U.S. ARMED FORCES IN VIETNAM 1954-1975

Part Four. Vietnam: U.S. Army Senior Officer Debriefing Reports
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NOTE

Reel III (Frames 0315 and 0527) contains a Senior Debriefing Report from Iran and Ecuador. These were included so as to give a comparison of the types of Military Assistance Activity outside of Vietnam.
Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARVN — Army of the Republic of Vietnam
COMUSMACV — Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CORDS — Civil Operations and Rural Development Support
CTZ — Corps Tactical Zone
DRV — Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
FWMAF — Free World Military Assistance Forces
GVN — Government of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
LOC — Lines of Communication
MAAG — Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV — Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MR — Military Region
NVA — North Vietnamese Army
OPCON — Operation and Control
PSYOP — Psychological Warfare Operations
QNSC — Qui Nhon Support Command
ROK — Republic of Korea
RVN — Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF — Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
USA STRATCOM — U.S. Army Strategic Communications Command
VC — Viet Cong (South Vietnamese Communists)
VNAF — Vietnamese Air Forces (South Vietnam)
REEL INDEX

Reel I

1968

Frame

0001 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: 9th Infantry Division, 1 June 1967 - 25 February 1968.
Contents: Special Problems in Delta Environment—Physical aspects of terrain, Basing troops in the Delta, Operations in densely populated areas; Analysis of 9th Division operations in the delta—Missions of 9th Infantry Division, Strike operations - MRF, Consolidation operations - 3d Brigade, Improvement of Vietnamese military forces; The impact of Skin Diseases on Military Operations in the Delta Region RVN.

Contents: Introduction; Description of the Enemy; Organization; Command, Control, and Tactics; Local Government Counterinsurgency Actions; "Americal" Division Operations.

The current logistical concept in ICTZ involves the operation of the wholesale system operated by the Navy which is complemented and extended by Army and Marine Corps logistical units. Navy has supply responsibility for wholesale Class I and III, II and IV common and construction material. Army and Marine Corps provide for retail distribution of supplies beyond Navy Support Activity, Da Nang Storage Activity (Army), and Navy supply point, Chu Lai and have full responsibility for service peculiar Class II and IV, Class V, and required services for their respective forces. This system is working well and results in little or no duplication among the services.

Because of the AR 1-26 debriefing subjects (causative factors of the insurgency, local government stability actions, and the US role in support of local government, among others) have been treated by officers eminently qualified to contribute to those important matters, this report attempts without benefit of the Brigade's staff experts, to state positive, helpful comments resulting from personal experience in the operational environment shared with the stalwart soldiers of the 20th Engineer Brigade.


The mission of the US Army Support Command, Saigon throughout the period covered remained as follows: Provide logistical support (less aviation and avionics, repair parts, medical service/supplies, cryptographic service and missile service/supplies) to US Forces in III and IV CTZ, RVN, and provide common user supply maintenance and service support to Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) in III and IV CTZ, RVN. The major forces supported at the beginning consisted of 4 2/3 division equivalents plus an Engineer Brigade, two Field Artillery Groups and the MACV advisory structure throughout the III and IV Corps Tactical Zones - a total of some 156,000 US and Free World Military Assistance Forces. This number has grown to some 220,000 and now includes four US Divisions, 2 separate brigades, an armored cavalry regiment and sufficient Australian, Thai, Philippine and Korean elements to bring the total of units supported to exceed 6 division equivalents.


The purpose of this report is to summarize significant occurrences within the II CTZ during the period of my tenure as Deputy Senior Advisor, 18 November 1967-15 December 1968. The report addresses primarily matters which directly affected the ARVN; however, changes in organization of the Advisory Group and related matters are also covered, but in less detail.

1969

0266 Senior Officer Debriefing Program: 34th General Support Group, September 1967 - October 1968.

Contents: Army Aviation Refresher Training School; Postal and Banking Privileges for US Civilians; Crash Damage Parts for Analysis: Shortage of Qualified Aircraft Armament Personnel; Late Receipt of Aircraft Armament Test Equipment; Retrograde of Aircraft; Review of Southeast Asia Retrofit/Modification Program; General Support Avionics Units in Vietnam; Civilization Program; Theater Aircraft Reparables Program; Use of SAAM Flights for Retrograde of Aircraft Reparable Components; Stove pipe; Push Package Concept; 95 Day RO (Requisitioning Objective); AMMC/NICP Due-In/Due-Out Reconciliation; Project Oasis; and AMMC Computer Requirements.
0341 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Deputy Senior Advisor, I Corps, 1 July 1967 - 19 August 1968.

Contents: Causative Factors of the Insurgency; "The Insurgent"; Local Government Stability Actions and the US Role; PSYOP Concept.

This report presents a proposed realignment of some responsibilities, a restructuring of certain units to streamline and simplify training and performance requirements, and a discussion of the advantages that would accrue as well as the disadvantages that may be foreseen.

0415 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Headquarters, 44th Medical Brigade, Period 1 August 1968 - 1 February 1969.
Contents: General Military and Medical Situation; Military Civilian Health Assistance; Personnel; Operations; Professional Services; Preventive Medicine; Medical Materiel; Medical Records and Statistics; Medical Statistical Data.

The missions for all US forces and activities, both military and civilian, were to: defeat and/or eliminate the NVA/VC main forces; improve the effectiveness and combat capability of ARVN, to include its combat, combat support, and logistic forces and their operating procedures; and assist in pacification toward the development of a viable society.

From 19 July 1968 to 25 May 1969, the 101st Airborne Division underwent major transformations in organization, operational concepts and techniques, deployment of major elements and support concepts. The Division's area of operation, centered around the city of Hue, increased in size from an area 30 kilometers in length along the coast and ranging 40 kilometers inland toward the mountains to an area which now extends 108 kilometers in length along the coast and 70 kilometers deep to the Laotian border. Operations were conducted against the enemy's lines of communication and base areas in the mountains; initially, however, the Division focused primarily on the elimination of enemy forces in the coastal plains and the protection of population centers, allied lines of communications, key installations and the rice producing areas. With the virtual elimination of organized VC forces from the coastal plains through the combined efforts of the 101st Airborne Division, the 1st ARVN
Division and Thua Thien Sector forces, the Division began to orient more and more on VC main force units and NVA in their base areas located in the mountainous jungle area adjacent to the Lao border. This shift in operations was made possible by the significant improvement in the operational ability of the Regional and Popular forces to control the coastal plains and populated areas with only limited assistance from the Division.

0565 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Period 4 June 1968 to 29 May 1969.

The 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) is assigned to CG, USARV, for command (less OPCON), with COMUSMACV retaining OPCON of the organization. The primary purpose of 5th SFGA is to advise and assist the Vietnamese Special Forces (VNSF) in the conduct of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Program. This program establishes a paramilitary indigenous force sponsored and supported by the United States. In this program, as well as in the other Group missions, 5th SFGA has the basic objective of the maximum combat efficiency at the lowest possible cost in men, money and material.

0649 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Delta Military Assistance Command and Senior Advisor, IV CTZ, Period 15 January 1968 to 1 June 1969.

Contents: The Enemy, IV CTZ—Organization, Command and control, Strategy and tactics, Armament, Logistics, Transportation, Communications. Outside support, Intelligence and counter-intelligence organizations, and Psychological aspects; Local Government, IV CTZ—Government organization, Political development, Economic development, New Life development, Community development, Agriculture, Logistics, Engineering, Youth affairs, Civic action, Education; RD Cadre program; Chieu Hoi program; Psychological warfare and information; Public health program; Phoenix program; Status of Pacification; Government forces—Intelligence, ARVN forces, U.S. military forces, Regional forces/popular forces, National police, Logistical support.

Reel II

1969 cont.


The 108th Artillery Group is in general support of XXIV Corps. Being mobile and flexible, our units ranged from Hai Van Pass to the DMZ and from the coast to the Laos border. Not having an area of operations of our own, we were in the position of cooperation with the supported divisions in their civic actions. The group had input to division and Corps intelligence agencies but was almost completely dependent upon them for intelligence planning, correlation and analysis. Therefore there will be many areas in the debriefing report in which there will be little that I can contribute from first hand knowledge and experience.

Contents: Introduction; Personnel and Training; Security, Plans and Operations; Services; Supplies; Maintenance; Transportation; Procurement; The Comptroller; Lessons Learned; Inclosures.

Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 6th Battalion 33d Artillery.


At the outset of this debriefing report I would like to make a few general comments about the engineer effort in Vietnam in order to put in proper perspective the remainder of my remarks which will mainly deal with problems and solutions thereto as I see them. Overall I would rate the engineer support rendered our combat troops in Vietnam as superior to that provided in World War II and Korea. In addition, special circumstances in this war have permitted the engineers to do a lot more work than ever before in nation building. Construction of major road networks; opening of secondary roads; a multiplicity of revolutionary development support projects such as school house construction, minor community projects of all types, and housing development work; all have contributed to improving the nation in such a way that the average citizen could see and appreciate what was being done by the U.S. troops to improve his lot. To many people reared in poverty and misery this was as meaningful or more so than our efforts to prevent communist domination of their country.


The main body of this report deals with my views on the broader aspects of the counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam from an Army engineer point of view. At inclosure 1 are additional details of engineer activities and problems which are of less general interest or which are not necessarily related or limited to a counterinsurgency environment.


Contents: Operations Summary; Concept of Operation; Operations; Civil Affairs; Organization and Training; Air Cavalry; Fire Support; Air Support; Aviation Support; Chemical Support; Signal Support; Engineer Support; Intelligence; Personnel Logistics; Base Camp Activities; Information; Pattern Analysis; Commando Vault; Techniques of Air Delivered Munitions: "SCORPION" Operations; "ROME PLOW" Operations; Land Clearing in the MANG YANG; Infantry Weapons; Short Range Patrols; Long Range Patrol Activities.
This report is submitted in accordance with cited references. It covers the period 1 May 1969 to 30 November 1969, during which period I was assigned as Deputy Senior Advisor, III Corps and III Corps Tactical Zone. In the appendices that follow the report sets forth in detail the accomplishments, the residual problems, and recommended actions for each of the functional areas in which the III Corps Advisory Group has responsibilities. In addition, supporting reports from the Senior Advisors of the three divisions of III Corps are attached as inclosures. The following paragraphs highlight those areas which I consider to be the most critical to ARVN at this time—critical to the extent that they bear a high relevance to the ability of ARVN to take over the ground combat role in Vietnam on a time schedule acceptable to the United States.

1970

The following observations were made in late November 1969 and pertain to a six month period as Commanding General, II Field Force Vietnam Artillery from May 21, 1969 to November 20, 1969. It might be useful at the outset to comment briefly on the enemy and friendly situation in the II Field Force area during that period. As a result of FWMAF successes, the main force enemy units have moved into outlying areas. It appears that the enemy's major objectives were to reopen LOC's and to disrupt the FWMAF pacification effort. His tactics were characterized by stand off attacks using mortars and rockets, sapper reconnaissance and selected attacks, and main force attacks in strength along the border. The enemy's ability to avoid contact whenever possible continued to be his greatest asset. On the other hand, his ability to choose the time and place for battle was being attrited. Our successes have enabled us to accelerate Vietnamization of the war. Territorial security forces were being committed to the security of the populated areas and ARVN units were pushing out to interdict enemy movement and to engage him in the outlying areas. FWMAF continued combat and combat support activities with a view towards accelerating pacification, improving the combat effectiveness of RVNAF, and eroding enemy capability in all areas.

Reel III

1970 cont.

Contents: Combined Police Operations; Brigade PBR Maintenance; Brigade Concept; Sentry Dogs.

This report reflects my views on the major problems facing Army Aviation in the operational environment of Vietnam, problems which are of prime interest for the continued development of Army Aviation and which have been isolated during my tenure as Aviation Officer, USARV, and concurrently Commanding General, 1st Aviation Brigade during the previously expressed role of the US Army in support of the counterinsurgency action in Vietnam, or, for example, to the merits of the Cobra over the Huey gunships which have already been well documented. I will address those continuing and future programs which require a prologue for their successful development in light of inevitable troop reductions and our present situation in Vietnam. In terms of format, each of the following paragraphs addresses a specific topic.


Contents: Introduction; Intelligence; Operations; Organization and Training; Artillery; Personnel; Logistics; Political Warfare.


Contents: The Enemy; Enemy Strength Chart; Government Organization; Political Development; Economic and Social influences; New Life Development Programs; Revolutionary Development Cadre; Chieu Hoi Program; Psychological Warfare/Information; Public Health Program; Phoenix Program; Resettlement and Refugee Support; Pacification Program; Government Forces—Intelligence, Counterintelligence, ARVN Forces, US Forces, Regional popular forces, Peoples self-defense forces, and Police; Logistical Support.


Contents: Command; Intelligence; "Vietnamization"; Disposition of U.S. Forces; ARVN Operations; Forward Mobile Staff; Artillery; Territorial Forces; ROK Operations; Logistics; LOC and Communications; Summary.


Contents: Causative Factors of the Insurgency; Enemy Propaganda Capabilities; GVN Political Actions; U.S. PSYOP Agencies; Recommendations.


0285 Senior Officer Debriefing Report: 1st Cavalry Division, Period 23 April 1969 through 5 May 1970.
This report reflects the operational environment of the 1st Cavalry Division and personal experiences. The story of the division's operations for the past year has been characterized by an expansion of the screening role into an operation which has driven the enemy main forces steadily back against the Cambodian border.

This report contains an evaluation of objectives, achievements, and the problems pertaining to the imperial Iranian Ground Forces. Insofar as overall advisory matters are concerned, the report is addressed from the viewpoint of the Army Advisory Section.

Contents: Introduction; Personnel and Administration; Logistics; Civic Action and PSYOP Operations; Combat Operations.

During the 12 months ending 3 May 1970 the application of Engineer effort in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones has changed significantly, in consonance with the policies to Vietnamize the military operations and to pacify and strengthen the economy and political structure of South Vietnam. During this period the proportion of total Engineer effort in support of US troop units has remained relatively constant. However, the specific tasks are considerably more related to relocating US units from forward areas being turned over to ARVN and to supporting US units in pacification and regional development of populated areas. At the same time, the major Engineer effort once assigned to base construction is now being expended to build a primary road system. Thus the 18th Brigade effort devoted to strengthening and developing the economic and political structure of South Vietnam increased many fold this past year to become our present major requirement. The discussions which follow will be divided into three major categories: support of regional development and nationhood; support of US and Free World Forces; other items of interest.

During the past year, the QNSC continued to provide for the logistics support of approximately 90,000 Free World Forces. At the same time, the initial phase of major retrograde program was begun. Significant reductions were made in excess stocks at the ON Depot and at DSU's. The TO and E equipment of one infantry brigade and an artillery battalion was received, processed and disposed of in operation Keystone Bluejay. Other units were encouraged to turn in non-mission essential equipment. Throughout the retrograde program, strong command emphasis has been placed...
on the objective "RETRO RIGHT" to maintain high standards in the care and handling of retrograde items. Concurrent with the increased retrograde program, QNSC began a major effort to consolidate logistics support facilities in order to decrease security requirements and make maximum use of a decreasing base of logistics manpower resources. Consolidation of QN depot areas, reduction of Vung Ro Bay facilities, elimination of the QN-Pleiku pipeline and pump stations, and reduction of the QN Ammunition Base Depot to an ASP are some of the major actions accomplished. Plans have been developed for additional restructuring and consolidation which will be accomplished consistent with the phased withdrawal of US forces. A final but most noteworthy accomplishment has been the success achieved by QNSC in the ARVNIZATION Program.

Contents: Contributing Factors to the Incipient Insurgency.

Contents: Narrative of Major Events from the G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, G-5 Advisors to CMAT.

The build up of the Vietnamese Armed Forces communications capability is of paramount importance as an objective in the efforts at Vietnamization. This report places Vietnamization activities first, then nonequipment topics, followed by items concerning equipment and its use, and finally, a section on topics solely concerning the 1st Signal Brigade. Each item is labeled as to primary source, i.e., USARV or 1st Signal Brigade. The topics and ideas presented here are suitable for use in many areas. Possible use in the Department of Defense and Army Training Centers and Schools is readily apparent. Along with the US Army's Combat Development Command, The Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, the Electronics Command and other commands of the Army Materiel Command, the United States Army Strategic Communications Command, Defense Communications Agency, and finally, the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Communications-Electronics, Department of the Army.

Contents: Introduction; Organization; General Assessment; Personnel; Training; Specialized Training; Supply and Maintenance; Logistics; Combat Support Units; Adequacy of Forces; Inclosures.

The purpose of this report is to record the experiences and insights gained by the Deputy Senior Advisor (DSA) of II Corps Tactical Zone during the period 1 December 1969 through 6 July 1970. This report is made in accordance with AR1-26 dated 4 November 1966 and USARV Regulation 1-3 dated 7 June 1968. It is hoped it will be valuable for use by those charged with development of doctrine, training modernization and improvement, case studies, and evaluations of the effectiveness of Vietnamization and development programs.

Reel IV

1970 cont.


The supply system in Vietnam was considered to be most responsive. Material readiness rates in Vietnam across the board were very high. After shifting from parcel post (and thereby air transportation) to over-the-road movement of Class IX repair parts from the Army depot to outlying direct support units, as much as five days of shipping time were saved. This, in turn, impacted on the volume of supplies required in the system and also on the timeliness of repair of materiel which was deadlined. The increased utilization of the rail system between Da Nang and Phu Bai reduced the necessity for both over-the-road and sea transportation for low priority goods. Economies in the use of drayage transportation have already been effected by the thruput of Class I and Class IV commodities direct from the Deep Water Port to the ultimate customer. As Local Nationals can be trained in many of the logistical skills such as truck driving, key punch operation, food handling, warehousing, receiving, shipping, MHE operation, and so forth, Type A military units can be effectively changed to Type B units and ultimately can be reduced to TDA organizations that would include a minimum of US Army managerial personnel. Through the medium of Project Buddy, the command has been quite successful in providing on-the-job training and classes for the ARVN logistical personnel. Retrograde and disposal operations, while among the more important of the command's several missions, will continue to increase in importance as more and more troops are withdrawn from MR-I.

0053 Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 593d General Support Group. 

Contents: Operations and Significant Operations; Incident Summary; After Action Reports; Inclosures.

1971


Contents: Comments on ARVN, VNAF, and GVN Operations; Comments on US Operations and Forces; Comments on ROK Operations; Pacification; Summary.

The period from 17 November 1969 to 1 September 1970, during which I was in command of XXIV Corps Artillery, was one of constant change. The US troop redeployments, the steadily increasing skill and responsibility of RVNAF, and the renewed attempts by the enemy to exert battlefield pressure and to destroy the pacification program all combined to make flexibility of action the most important aspect of artillery operations in XXIV Corps. Although the DMZ area remained of vital importance, the main enemy activity and the area of greatest continuing threat was in the western portions of the Corps area, especially western Thua Thien. In conjunction with RVNAF, XXIV Corps Artillery reacted strongly to this threat and was instrumental in reducing it to tolerable levels. In each of our operations we used the tactics and techniques which, we felt, were best suited to the tasks to be performed. The optimum solution in one area or one situation often could not be applied in another. In this report I will summarize the more significant occurrences during my period of command, and discuss some lessons learned which might be of value to others.

Contents: Command and Control Administration; Logistics; Operations; ARVN Affiliation.

The brigade, officially designated as the 1st Brigade of the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), functioned as an independent brigade, directly subordinate to XXIV Corps, and conducted operations in Quang Tri Province. A troop list is included. A brief description of the area of operations is included. Operations have been conducted on all types of terrain from the flat tide lands along the South China Sea to the east; throughout the Piedmont in the center and in the mountainous terrain in and around the Khe Sanh Plateau to the Laos-Vietnam Border in the west.

Contents: Introduction; USASTRATCOM and the Doctrine of “Flexible Response”; Soldier Art Program; Equipment; Communications Support in Cambodia; Recovery of Fixed ICS/DTE Assets; Project “Thrift”; CARA; Training.

This report reflects personal assessment of conditions in military Region 2 and is based upon a service of fourteen months in the region. While failures continue to mar the scene, there also is considerable basis for confidence. While this is apparent when one compares the situation now with the situation one year ago, it is obvious if considered in terms of what has been withdrawn. In March 1970, US maneuver forces included the 4th Infantry Division, the 173d Airborne Brigade, and TF South (a multi-battalion force operating primarily in Binh Thuan Province). Now only the 173d Airborne Brigade plus two separate battalions (1/22d Infantry and the 1/10th
Cavalry) and Company C, 75th Infantry (Rangers) remain. An assessment of just how much the Vietnamese can be expected to do on their own is discussed from different angles.


Contents: Summary of Observations; Major Tactical Activities; Fire Base Security; Future Planning; Maintenance and Logistics; Personnel; Morale and Welfare; Sub-Zone IV; Club and Messes.


Contents: Introduction; Personnel; Training; Operations; Logistics; Situation in Military Region 4; Reports.


The mission was to advise the Deputy Commanding General, US Army Vietnam, on engineer matters; to command the US Army Engineer Command, Vietnam; and to ensure optimum utilization of Army engineer resources in Vietnam. Among the principal objectives of the Engineer Command have been to get the USARV portion of the lines of communication (LOC) completed to a high standard of quality and as soon as possible; to help the ARVN prepare to take over the engineer task across the board upon our departure; and to ready US Engineer units for redeployment as soon as they could possibly be released.

1972


Contents: Introduction; RVNAF; ROK Forces; US Troop Discipline; Drug Abuse Program; Defense of US Forces; Army Organization in Military Regions; Community Relations; "The Soldier."


The period covered by this report was characterized by a low level of enemy activity while US units were being drawn down and inactivated. Enemy activity consisted mainly of sapper attacks, attacks by fire, and terrorism. 23d Artillery Group was assigned to USARV, but under the operational control of HQ, Third Regional Assistance Command, and under Saigon Support Command for administration and logistical support except for personnel matters. The group dealt directly with HQ, USARV on personnel matters.


Contents: Introduction; Intelligence; Combat Operations; Personnel Administration; Logistical Support; Psychological Operations; Redeployment; Inclosures.
The period discussed in this report was characterized by continued, sharp reductions in military strength, a corresponding increase in contract operations for communication services, continuing assumption of former 1st Signal Brigade communication missions by the ARVN Signal Department, and a major effort to retrograde Communications-Electronics equipment from South Vietnam.

This report covers observations and reports lessons learned during the employment of a separate airmobile brigade in a combat environment. During the period of this report, operations ranged from small unit actions to conventional, mid-intensity combat.

Contents: Question and Answer Format; After Tour Report.


Contents: Operational Environment; Command Relationships; Experiences in Command; Relations with the Host Nation Forces and Government; Relationships with Third-Nation Forces; Organization; Training; Civil Disturbance Operations; Research and Development; Conclusions.


Contents: Completion of Tour Report; CORDS.
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