism or inevitability and accepts that the President is not necessarily a prisoner of the bureaucracies, a slave to organizational repertoires, or even a co-equal bargainer, then from there the analyst must search for how the President can achieve change or decide on an action and have it carried out as he intends. Though the CORDS decision was taken in an unusual wartime situation, it still offers valid insights.

All observers of government behavior note how often actual outcomes differ from those intended by policy decisions, but in the CORDS case this was not true. I have shown already that success for the President in the CORDS decision and its implementation depended on a fortuitous combination of perceived and real Presidential interest and the individual characters of the actors involved. It is also important to see that the decision was tailored to fit organizational capabilities and repertoires. These capabilities and repertoires to a large extent do set the parameters of choice in any decision. This certainly was true of the three alternatives Komer
presented in August 1966; indeed, his advocacy for the CORDS solution was based on his assessment of capabilities. For him the determining factor was which organizations were effective in translating pacification decisions into effective action, and both he and the President realized the Department of Defense to be superior in this respect. Yet Komer constructed the organization itself with both eyes open to the constraining effects of each agency's standard operating procedures, especially those of the military. By digging into the personnel and resources of several agencies, he was able to avoid accepting any bureaucracy's repertoire as an unchangeable given. Thus one saw civilians as managers, military intermingled with civilians, increased civilian influence on the conduct of military operations, CIA officers operating overtly, and the changing of promotion policies (a sacred organizational prerogative) to reflect equal emphasis given to service with CORDS. This was one of the reasons that CORDS prospered. It took roles and capabilities into account but was not stultified by them.

Another route out of the theoretical impasse between the President and the bureaucracies he is supposed to control can be found in the action relationship between the President and the bureaucracies. Most supporters of the paradigm see persuasion and bargaining as the dominant methods of Presidential control of decisions. Persuasion is of course the preferred course in human relationships and bargaining a fact of government life though it characterizes better the relationship between the bureaucracies themselves or between the President and groups outside the Executive Branch.

Bargaining does not explain either the years of inaction or the CORDS decision. There is no evidence from the experience with pacification
management to prove that bargaining was a major factor between the President and the bureaucracies, though it was a constant practice among the bureaucracies themselves on the second, separate level of action. The competition was really for the President's mind, his attention, his decision. Walt Rostow's view of the President as "weighing in one man's mind the conflicting interests, imperatives, priorities, and allocation of resources" appears to hold true in the reaching of this decision, but after the President made up his mind in September 1966, a different process was at work. Here there was a direct adversary relationship between the Chief Executive and the civilian bureaucracies. If outwardly he appeared to be bargaining with the agencies, manipulation was really the form of action.

The CORDS decision was not truly a case of multiple advocacy once the President had made up his mind in September 1966. The advocacy was a sham and merely a means for bringing the agencies on board with as little disruption and resentment as possible. Komer and McNamara had won from the start. In setting up CORDS President Johnson wanted not just organizational order but better management to achieve visible progress in pacification itself. To attain these two ends he manipulated every agency involved, even the military, with varying degrees of subtlety. He was not persuading them. He and his staff were guiding them to achieve his policy ends. The civilians were given an opportunity to "hang" themselves which they promptly did, and the military were given direct responsibility and a civilian they could not easily control. Few officials appear to have realized what was happening

even though it was but lightly masked. Admittedly, such a strategy took time and was dependent on key personalities. But, the fact that it occurred at all shows its utility. While it places a higher premium of bureaucratic skill on the President and his staff, this does not at all preclude its viability as a method of conducting government business. This is not a claim to have discovered the wheel. Manipulation of the bureaucracies and officials is not new; it just has not received enough attention in recent years by those who are seeking a new approach to understanding how the U.S. Government functions. Manipulation should certainly be given the same attention as bargaining. It offers a positive approach to action and change.

The history of U.S. organization for pacification advice and support in Vietnam is both depressing and enlightening...depressing in that it took so many years for the U.S. Government to arrive at a satisfactory solution that integrated its effort and enlightening in that despite all the difficulties change was possible. In analyzing the CORDS decision, I have not sought to overturn the bureaucratic and organizational politics paradigms. Much of what they offer is valid and certainly is important to understanding government decisions. They explain, even if they do not predict, many decisions; all observers would agree that policymakers should be aware of them. Yet these models need broadening, to emphasize the possibility of change more, and to reject a paralyzing determinism.

While the study of bureaucratic politics should enhance one's appreciation of the complexities of decision-making in the Executive Branch and the difficulties of ensuring proper implementation, it also should not lead to
absolving leaders from personal responsibility nor be an excuse for inaction or abdication to the standard procedures of organizations and bureaucratic interests. These are not easy to overcome, but they are also not immutable, as the CORDS decision showed. President Johnson succeeded where most would have believed the task impossible. With close attention to bureaucratic realities and organizational capabilities, careful choice of officials, and active Presidential interest, the CORDS experience need not be unusual. These paradigms must now go beyond describing the problems and complexities and search for solutions and similar case studies where change has been achieved. CORDS is but one such example.
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To assemble this collection, the author had access to files in the Agency for International Development, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of State, and the Department of the Army. The author was also able to visit Vietnam twice in 1970 while working for the U.S. Army as an historian and bring back the files of Ambassadors Komer and Colby and many other pacification officials.

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## Appendix I

### TERMS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AID</td>
<td>Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Vietnam -- the regular Vietnamese army, not local forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>big unit war</td>
<td>see &quot;main force war&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>chieu hoi</td>
<td>The South Vietnamese Government's program to attract, re-educate, and resettle Viet Cong and North Vietnamese deserters</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CINCPAC</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief Pacific -- the U.S. overall commander in the Pacific, stationed in Hawaii</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency Plan (1960)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Guard</td>
<td>village and district-based Vietnamese local defense forces, known from 1964 on as Regional Forces. Sometimes known merely as &quot;CG&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMUSMACV</td>
<td>Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam -- the overall U.S. military commander in Vietnam from 1962 on</td>
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<td>CORDS</td>
<td>Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>corps</td>
<td>a military and administrative division of South Vietnam headed by a Vietnamese Lieutenant General. It came between the national government in Saigon and the provincial governments. There were four corps areas in Vietnam. This was not a traditional Vietnamese administrative division; it came in when the Americans took over the advisory effort from the French in 1954.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corps Senior Advisor</td>
<td>The U.S. senior advisor to the Vietnamese corps commander. With the exception of one civilian late in the war, this was always a U.S. military man. After 1965 he was usually of three-star rank and was also the commander of all U.S. military forces in the particular corps area.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>CTZ</td>
<td>Corps Tactical Zone -- another name for corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Mission -- the Ambassador's deputy, after 1964 known as the Deputy Ambassador</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEPCORDS</td>
<td>Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support -- the formal title of the U.S. military commander's deputy for pacification. This term was also used to refer to the U.S. corps commander's deputy for pacification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Senior Advisor</td>
<td>a U.S. military position at corps level. This officer was the U.S. corps commander's deputy in charge of all advice to the Vietnamese forces in the corps, excluding those assigned to pacification after 1967,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>a Vietnamese governmental and administrative unit roughly equivalent to an American county</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSA</td>
<td>District Senior Advisor -- the senior U.S. advisor in each Vietnamese district usually a U.S. military major but occasionally a civilian. This precise term came in after CORDS was set up in May 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Force</td>
<td>a U.S. military term for a corps in Vietnam. I Field Force was the Vietnamese 2d corps; II Field Force was the Vietnamese 3d corps. Sometimes this was abbreviated as FFORCEV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>International Security Affairs -- an office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense headed by an Assistant Secretary of Defense. This was a major policy planning office under Secretaries McNamara and Clifford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JGS</td>
<td>Joint General Staff -- the Vietnamese Armed Forces High Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSPAO</td>
<td>Joint United States Public Affairs Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAAG</td>
<td>Military Assistance Advisory Group sometimes known also USMAAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACCords</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support -- the MACV staff section in charge of pacification after May 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command, Vietnam -- sometimes also known as USMACV. This was the U.S. military headquarters and command in Vietnam after early 1962. Often it was used to denote the entire U.S. military advisory chain down to the districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Force War</td>
<td>This was the war of battalions, regiments, and divisions often fighting only each other. In many instances each side's local and paramilitary forces would fight against main force elements however, but generally this refers to the conventional, regular military war of large units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>New Life Development -- an amalgamation of the USAID field programs that were managed by CORDS after 1967. Health and education are examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAM</td>
<td>National Security Action Memorandum -- These were the most important final decision, action documents of the White House during the Presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>Operations Control Board -- the branch of President Eisenhower's National Security Council that oversaw implementation of decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCO</td>
<td>Office of Civil Operations -- the office in the U.S. Embassy that unified civilian pacification advice and support from November 1966 to May 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPB</td>
<td>Operations Planning Board -- the branch of President Eisenhower's National Security Council that oversaw planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSD</td>
<td>Office of the Secretary of Defense -- staff offices in the Department of Defense working directly for the Secretary of Defense, as opposed to the service staffs and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Popular Forces -- local village and hamlet defense forces in Vietnam usually drawn from the immediate area in which they served. Prior to 1964 they were called the Self Defense Corps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>province</strong></td>
<td>a Vietnamese governmental and administrative unit roughly equivalent to an American state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSA</strong></td>
<td>Province Senior Advisor — the senior U.S. advisor in each Vietnamese province. This precise term came in after CORDS was set up in May 1967. These positions were divided roughly in half between U.S. civilians and military.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Safety</strong></td>
<td>the formal name given to USAID's police advisory program in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RC</strong></td>
<td>Rural Construction — a substitute term for pacification used in 1965. See text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RD</strong></td>
<td>Revolutionary Development — a substitute term for pacification used in 1966 and 1967. It also referred specifically to the program of teams of government pacification cadres that were sent out to work in the hamlets and villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RDSD</strong></td>
<td>Revolutionary Development Support Directorate — the staff section in MACV Headquarters that handled pacification from November 1966 to May 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RF</strong></td>
<td>Regional Forces — local district defense forces usually drawn from the areas in which they served. Prior to 1964 they were called the Civil Guard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>region</strong></td>
<td>the U.S. and Vietnamese civilian equivalent of the military corps areas. They were identical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RVNAF</strong></td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SACSA</strong></td>
<td>Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sector</strong></td>
<td>the military term for province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Defense Corps</strong></td>
<td>see PF or Popular Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sub-sector</strong></td>
<td>the military term for district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRIM</strong></td>
<td>Training Relations Instruction Mission — the joint U.S./French training mission for the Vietnamese military forces from 1954-1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USAID</strong></td>
<td>the Agency for International Development's field mission in Saigon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>USIS</td>
<td>United States Information Service -- the field operating arm in Vietnam of the United States Information Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USOM</td>
<td>United States Operations Mission -- the field operating arm of the Agency for International Development in Vietnam. After 1965 this same office was known as USAID.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USVNR</td>
<td>United States-Vietnam Relations -- this was the formal title of what was later known as the Pentagon Papers. It is used extensively in the footnotes of this dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VNCC</td>
<td>Vietnam Coordinating Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Appendix II

WHAT IS PACIFICATION?

Pacification is difficult to define precisely. As a term in the English language one can date it back at least to the 15th Century; as a technique of warfare, it is as old as man's political organization. The Oxford English Dictionary says that it means "to reduce to peaceful submission, to establish peace and tranquility in a country or district."¹ This is pacification in its broadest sense, and this meaning is what generally comes to mind when one thinks of the word, but it is only the base for the more refined definitions discussed below.

Pacification -- to make peace. Peace, but whose peace? To some it is but another name for repression and subjugation. Just after World War II, George Orwell said, with much truth:

...political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machinegunned, the huts are set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification.²

Hitler, Stalin, and even some Americans used and conceived pacification as brutal suppression. For many today this is what the mind conjures up when one hears of pacification in Vietnam. Despite the fact that all of Orwell's images came true many times over in Vietnam, pacification, as a concept and as a program of the French and Americans, was not that aspect of the struggle.

I will not attempt to present a personal definition. It is more instructive for this dissertation to see what the actual practitioners and policymakers considered pacification to be. Examining also the place of pacification as a program in the overall struggle should assist in comprehending the term. Definitions and perceptions are one prism; the reality of what belonged to pacification in terms of organization and operational emphasis is quite another. Since the actual organizational responsibilities have been discussed in the dissertation, they are treated only generally here.

There has never been exact agreement on just what pacification was. To different actors at different periods in the French and American involvement pacification had varied meanings. Yet while it has been a fluid term, one still can see certain concepts appearing and reappearing with regularity over the years:

- the combination of force and politics;
- gaining popular allegiance -- winning "hearts and minds";
- bringing peace and order to the countryside;
- control of the population;
- the spread of organized central government -- an administrative connotation;
- nation building or national political/economic/social development;
- an extended civil/military process;
- a specific operation, usually military, to gain control;
- active self-involvement of the population against the insurgents;
- security of the population as its most important element.
That list could easily be extended, and some or all of the above were in everyone's definition of pacification. The problem in meaning lies, of course, in how one combines them and which elements deserve priority and emphasis. For example, subordination to the view of the necessity of popular allegiance would mean restrictions on the conduct of military operations. An overemphasis on security often means that security becomes an end in itself. If control is primary, then political reforms and popular support can get lost.

The following definitions, all three by persons at one time or another officially connected with pacification, show how widespread the umbrella of pacification has been:

...pacification refers to a comprehensive government effort to bring law, order, and effective administration to the countryside. It may involve multiple social and political activities that could culminate in revolutionary change in the rural areas, leading to improved living conditions and increased self-government. It is a complex process which requires various civilian and military resources of the counterinsurgent government to be applied in a carefully coordinated sequence.

..."pacification" denotes an array and combination of action programs designed to extend the presence and influence of the central government and to reduce the presence and influence of those who threaten the survival of the government through propaganda, terror, and subversion. The pacification process incorporates a mix of programs and activities that may vary in composition and relative emphasis from time to time and from place to place...the program mix comprises two broad types of activities. They are designed, on the one hand, to establish and maintain a significant degree of physical security

for the population and, on the other, to increase
the communication and ties between the government
and the people through a variety of selected non-
military programs. 4

Although security is its primary element, pacifica-
tion is a complex process that by no means should
be equated simply with destruction of an enemy.
Pacification...advances more rapidly with the re-
duction of the enemy's capability to disrupt the
government and society of the Republic of Vietnam,
but its goal is a healthy, viable community. Paci-
fication aims at reducing hostility toward the GVN
through a spectrum of programs which strike both
at hostile elements and the roots of that hostility. 5

Sir Robert Thompson who since the British success in Malaya has come to
be viewed as the foremost exponent of pacification said that pacification was:

an offensive campaign designed to restore the
government's authority by a sustained advance in
accordance with national priority areas and, at
the same time, to protect the individual against
a selective reprisal attack so that he can safely
play his part within the community, in cooperation
with the government, against the Viet Cong. 6

Thompson here has stressed two key elements: pacification as offensive not
defensive and the vital importance of eliminating the grip of the insurgent's
clandestine infrastructure on the population. He saw military operations as
defensive -- a perimeter for pacification which he called offensive since it
struck at the insurgent's real strength, his base among the population.

American Experience with Pacification in Vietnam, Report R-185
5. MACCORDS Briefing prepared for Admiral John McCain, mid-1969, CONFI-
DENTIAL.
6. Sir Robert Thompson, No Exit from Vietnam (New York: David McKay Co.,
Pacification has been a term that officials, despite Orwell, have often tried to avoid. It was seen as having brutal and colonialist connotations. For this reason the process on occasion has been given cosmetic labels such as "national security action," "rural construction," and "revolutionary development." Yet try as they might, both Americans and Vietnamese kept coming back to the word pacification. If it was felt to be unsatisfactory, no other term described the process better.

Finally, as this chapter progresses, the reader should observe how many times pacification was divided into civil and military elements. It was not often that pacification was seen as a civil/military process. This dichotomy was a persistent one and reflected the organizational split between the civilians and the military. The lack of organizational unity ensured this conceptual divergence which in reality meant an operational one as well.

Pacification as a modern term began with the French in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Its two greatest proponents were veterans of France's colonial wars in Tonkin, Madagascar, and North Africa, Marshal Hubert Lyautey and General Joseph Gallieni. Lyautey saw military cooperation not as a conventional operation with columns searching for organized resistance but as governmental organization on the march, spreading out from a central core (the famous "tache d'huile" or "oil spot") in a series of coordinated civil/military actions. One of his key principles was that the occupier always must judge military operations and the method of conquest by their future

effect on the area being conquered:

A colonial expedition should always be under the
command of the chief appointed to be the first
administrator of the country after its conquest...

If in taking a native den one thinks chiefly of the
market that he will establish there on the morrow,
one does not take it in the ordinary way.8

His chief at the time the then-Colonel Gallieni, stressed that the best
method for pacification was the "combined application of force and politics."
Political action was of consummate importance; he was adamant in his dislike
for destructive military operations. For him pacification was not mere sub-
rogation and a terrorized population. It was a sweeping process of political,
economic, and social organization with military measures to be used if neces-
sary but always bearing in mind the future administration of the country
rather than speed or ease of military conquest. He saw the French solider
not as an occupier but as a politico-economic administrator. Pacification
was meant to be attractive rather than repressive.

The French returned to Indochina after World War II with this heritage
of successful pacification precepts. Now however they faced a full-blown
political/military nationalist insurgency. At first pacification meant
"hammering into submission,"9 reconquering their lost colony from a nation-
alistic movement already in place. In 1946 however, the French set out to

8. Ibid., p. 243.
9. Lawrence J. Legere, "Pacification Lessons Learned by the French in
Indochina, 1945-1954" (unpublished paper originally prepared for the
Institute for Defense Analyses now in the files of the Center of
Military History, 22 July 1971), p. 10. This is the only work that
pulls together the literature in French pacification during this
period. It is most useful and instructive.
pacify Indochina in earnest, incorporating the lessons of Gallieni and Lyautey. One French general after the war stated the results of pacification as follows:

For a province to be considered pacified, it is necessary for the authority of the legal government to manifest itself by the restoration of normal political institutions, for the clearing of the area to have been conducted by the people themselves, and, finally, for the centers of population to have organized self-defense units. 10

Note that pacification here is not mere administration or control but active self-involvement by the local population. This reflects the existence of continuing threats to security from outside the local area and from internal politico-military forces -- problems that plagued pacification more and more as the years went on. Five main lessons were incorporated into basic French directives on pacification during the war:

a. Armed force is never an end in itself; only a means to achieve pacification.
b. Neither the political nor the military effort can do the pacification job by itself.
c. The military man must act as a pacifier, only occasionally as a soldier.
d. The close coordination of military and political arms with unity of authority at all levels
e. An increasingly greater role for the Vietnamese. 11

The French emphasized pacification more in southern Indochina and generally were more successful there than in the north, but, as in the later U.S. experience, the pressure of the big unit war in Tōnkîn diverted French

10. (French Indochina High Command), A Translation from the French: Lessons of the War in Indochina, trans. V. J. Croziat (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 1967), p. 110. This was originally the second volume of a lengthy study commissioned and issued by General Paul Ely, Commander-in-Chief, French Forces, Indochina, in May 1955.
resources away from pacification. Of even greater consequence was the lack of an acceptable political program for the Vietnamese. Despite promises the French never really gave power to the Vietnamese, even their puppet Bao Dai. They did not provide the fledgling Vietnamese Army the freedom and responsibility that were necessary to improve its effectiveness and give it political authenticity among the population. Confronted by modern nationalism and organized political opposition, both of which Gallieni had not faced, French pacification over the long term could not work despite local successes in the south.

In the wake of the Indochina War, many French officers set out to re-examine the causes of failure and try to develop principles to combat Communist revolutionary warfare. This process of intellectual re-evaluation reached its peak in 1956 and 1957. Pacification was a principal concern, and its central tenet was to be that all operations, military and civil, had winning the people as their raison d'être and should be judged on that basis. Security was taken as the essential prerequisite, but popular participation must be a key element in its maintenance. All of the writers stressed unequivocally that elimination of the enemy's political/military infrastructure was vital -- a lesson that was adhered to with great vigor in Algeria. Legere observed that the French, in drawing their lessons on pacification, concentrated more on security than political/economic development, on techniques such as the "oil spot," local defense forces, inducing defectors, regrouping of the population and anti-infrastructure programs. Yet, he notes that even in these specifics there was a "constant imperative"
of turning over as much of the program as possible to the loyal population.\textsuperscript{12}

In Algeria the French perfected pacification as a technique for re-establishing government control. They gradually exterminated organized guerrilla opposition but still lost the war politically. While the reasons for the outcome in Algeria were extremely complicated, it should be clear that pacification must be accompanied by an attractive political goal. In the era of nationalism it could not succeed by substituting enlightened colonialism for independence.

A different era began in 1954 when the United States Government replaced the French as the patron of the fledgling Republic of Vietnam. Pacification and guerrilla war were not new to Americans or totally foreign to the U.S. Army's institutional heritage. The long Indian Wars and the suppression of the Philippine Rebellion in the early 20th Century were crude examples. Americans stayed behind to operate as guerrillas in the Philippines after the Japanese invaded in 1941, and in the Burma Theater the United States was involved in large-scale irregular warfare. Indeed, some of the participants in that campaign, such as Dean Rusk and Roger Hilsman, later became well-known policymakers on Vietnam. Other Americans, especially those who later rose to prominence in U.S. intelligence, helped plan or actually implement rebellions and guerrilla warfare against Nazi Germany. After World War II, Colonel Lansdale was intimately involved in the successful effort to defeat the Hukbalahap Insurgency in the Philippines. At the same time as the French were losing in Indochina, the British were bringing about a different outcome in Malaya.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 42.
During the Indochina War the United States had small military and civil assistance missions stationed there, and some of the members of these, such as William Rosson, held high ranking military positions in Vietnam fifteen years later. Colonel Lansdale and General John O'Daniel (later the first Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Group in 1954) visited Vietnam in 1953 and early 1954 on detailed fact-finding missions.

From the above, one can lay to rest the myth that Vietnam was foreign to American experience. We may not have learned the right lessons, but we had been exposed to the problems. Despite this exposure, few of the French lessons percolated directly into U.S. doctrine. Coupling a sense of superiority left over from World War II with the French defeat in Indochina, not to mention their distasteful hue as "colonialists," most American officials and soldiers ignored the French experience. Some U.S. military, such as General O'Daniel, even criticized the French for not having operated as divisions rather than regiments and battalions\(^\text{13}\) -- a criticism that unfortunately reflected the predominant military desire to apply the practices of World War II and Korea rather than the lessons of Mao and guerrilla warfare in Indochina to the new struggle. In the 1960's when "counterinsurgency" came into vogue, studies that drew on the French experience, such as the works of Bernard Fall and Peter Paret,\(^\text{14}\) did gain a wider audience but did not substantially affect institutional doctrine. The situation appeared to

\(^{13}\) Report of Joint U.S. Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953, TOP SECRET, p. 2. This is the first "O'Daniel Report."

be different to most Americans who did not see themselves as colonialists but as supporters of a free government. Many also viewed the French defeat in military and technological terms. The French had been too weak and not possessed our weaponry. U.S. technology and overall military strength smothered the development of doctrine and a political strategy.

If the larger institutions of the U.S. Government were not directly affected by what happened to the French in Indochina and Algeria, pacification concepts still traversed the gulf, primarily through the Vietnamese medium and a small number of Americans who did bother to learn. Indeed there was little more in the American definitions and concepts of pacification that had not been already well thought out by the French. The Vietnamese who actually carried out the program made use of their experiences on both sides in the Indochina War. Often ex-Vietminh were the most prescient and capable pacifiers.15

A persistent element in official and unofficial conceptions of pacification has been that of control of the population. While physical control is heavily stressed, the mental dimension has received attention also, especially after 1954. Coercive thought control was not the objective; rather the population undergoing pacification was to receive clear benefits, or at least the promise of them, to dispose them favorably towards the government. In connection with this, perhaps the most striking post-French conceptual emphasis was that on "nation-building" or long-term social/economic/political

15. For example, Kieu Cong Cung who led "Civic Action" in 1955-56, Colonel Nguyen Be the head of the National Training Center at Vung Tau after 1966, and Tran Ngọc Chau.
development. Both the Americans and the Vietnamese heavily emphasized this aspect of pacification in their public statements, though it has always taken second place to security matters. They felt that the non-security measures contained in pacification plans were at least the initiation of development. Operationally, long-term development tended to be elbowed aside by the immediate emergencies of the war and, more often than not, was left to normal Vietnamese government ministries and uninnovative, traditional, or Saigon-oriented branches of U.S. agencies, especially USAID. Development was however the general end toward which pacification was supposed to be heading. Only in 1969 when the security situation in much of the countryside had radically improved did some of the operational emphasis embrace this concept.

After the Geneva Conference in 1954 the nascent South Vietnamese government was faced with the Herculean task of establishing its authority in the countryside. Unlike the French-sponsored Bao Dai regime, it had a genuine claim to nationalism though this was weakened by its dependence on foreign support. The government faced not only a skeptical population, many of whom had lived under de facto Vietminh rule for years, but also dissident religious and bandit sects. President Ngo Dinh Diem personally disliked the word "pacification" with its French colonialist overtones, so he named the process "national security action." His closest American advisor during this period, Colonel Lansdale, admitted that the terms were interchangeable

16. See "Glossary of Terms and Acronyms."
17. Memorandum, Edward G. Lansdale to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Subj.: Historical Note, 13 May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
and that in common parlance the French term was still used.18

Operationally, from 1954 to 1959 pacification meant the entire government internal security effort (rural), though in the very beginning it was seen as merely a rather military first step to restore control in the countryside. Soon, however, it included the whole program to extend administration and for this had its own sub-program called "civic action" which involved the rotation of civil service personnel out into the country to work among the people.19 The objective of pacification was to bring peace and order to the country and to combat dissidence by a multi-faceted political-psychological/economic/military response with all interested Vietnamese agencies (except the military) under the Commissioner General of Civic Action.20

During these years there was no recognized main-force, large-unit war, but the principal threat still was perceived as external -- an overt North Vietnamese invasion, and the Vietnamese Army trained and equipped for this threat.21 Yet the Army's only operational occupation was security within South Vietnam's borders. As late as 1959 General Lionel C. McGarr, soon to be chief of the U.S. Military Advisory Group in Vietnam, used "pacification"

18. Memorandum for Record, Lansdale, Subj.: "Pacification" in Vietnam, 16 July 1958. This same phenomenon occurred in 1967 when pacification returned to official parlance after two years of cosmetic re-labeling.
and "internal security" interchangeably. 22

By 1960 the internal effort was divided into two wars, pacification and conventional fighting against the growing threat of the Viet Cong who were beginning to operate in battalions and regiments. The joint U.S./GVN Counterinsurgency Plan, developed in 1960, exemplified this new trend. The external threat was viewed as a real but now more remote possibility. 23 The Vietnamese Army (Army of the Republic of Vietnam or ARVN for short) was seen as a conventional offensive and defensive force to deal with enemy main forces, and the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps 24 as the static defense force for pacification and local security. Here we see pacification as "defensive," to be allotted to lesser forces with less emphasis and less glamour.

One point is clear. The U.S. Government did not have an agreed definition. In April 1961 General Lansdale described the goal of pacification as "to end the internal Communist threat in South Vietnam," thus including the entire internal effort. 25 Yet at the same time he went on to describe a


24. The Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps were the antecedents of the Regional and Popular Forces; the names were changed in 1964. Recruited locally for local (village, hamlet, district) defense, they were poorly paid and equipped, yet because of the nature of the early part of the war, they bore the brunt of the fighting between 1956-1960.

second phase called "stabilization" which involved administration, health, community and political development, education, and agriculture -- some of which were intimate parts of past and future pacification processes. Pacification for most observers was thought to encompass both security and what Lansdale called "stabilization." In addition, most of the U.S. Government appears to have viewed pacification as a sub-process in the larger "counter-insurgency" -- a term that was just gaining currency in early 1961 and which meant the entire effort against the insurgents and definitely incorporated the main-force war and the pacification process. Roger Hilsman in 1962 saw pacification as the point at which military and social action meet, a phase in the overall strategic concept of counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{26} Much later, a writer in the \textit{Pentagon Papers} noted that security was seen as a precondition to political, economic and social reforms to ensure the viability of South Vietnam and that the two combined were known and widely accepted throughout the U.S. Government as the "pacification process."\textsuperscript{27} While not necessarily inaccurate, this agreement is not reflected in the documents. In 1964 the President formally accepted counterinsurgency as the strategy for the entire conflict in South Vietnam of which pacification was but a part,\textsuperscript{28} but by this point the former term was used less and less while the latter soon was to be hidden under a series of cosmetic labelings. Indicative of the lack of conceptual agreement, later in the same year the Army's Chief of Staff,

\textsuperscript{26} Roger Hilsman, \textit{To Move A Nation} (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), pp. 451-452. This was contained in a State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research study of 19 December 1962 sent by Hilsman to Averell Harriman, the President, and the National Security Council. \textsuperscript{27} USVNR, IV.B.3., p. 14. \textsuperscript{28} National Security Action Memorandum No. 288, 17 March 1964, SECRET.
General Harold K. Johnson, who devoted a great deal of thought and attention to improving the U.S. response in Vietnam, saw pacification as but a military first phase of securing and control to be followed by civil measures, more a specific operation than an extended civil/military process.  

The confusion over definition persisted. In 1964 the South Vietnamese government stated that:

> the pacification of an area is the restoration of public security and improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants of that area in all fields, political, economic, and social.

They viewed it all-inclusively as the central method for defeating the insurgency, yet while its Chien Thang national pacification plan stressed "clear and hold" operations, it noted the need for prior military screening action. This need raises a problem with organizational ramifications that never was resolved, and it intensified when the American troops arrived in 1965. Conceptually, it was clear to all that military operations and pacification were, or should be, part of an integrated whole. Yet as the enemy main force threat grew, military operations quickly were separated from pacification at operational levels. The South Vietnamese and Americans were not just pacifying native tribes or countering a local insurgency but fighting a regular war as well. For reasons of organizational repertoire (i.e., military units preferring to do what they are trained and equipped to accomplish) and

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29. Memorandum, Johnson to Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Subj.: Situation in Vietnam, 12 September 1964, TOP SECRET.
genuine need, the preliminary military screening received the lion's share of attention, and pacification, which most admitted to be the heart of the problem, trailed like a dinghy in the wake of the conventional war.

Throughout the history of American involvement in Vietnam there was a running debate, still unresolved, among agencies of the government, and even between officials within each agency, over the relative importance of security versus economic/social/political development. The military and some civilians believed that one had to have security before development could work or survive. The converse, which many civilians adhered to, was that political allegiance combined with economic and social development would bring military success (the people would cease support of the insurgents who would then be deprived of their base). This dichotomy reflected the even more basic one in the whole U.S. approach to the conflict: was the war primarily military to be fought with essentially military means or was it a political struggle? While the government never formally resolved this question, the resources and emphasis devoted to the military side comprised a de facto policy decision in its favor. Yet the "security first" solution to pacification may have been the only realistic path since the late 1950's. The people had seen too many programs, too many governments, been prey too often to the changing flow of the struggle in their villages to put their trust in anyone who could not protect them first. To expect otherwise was unrealistic. Still, despite all of the emphasis on security (the pursuit of which often became an end in itself), pacification continued to founder on inadequate sustained security, and the two wars for the Americans flowed on in separate streams rarely becoming a single river. By 1966 the
separation was so great that the President began to term pacification "the other war" to give it more visibility. One cannot help but ask why, if pacification was felt to be so important and military operations had as their general goal the creation of a climate of security in South Vietnam, was the military war not subordinated more firmly to political direction and better coordinated with the pacification effort?

Though there were clearly two operational wars (a third if one includes the air war against the North Vietnamese), the confusion persisted as to what pacification was. In February 1965, before the advent of large numbers of U.S. and North Vietnamese soldiers, the U.S. Mission was able to agree on the following definition of pacification:

all civilian, military, and police actions to eliminate organized Viet Cong military activity, to detect and eliminate the overt and covert Viet Cong political apparatus, and nurture the economic, political, and social development of a viable community. 31

This can only be the entire war, yet in no sense did those responsible for pacification on both the U.S. and GVN sides ever have control over the range of forces that this definition implied. In September the U.S. Mission agreed with the Vietnamese definition of pacification as consisting of five strategic principles: "internal defense and security, economic progress to better the standard of living, improvement of social services such as education and health facilities, establishment of political institutions and a positive ideology, and amelioration of the administrative system." 32 Again, the same

31. Airgram, Saigon 602 to State, February 1965, CONFIDENTIAL.
32. Airgram, Saigon 165 to State, 7 September 1965, CONFIDENTIAL. This quotation is from Appendix 1 to Enclosure 1 of the airgram. The appendix consists of a GVN memorandum on pacification presented to a joint U.S. Mission Council/GVN National Security Council meeting of 28 August, 1965. The GVN memorandum is UNCLASSIFIED.
wide definition. Note that political and economic development are included.

To further confuse the issue both governments went through one of their periodic cosmetic rewordings of pacification. In April 1965 "Rural Reconstruction" (soon changed to "Rural Construction") supplanted pacification as the official term for the same process. In the same year the Rural Construction Cadres (59-man teams sent out to work in the hamlets) became the public symbol of pacification and to most journalists and uninformed observers were synonymous with the entire pacification program. Pacification disappeared under the cloak of Revolutionary Development (or "RD") which in 1966 supplanted Rural Construction as the new name for the same program even in many official classified documents, so much so that experienced researchers can be misled as to whether a government official is discussing the specific RD cadre program or the larger effort. Indicative of the confusion at this time was the important Army Staff's PROVN (Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam) study of March 1966. The title contained "pacification" but nowhere was it defined, yet Rural Construction was given the February 1965 Mission definition of pacification. Counterinsurgency was described as: "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions undertaken by the government to defeat subversive insurgency." This and the February 1965 definition of pacification are virtually the same. By mid-1966 an interagency "Roles and Missions"

33. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Department of the Army, A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1966), CONFIDENTIAL, II, pp. xxvi-xxvii. This page is UNCLASSIFIED.
study group went further than ever before and said that:

Revolutionary Development consists of those military and civil efforts designed to liberate the population of South Vietnam from Communist coercion; to restore public security; to initiate economic and political development; to extend effective GVN authority throughout South Vietnam; and to win the willing support of the people to these ends.34

It is not easy to ascertain what the President thought pacification was, to discern the difference between memorandums drafted by his Special Assistants and his personal views. His remarks at the Honolulu Conference in February 1966 do however provide illumination on this point. There he divided the war into three facets: "military pressure on Hanoi," pacification to "bring a better program to the people of South Vietnam," and the search for peace.35 He went on to say: "a better pacification program that includes everything." And this it did...agriculture, health, education, democracy-building, industry, refugees, improving the life-span, and even rural electrification. While this expansive vision of pacification, almost a Vietnamese "New Deal," may have reflected a calculated desire to build up the "other war" that was being overwhelmed by the military struggle, it seems safe to surmise that he genuinely viewed pacification as a wide-ranging process. He was not conceptualizing the detail of hamlet war or specific phased plans to regain control of the countryside. Those were for his lieutenants to solve. He was looking at it broadly.

34. USVNR, IV.C.8., p. 84.
Others had to devise and manage pacification programs. In August 1966, Mr. Robert Komer, then his Special Assistant in charge of pulling together Washington support for the "other war," observed that while pacification could be used to encompass the whole military, political, and civil effort in Vietnam, the term needed to be narrowed down for operational purposes. Pacification meant "securing the countryside and getting the peasant involved in the struggle against the Viet Cong." For him, it was a long-haul, low-cost strategy and one that concentrated on winning the war in the South. His operational definition was influenced by what programs were already underway for security, development, and winning popular support. Pacification was to be rural and not urban-oriented. It was interested in short and medium-term actions, not long-term programs such as nation-building or national political development; and it encompassed all military operations related to local, village/hamlet security (a gray area and one that he admitted was difficult to separate out from main force operations). Pacification, however, was not to be mere military suppression, but during 1966 to 1968 security was felt to be paramount. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese strength in the countryside demanded it. Komer became the operational manager of the U.S. pacification program in Vietnam, but while the U.S. Mission did adopt an official definition, not all troops marched to the beat of the same drum.

As indicative of the lack of common understanding as to just what pacification was, here are three interpretations from 1967. A CIA official

36. Ibid., p. 66. This definition was confirmed and elaborated upon during an interview with Ambassador Komer on 26 September 1974.
noted that the military gave pacification an essentially administrative, imposed connotation whereas the civilians placed it in a political context. He went on to say that security, social and economic development, administrative control, and democracy were all subordinate to the basic political objective of turning the people against the Viet Cong and gaining their support.  

A high-level civilian CORDS official briefing prepared for the Secretary of Defense stated that: "to the peasant, pacification means security, peace, social justice, and personal involvement with his government." A MACV Headquarters Planning Directive, issued under General Westmoreland's name, said that pacification was but the third part of the overall strategy and should be preceded by military offensives and neutralization of enemy base areas. This came, I might add, during the heyday of the "search and destroy" strategy. In each case the definitions quite faithfully reflect the organizational perspective of the authors.

General Westmoreland's personal understanding of pacification, as expressed in post-war reflections, was far broader than that of his staff. He viewed it as a complex military/psychological/political/economic process, the end purpose of which was to have a viable community free of physical harassment. Security, he believed, was fundamental and divided into two

38. Briefing, L. Wade Lathram prepared for McNamara, 7 July 1967. SECRET. Lathram was the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS.
elements: local, close-in security to defend against small enemy units or hold off for reinforcements and the security provided by large units that intercepted enemy battalions and regiments in advance. Once security in the hamlets has improved beyond the precarious, the civil, benefit side of pacification could work: roads, schools, medical help, economic assistance, improved communications, and political organization (elections). 40

In early 1968 CORDS promulgated an official definition:

Pacification is the military, political, economic, and social process of establishing or re-establishing local government responsive to and involving the participation of the people. It includes the provision of sustained, credible territorial security, the destruction of the enemy's underground government, the assertion or re-assertion of political control and involvement of the people in government, and the initiation of economic and social activity capable of self-sustenance and expansion.41

Here we have a wide-ranging concept that clearly encompassed military security, yet in overall U.S. operations pacification was subordinate to security and not the opposite. And, while in 1967 and 1968 pacification did not include long-term political and economic development, in the following years these aspects gained more emphasis, so much so that by 1970 the GVN's yearly pacification plan included "community development" in its title. While this change was part of a deliberate effort by Ambassador Colby to re-orient pacification away from security which was felt by then to be less precarious, it nonetheless shows how fluid the term was.42

40. Interview, Charles B. MacDonald with Westmoreland, 17 April 1973.
41. HQS. MACV (AcofS, CORDS), Guide for Province and District Advisors, 1 February 1968, p. 2-1.
42. Personal Interview with Ambassador William Colby, 6 February 1970.
I wish to stress again that U.S. and GVN organization rarely reflected responsibility for what current definitions stated or implied. To some, pacification meant control, military occupation, and administration; others included political and economic development and popular participation. Was it a process to begin from the bottom up or to be imposed from the top down? Or was it a combination of all of these? Everyone concerned in the Government had their own vague understanding as to what pacification was, but there never was precise agreement. On few occasions was the definition kept limited, yet the organizational arrangements set up to handle it seldom encompassed all of its aspects.

In retrospect pacification which began simply as a restoration of control in 1954 soon became the entire government program to root out the remaining Vietminh and then to deal with the emerging insurgency after 1956. By 1960 the Viet Cong military threat had grown to such a level of danger and organization that pacification became the second part of a larger war. When the U.S. ground troops arrived in 1965, the regular unit war divided into American and Vietnamese components. It was only late in the conflict that some semblance of unity among all of them was achieved, and even then pacification was always placed in a subordinate position despite wide-ranging definitions and lofty statements that it was the heart of the matter.
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Born -- September 21, 1942

1956-1960 -- Deerfield Academy

1960-1965 -- University of Virginia, B.A. with Distinction in history, specialized in Medieval and Modern European History

1962-1963 -- University of Grenoble, Premier Degree in French language

1965-1966 -- University of London, M.A. in War Studies under Michael Howard

1966-1968 -- United States Army. Served fifteen months in Vietnam, eight months in a Military History Detachment and seven months as an Assistant Field Evaluator for the U.S. pacification advice and support effort (CORDS).

1969-1972 -- Civilian historian for the U.S. Army's Center of Military History in Washington, D.C. In charge in writing the Army's official history of pacification in Vietnam. Spent most of these years assembling the major collection of official and unofficial documents on pacification in Vietnam. Made two trips to Vietnam in 1970 to gather research materials and bring back large collections of official papers.


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