THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE
DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This master's thesis deals with the development and implementation of counterinsurgency warfare by the military and government of the United States during the Vietnam War. The main point of this work revolves around the fact that the United States did not develop a successful and comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrine during this period. However, certain counterinsurgency units and programs were developed that did achieve success in deterring the guerrilla war waged by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The Phoenix Program and especially the Civilian Irregular Defense Group Program, which was developed and operated by the U.S. Army Special Forces, proved that counterinsurgency warfare could be waged successfully against an elusive foe. As the Vietnam War escalated, the United States relied upon the technology, the mobility, and the firepower of America's conventional military to try and destroy an unconventional enemy. This reliance upon conventional military strategies and tactics eventually led to the withdrawal of American troops and the
defeat of the Republic of Vietnam by the communist forces of North Vietnam.

I believe that the United States and the Republic of Vietnam could have prevented a communist victory through the proper development of counterinsurgency warfare doctrine. This doctrine would include a combination of counterinsurgency tactics and strategies, social reform, economic assistance, military training, and political stability.

The United States learned many valuable lessons in Vietnam, including the importance of maintaining specialized units that could be used to fight a limited war against a dedicated enemy with a political agenda. Warfare has never been an exact science, and a nation must be prepared to deal with any contingency.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their assistance in the completion of this thesis. First of all, I need to thank my parents, June and Chester Friedl, for without their emotional and financial support I would have never attended graduate school. Next is my thesis advisor, Professor Ronald J. Nurse, whose advice, support, and patience in this endeavor has provided me with a better understanding of my thesis and historical research in general. I would also like to thank Professors Burton I. Kaufman and Thomas J. Adriance for their advice and cooperation during this period. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the research staff of the U.S. Army War College Library in Carlisle, Pennsylvania for their assistance in my pursuit of research material.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CIDG</td>
<td>Civilian Irregular Defense Group</td>
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<td>FID</td>
<td>Foreign Internal Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low Intensity Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLDB</td>
<td>Luc Long Duc Biet (Vietnamese Special Forces)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRRP</td>
<td>Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAAGV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam</td>
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<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command, Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>Military Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Noncommissioned Officer</td>
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<td>NVA</td>
<td>North Vietnamese Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSS</td>
<td>Office of Strategic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVN</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVNAF</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam's Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEAL</td>
<td>Sea Air and Land</td>
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<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Special Forces (United States Army)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFG</td>
<td>Special Forces Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFOB</td>
<td>Special Forces Operational Base</td>
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<tr>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission</td>
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<td>TRIM</td>
<td>Training Relations and Instructions Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UW</td>
<td>Unconditional Warfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Viet Cong</td>
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<td>VCI</td>
<td>Viet Cong Infrastructure</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines counterinsurgency as, "organized military activity designed to counter insurgency," circa 1962. The most important aspect of this general definition is the date of origin for counterinsurgency. Prior to 1962, counterinsurgency was a word and a concept that concerned few people in the United States. Guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency tactics can be traced throughout history, and these old forms of warfare re-emerged during the Second World War and the decades that followed. The development of counterinsurgency in the United States arose due to the threat of communist sponsored wars of national liberation. This concept dates back to Mao Tse-tung's military paper, "On Protracted War," in 1938. However, many of the concepts that Mao developed were borrowed from Sun Tzu, a Chinese philosopher and military strategist who wrote a treatise on the "Art of War" nearly two-thousand years ago. Mao Tse-tung combined communism with guerrilla warfare, and this combination greatly influenced fledgling communist leaders throughout the world, especially in Southeast Asia.

The United States responded to Mao's protracted war by developing modern counterinsurgency tactics and strategies. Under President John F. Kennedy, counterinsurgency warfare became an important aspect of American military doctrine in Southeast Asia. Counterinsurgency warfare became a vital
part of American military doctrine during the Vietnam War, and units such as the United States Army Special Forces played an important role in the development and implementation of this new (as compared to American conventional warfare) type of warfare. By 1962, the United States had been supporting the government of South Vietnam in terms of financial and military aid for eight years and within two years the U.S. would send combat troops to South East Asia. America's early involvement in Vietnam laid the foundation for the development of counterinsurgency warfare.

I concluded that the initial American military advisory efforts did not prepare the Republic of Vietnam to fight an unconventional war. Military advisers from the United States trained the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to fight a conventional war based on recent experiences in Korea. The French, Americans, and South Vietnamese were not prepared to combat the guerrilla and political war waged by the North Vietnamese.

However, the United States Army Special Forces did achieve limited success in the implementation of counterinsurgency strategies and tactics during the Vietnam Conflict. The Civilian Irregular Defense Program (CIDG) was a perfect example of a successful counterinsurgency doctrine. U.S. Army Special Forces were among the few units that relied upon counterinsurgency tactics to fight the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The CIDG Program, which was
developed and ran by the Special Forces/Green Berets, was one of the most successful counterinsurgency tactics used during the Vietnam conflict. This program allowed local Vietnamese villagers to defend their families and homes, gather intelligence, and fight the Viet Cong insurgents on their own terms. Special Forces soldiers also supplied limited social and political reform to many of the minority groups throughout the Republic of Vietnam. Counterinsurgency programs under the Special Forces provided intelligence, set up civic action, medical, and agricultural projects, and denied the Viet Cong access to these villages. In areas where SF base camps were established, the Special Forces impeded the use of outlying villages for safe havens, recruitment, and supplies by the Viet Cong.

Yet as America's involvement in Vietnam increased, counterinsurgency efforts played a secondary role to conventional military tactics and strategies. The United States relied upon weapons technology, air mobility, and military superiority. Viet Cong insurgency prospered under these conditions. To understand how the United States failed to produce an effective and comprehensive counterinsurgency program in Vietnam, I examined the historical and bureaucratic framework of America's early involvement in Vietnam, the different viewpoints of counterinsurgency doctrine in Washington, D.C., and the limited success of the
counterinsurgency programs of the United States Army Special Forces.

America's initial involvement in Southeast Asia began during the First Indochina War, 1945-1954. The United States supplied France and its former colony with financial and military aid throughout this period, and America eventually assumed full responsibility for the welfare of the Republic of Vietnam with the defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Over the next ten years, America initiated several military advisory and training programs to prepare the South Vietnamese for an invasion from the North. This invasion from the North appeared in the form of guerrilla warfare by Vietnamese communists (Viet Cong). The American advisory period also witnessed the early development and use of counterinsurgency warfare. However, a comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrine was never fully developed due to departmental and political competition.

Differences in opinion concerning the situation in Vietnam existed between President Kennedy and the State Department and Vice President Lyndon Johnson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Department of Defense. President Kennedy and advisors such as General Maxwell D. Taylor viewed the conflict in Vietnam as internal, they believed that it could be settled through political and social reforms, and limited military intervention in the forms of an effective counterinsurgency doctrine and the use of U.S.
military advisors and aid. Yet one of President Kennedy's chief advisors, Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, initially believed that the United States military role in Vietnam would be completed by the mid-1960's. The increase in the activity of the Viet Cong and the willingness of the U.S. government to expand America's involvement in Vietnam proved that McNamara's first assumption wrong. Officials and officers within the Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military, believed that the situation in Vietnam was an external threat from the North and should be dealt with through conventional military strategies and tactics. These strategies and tactics included the American military's mobility and superior technology.

The untimely assassination of President Kennedy led to a decline in American counterinsurgency warfare efforts. During the Johnson administration, the United States military slowly escalated the conflict in Vietnam and eventually withdrew from Southeast Asia under President Richard Nixon. One can only speculate what would have happened in Vietnam if President Kennedy had lived. However, the political situation within the Republic of Vietnam had deteriorated to the point of no return by 1963. The United States could withdraw after nine years of aid and support to an ally, or continue to assist the South Vietnamese.
CHAPTER ONE:
COUNTERINSURGENCY AND THE ADVISORY PERIOD

Was the United States military advisory program in South Vietnam between 1954 and 1964 successful, and how did this program affect the development and implementation of counterinsurgency warfare? Prior to 1954, the U.S. supported the French military in Southeast Asia, and after 1964 America continued to aid the governments of the Republic of Vietnam. In retrospect, many people would say that military aid to the Republic of Vietnam was unsuccessful. However to evaluate U.S. military assistance to South Vietnam, one must examine the expected results of the advisory program during this ten year period. Research suggests that the advisory program was successful in organizing and training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to combat an overt invasion from North Vietnam. There were advisers, such as Edward Lansdale, who believed that counterinsurgency tactics should also be taught to the South Vietnamese. The influence of Edward Lansdale will be further examined in the next chapter. Yet, the advisory program failed to prepare the ARVN to deal with the Viet Cong (VC) insurgency that prevailed during the 1960's. There were some successes in the field of counterinsurgency, such as the Strategic Hamlet program and especially the Civilian Irregular Defense Group program of the Army Special Forces. Why did the United States prepare the South Vietnamese to fight a conventional war? When did
American advisers recognize the threat of insurgency, and what did they do to deter this threat? Did the development of counterinsurgency strategies and tactics succeed or fail? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions.

Counterinsurgency warfare developed in the United States during the Kennedy administration in the 1960's. There are political and military components to counterinsurgency warfare. For counterinsurgency to be successful, there must be political and social stability. A government must supply the proper reforms to aid its people. The military aspects of counterinsurgency deal with the elimination of the insurgents and their influence upon the people. Many of Kennedy's chief political and military advisers believed that counterinsurgency measures could be used to deter communist aggression throughout the free world, and Vietnam became a proving ground for this new doctrine. The political aspects of counterinsurgency called for reforms to win the confidence of the people and to maintain order and stability in the nation under attack. Militarily, counterinsurgency relied upon advising, training, and equipping the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam to defend itself against communist insurgency. The United States applied this new concept of warfare in Southeast Asia with disappointing results. Instead of maintaining order and stability in the Republic of Vietnam through political reform and military assistance, the United States created a nation that relied entirely upon American
assistance. South Vietnam's reliance upon the United States and the political tenacity and willpower of the North Vietnamese leadership ultimately led to its defeat by the communists in 1975.

The defeat of the French forces at Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954, ended a century of French dominance in Indochina.\(^1\) American intervention in South East Asia officially began with this French military defeat, and the United States advisory program in South Vietnam, before the involvement of American combat troops, helped develop the South Vietnamese Army into a modern, conventional fighting force. However, by 1961, American military advisers faced the problem of preparing the Republic of Vietnam's Armed Forces (RVNAF) to deal with the threat of insurgency. Increased Viet Cong terrorism created the need for the development of counterinsurgency to control Viet Cong guerilla activities.\(^2\) Viet Cong insurgency eventually produced open conflict between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1965.

Formal United States aid to South Vietnam began on May 1, 1950, when President Harry S. Truman approved a


$10,000,000 grant in military assistance to the French forces in Indochina.\(^3\) Between 1946 and 1954, France fought the Viet Minh (communist) forces of Ho Chi Minh for control of the former French colony of Indochina during the First Indochina War.\(^4\) American military and economic contributions supporting the First Indochina War totaled nearly eighty percent of the entire conflict.\(^5\) This figure proves that the United States was heavily involved in South Vietnam almost fifteen years before the first American combat troops arrived in South East Asia.

American military assistance began during the First Indochina War. The Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, organized on September 17, 1950, and assembled in the Saigon-Cholon area on November 20 of that year.\(^6\) MAAG Indochina became the dominant American advisory organization for the next ten years. It ensured that American supplied equipment reached its proper destination and that this equipment was properly maintained by the French forces.\(^7\)

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\(^7\)Ibid., 7.
Between 1950 and 1955, MAAG Indochina served as a small logistical accounting group and supervised the 1.1 billion dollars in material and aid that the U.S. contributed to the First Indochina War.\textsuperscript{8}

On July 20, 1954, the Geneva Accords created a cease-fire agreement between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{9} They provided for the division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel, the withdrawal of all communist forces from the south, and the limitation of the introduction of foreign military personnel and equipment.\textsuperscript{10}

The Eisenhower administration and the government of South Vietnam did not formally sign or endorse the Accords, but both countries did informally agree to abide by the terms of the cease fire.\textsuperscript{11} Formal American aid to South Vietnam became legitimate due to this informal agreement between the two countries. This informal agreement allowed the United States to continue to finance, equip, and train the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam for an overt invasion from the North.


\textsuperscript{9}Collins, \textit{The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army}, 1.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{11}Eckhardt, \textit{Command and Control}, 9.
During December 1954 France and the United States agreed to aid the Republic of Vietnam through the Military Assistance Program (MAP).\textsuperscript{12} MAP was an organization responsible for the logistical support of the South Vietnamese and French armed forces in Indochina.\textsuperscript{13} The Military Assistance Programs existed throughout the world and allowed the United States to supply financial aid and military equipment and material to its allies. This organization remained the main source of military aid to South Vietnam during the entire American advisory period and came under the jurisdiction of MAAG and eventually the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

A joint Franco-American Training Relations and Instructions Mission (TRIM) was established during February 1954.\textsuperscript{14} TRIM intended to create a South Vietnamese conventional army by January 1, 1956, and to establish a follow-through program that would increase and maintain the efficiency of the Vietnamese armed forces.\textsuperscript{15} This joint Franco-American organization's initial composition included thirty-three U.S. and twenty-eight French personnel and was

\textsuperscript{12}Eckhardt, \textit{Command and Control}, 6.


\textsuperscript{14}Vien, \textit{The U.S. Advisor}, 3.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 3.
headed by Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel, commander-in-chief of MAAG, Vietnam. The TRIM program had several difficulties, including the political situation in the Republic of Vietnam and the fact that the South Vietnamese military was still organized in small units and lacked effective leaders on all levels. TRIM's primary objectives included creating a conventional army and supporting forces by January 1, 1956, and establishing programs that would increase and maintain the efficiency of this force. However, the withdrawal of French forces from Vietnam on April 28, 1956, caused TRIM to be disbanded because all French troops were now forced to leave South Vietnam. The initial program set up by TRIM produced limited success due to the lack of French responsibility. The remaining French forces in Vietnam were too busy dumping equipment, which created a logistical nightmare for the South Vietnamese military, and the French basically wished to leave Vietnam as soon as possible. With the departure of the French military, the entire advisory program came under American jurisdiction.

In October 1955, the military advisory effort in South Vietnam came under the authority of MAAGV with 342

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17 Ibid., 4.
18 Collins, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 2.
personnel. MAAG Vietnam became independent from MAAG Indochina, which continued to operate within Laos and Cambodia. This new military command assumed the advisory responsibilities to the Republic of Vietnam by providing advice and assistance to the government and the military.

Eventually, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) would replace MAAGV as the chief U.S. military headquarters in Southeast Asia. MACV initially was formed as a liaison and logistics headquarters to control the buildup of U.S. combat forces in Vietnam. Eventually, MACV would become the chief U.S. military and advisory headquarters in Vietnam, while MAAGV would be disbanded and absorbed by MACV. MAAGV now confronted a major logistical problem because of the French withdrawal from South Vietnam. The French had dominated logistics until 1956, and the French troops had dumped a large quantity of equipment in South Vietnam during their departure. The French forces withdrew and experienced ARVN units had to meet the increased activities of the Viet Cong. These ARVN units could not complete their training while engaged in the field.

MAAGV needed more personnel to respond to the development and reorganization of ARVN logistics. To meet this challenge, MAAGV established the Temporary Equipment

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Recovery Mission (TERM) on June 1, 1956. TERM increased the total strength of MAAGV personnel to 692 men. TERM's primary mission was assisting the advisory group in recovering the excess war equipment left by the French. TERM also helped develop an adequate and effective logistical system for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

By 1957, TERM had transformed the ARVN logistical facilities, and all technical services were using United States Army supply procedures. TERM's development of a workable and effective logistics system in South Vietnam appeared to be a gigantic achievement. Although United States Army logistical techniques were not suited for the harsh, primitive jungle environment of Vietnam, TERM personnel and their South Vietnamese counterparts created a logistics foundation that met the needs of ARVN troops and MAAGV advisers.

Now that MAAGV had solved the logistical problems, it devoted its time and effort toward organizing and training the ARVN forces. The United States trained the armed forces of South Vietnam after recent American experiences in Korea.

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20 Collins, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 2.


22 Ibid., 34.
Vietnam and Korea were similar, one country divided in half at an arbitrary line of latitude, one side communist and one non-communist, and one side receiving American support and the other receiving Sino-Soviet support. The United States and MAAGV believed that the immediate threat to South Vietnam was an invasion from the north, as had happened in Korea. American advisers viewed the situation in Vietnam as a conflict between two opposing nations.

In reality, South Vietnam also had to deal with the internal threat of the Viet Cong, who were backed by the North Vietnamese. MAAGV wanted to develop a South Vietnamese force capable of meeting an overt invasion from the north, and to prevent another Korean-type conflict. The threat of Viet Cong insurgency and the maintenance of internal stability should have been of key importance to MAAGV. Yet, U.S. military advisers did not recognize this threat until it was too late to control. The development of the South Vietnamese armed forces was important, yet it should have coincided with the implementation of proper counterinsurgency measures.

The defense structure of South Vietnam in 1956 planned for an overt invasion from North Vietnam and subversive warfare waged by the Viet Cong. MAAGV advisers organized and

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trained regular South Vietnamese military forces to destroy the enemy and defend the borders from invasion.\textsuperscript{24} South Vietnam's regular forces received the most training and attention during the mid-1950's from MAAGV. United States military advisers believed that internal security should and could be handled by the Government of Vietnam (GVN).\textsuperscript{25} The dependence on the South Vietnamese to maintain internal security produced a crisis in American military doctrine (conventional versus counterinsurgency) by 1960. The Republic of Vietnam depended on improperly-equipped and poorly-trained militia forces to control Viet Cong insurgency throughout the late 1950's and early 1960's.\textsuperscript{26} The Civil Guard, activated in April 1955, and the Self-Defense Corps, activated in April 1956, were responsible for internal security during the American advisory period.\textsuperscript{27} Each of these units was inadequately trained, supported, and manned. The Civil Guard (national level) and Self-Defense Corps (local level) relieved ARVN forces from internal security duties, local intelligence gathering, and countersubversion.


\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 24-25.
activities.\textsuperscript{28} American military assistance to these militia troops remained limited during this period because the U.S. believed that it needed to prepare South Vietnam for a conventional conflict between the North and the South. Lack of adequate support for the territorial forces allowed Viet Cong insurgency to grow and to interfere with the training of South Vietnam's regular forces. The MAAGV advisors were excessively concerned with the potential threat of an invasion from the north. MAAGV's concern for conventional military training undermined the entire advisory program in Vietnam. Instead of creating an independent military that could maintain internal stability and order, the United States allowed the South Vietnamese to become dependent upon American aid, advice, and eventually U.S. combat forces.

From 1956 until 1959, MAAGV trained and developed a conventional fighting force for South Vietnam. MAAGV organized the Army of the Republic of Vietnam according to United States Army doctrine. In October 1956, MAAGV personnel and Vietnamese officers created a master school planning board built around six key training centers.\textsuperscript{29} These training centers included a General School Center at Thu Duc, an infantry school, medical, intelligence, and psychological

\textsuperscript{28}Collins, \textit{The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army}, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{29}Vien, \textit{The U.S. Advisor}, 8-10.
warfare schools at Saigon, a Military Academy at Dalat, plans for a military college, and a replacement camp at Quang Trung. By the end of 1958, MAAGV had established eighteen schools and training centers which processed an average of 20,000 conventional troops each year.\textsuperscript{30} These schools provided basic and specialized training for ARVN officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted personnel throughout American involvement in Vietnam. MAAGV also provided on-the-spot training to Vietnamese soldiers at the battalion and regimental level, an option not provided by the French.\textsuperscript{31}

Basic ARVN recruits attended a thirty-one week training program that included the following phases: basic individual, advanced individual, basic unit, and advanced unit.\textsuperscript{32} New infantry recruits received training in patrolling, weapons use and maintenance, ambushes and counterambushes, and basic land navigation. After initial basic training, ARVN soldiers received refresher courses and could attend specialist schools such as airborne or ranger. Qualified soldiers could

\textsuperscript{30}Vien, The U.S. Advisor, 9-10.

\textsuperscript{31}Collins, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 14-15.

also participate in the Offshore Training Program.\textsuperscript{33} This program allowed ARVN troops to receive specialized training at United States military posts throughout the world. By 1960, the Offshore Training Program, through MAP funding, had trained 1,375 ARVN troops in the United States and 226 allied nations.\textsuperscript{34}

Some problems existed within MAAGV's initial training plan. In 1956, ARVN lacked experienced officers and noncommissioned officers at every level. There was a shortage of trained instructors, and the language barrier caused problems for American advisers and their Vietnamese counterparts. These problems continued to plague military advisers throughout the advisory period. However, by 1959, the ARVN was almost completely reorganized. In September of that year, ARVN had seven standard army divisions of 10,450 men each and Army Corps Headquarters at Da Nang (I Corps), Pleiku (II Corps), and Saigon (III Corps).\textsuperscript{35}

By 1959, the ARVN forces were prepared for an invasion from the north, but this invasion never came. MAAGV advisers now realized that Viet Cong insurgency presented the greatest threat to the Republic of Vietnam. Throughout the early

\textsuperscript{33}Collins, \textit{The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army}, 12.

\textsuperscript{34}Khuyen, \textit{RVNAF}, 203.

\textsuperscript{35}Truong, \textit{RVNAF and U.S. Operational Cooperation and Coordination}, 15-16.
1960's, Viet Cong activity gradually increased and became the focus of U.S. advisers and the South Vietnamese military. During one month in the fall of 1957, twenty-two village and local government leaders were murdered, eleven local militia killed, and fourteen local militia kidnapped by the Viet Cong. The insurgency problem grew worse every day. Vietnamese Army officers complained about the emphasis on conventional training to fight an unconventional war. South Vietnam's reliance upon the ill-equipped and poorly trained territorial (militia) forces for internal security proved to be ineffective against the Viet Cong.

In 1960, it was apparent to the U.S. military advisers that ARVN forces could not deal with the growing insurgency. A perfect example of ARVN's inability to deter the Viet Cong occurred on January 26, 1960, when the South Vietnamese Army regimental headquarters in Tay Ninh Province was overrun. American planners and advisers decided that new, forceful actions and programs were needed to insure the survival of

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37 Spector, Advice and Support, 315.


39 Truong, Territorial Forces, 7-8.

40 Collins, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 17.
the South Vietnamese government. It was during this period that the CIA and Special Forces were running operations against the communists in Laos and Vietnam, Project WHITE STAR and the CIDG program respectively.

At a Pacific Commanders conference in April 1959, Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, the new chief of MAAGV, stated the problems in Vietnam as follows: there was no national plan for the situation, there was no rotation of units in the field, there was a need for a central surveillance plan, there was a need for more counterinsurgency units, there was inadequate intelligence on enemy activities, there was an inadequate communications system, there was a need for a single commander to direct the war effort, and there was the inability of the territorial forces to supply internal security.⁴¹ These problems became the responsibility of the new MAAGV chief, Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, in June of 1960.⁴² General McGarr implemented a counterinsurgency plan that set the basic guidelines for future U.S. plans and actions. This CI plan was approved on February 6, 1961, and it called for the halt of insurgency by enlarging and reforming the military, to divide Vietnam into tactical zones with a headquarters in each zone, and to provide security with regular troops.


⁴²Ibid., 18.
ranger units, and territorial forces. These new developments in counterinsurgency led to the creation of a new command to deal with the threat of insurgency.

The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), established on February 8, 1962, became the primary American organization responsible for the development of counterinsurgency programs and training. MACV would operate under the jurisdiction of MAAGV until the Viet Cong insurgency was controlled.

In mid-November 1961, President John F. Kennedy decided that the United States would assume a growing operational and support role in addition to maintaining the existing advisory missions in South Vietnam. The decision to expand the American military advisory system provided two important opportunities: to strengthen the ARVN military forces rapidly, and to provide American troops in force should indigenous militia prove inadequate. In 1962, the United States also began to supply helicopter transport and air

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44Collins, The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 17.

45Eckhardt, Command and Control, 27.

46Ibid., 25.
cover to the ARVN units. It was now apparent that the United States would continue to increase their support for the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) with the possibility of involving American combat troops.

President Kennedy believed the best way to fight a guerrilla war centered on counterguerrilla tactics. Kennedy's concept of counterinsurgency was part of his flexible response towards communist aggression. JFK would use all available resources to impede the further growth of communism in the free world. During the early 1960's, counterinsurgency and the Army Special Forces became the focal point for the United States military. The concept of counterinsurgency (CI) had slowly developed after World War II, and military articles written about CI steadily increased after 1945. Communist countries, especially China, now supported "Wars of National Liberation," and this support for a new type of revolutionary war worried the Kennedy administration. Under these circumstances, the Kennedy

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administration emphasized the need for counterinsurgency capabilities within the United States military.

The CI program under Kennedy began at the highest levels within the State Department, Department of Defense, and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Emphasis upon counterinsurgency caused serious problems within the Army because a new doctrine could not be developed and implemented quickly.\textsuperscript{50} The majority of senior American military officers continued to favor a conventional approach to the situation in Vietnam and they were skeptical about Kennedy's emphasis on counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{51}

Counterinsurgency also created factions within the Kennedy administration and the military.\textsuperscript{52} One group favored a purely military approach based upon punishment of North Vietnam. This group included Vice President Lyndon Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Although for a brief period, President Johnson continued to use Kennedy's "flexible approach" to prevent communist aggression. He quickly escalated the conflict in Vietnam to include American combat forces. The White House and the Department of State viewed the situation in Vietnam as an internal problem of


\textsuperscript{51}Bowman, M.A. thesis, 119-120.

insurgency. A thorough examination of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations will be discussed in chapter two.

The introduction of Special Forces units in Vietnam coincided with the Project WHITE STAR Mobile Training Teams in Laos. Project WHITE STAR officially began in 1959, although SF troops had been in Laos acting as civilian advisers since 1957. The CIA funded and coordinated WHITE STAR, while the Special Forces trained and advised the Laotian Army in counterinsurgency tactics. WHITE STAR was a very successful program that trained Laotian regular army units and irregular troops against the communist sponsored Pathet Lao. SF trained units proved to be the deciding factor in a countercoup against military factions who seized power in August 1960. The success of the countercoup led to a substantial increase in the number of SF personnel in Laos. Project WHITE STAR personnel trained the Meos and Kha tribesmen in CI warfare, and the Meos became the most effective anti-communist force in Laos. Over 400 SF troops served in Laos and gained great CI experience, which would later help the Special Forces develop the CIDG program in Vietnam. By


54 Ibid., 45-46.
October 1962, all foreign military personnel were required to leave Laos and Project WHITE STAR came to an end.\textsuperscript{55} Kennedy and junior officers within the military were influenced by Sir Robert G. K. Thompson, a British military adviser in South East Asia who developed basic counterinsurgency strategies and tactics.\textsuperscript{56} Thompson developed counterinsurgency principles that called for social and political reforms, protected the people under the law, and denied the guerrilla infrastructure of its supply base (the population).\textsuperscript{57}

These CI tactics evolved into the unsuccessful Strategic Hamlet Program. The basic concept of the Strategic Hamlet Program was to turn each hamlet, the natural geographic and demographic unit of South Vietnam, into a defensive fortification, thus creating interconnected lines of defense.\textsuperscript{58} This program failed due to inadequate training, lack of coordination with local military units, and because it forced the displacement of large numbers of people, especially farmers.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55}Thompson, \textit{De Oppresso Liber}, 46.

\textsuperscript{56}Tsou, \textit{China in Crisis}, 274-275.

\textsuperscript{57}Truong, \textit{Territorial Forces}, 6.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 6-7.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 7.
The Strategic Hamlet Program ended with the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, and the new objective of the Republic of Vietnam was to destroy the Viet Cong.\(^{60}\) The rise of a military government under General Nguyen Khanh greatly affected U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine.

Counterinsurgency doctrine also failed because American advisers relied on technology and a body count to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure.\(^{61}\) The American military remained suspicious of counterinsurgency and its development and emphasis during the early 1960's. Army officers believed that insurgency from the north could be controlled with direct military intervention, such as bombing North Vietnamese cities and military installations. However, the Kennedy administration established MACV in 1962, and relied upon the successes of the Special Forces and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) to defeat the Viet Cong insurgency.

After 1964, the United States and South Vietnam were primarily fighting a conventional war against guerrillas. The type of war that Special Forces, the troops they trained,


and the Viet Cong fought did not allow America to use its wealth, industrial, or technological superiority successfully.\textsuperscript{62} Guerrilla and counterinsurgency warfare were confusing subjects for American political and military officials. Guerrilla warfare ran contrary to the American sense of fair play and the American conviction that politics and the military should not mix.\textsuperscript{63} The guerrilla war waged by the North Vietnamese was an extension of their political goal to unite Vietnam. A majority of American military commanders in Vietnam did not understand this political war, and so they did not understand the mission of the Special Forces.

The situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating rapidly and the establishment of MACV was supposed to solve the insurgency problem. MACV was originally set up as a temporary headquarters that would be withdrawn as soon as the Viet Cong insurgency was controlled.\textsuperscript{64} However, due to the expansion of United States military activities in Vietnam, it became apparent that MAAGV and MACV had conflicting and overlapping roles. On May 15, 1964, MAAGV was formally

\textsuperscript{62}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 2.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., 1-2.

dissolved and a reorganized MACV headquarters was authorized.\textsuperscript{65}

Between 1961 and 1962, the insurgency problem in South Vietnam produced many problems. The American chain of command that had existed for ten years was reorganized. The newly expanded system had become so large that ARVN capabilities could not adequately supply support for their U.S. advisers.\textsuperscript{66} Another problem was that ARVN requirements for U.S. advisory assistance were never determined by the Vietnamese. The United States controlled all aspects of financial and military aid. A quote in the early 1960's from an American Army general about the advisory effort sums up the situation, "We erroneously tried to impose the American system (conventional) on a people who didn't want it, couldn't handle it and may lose because they tried it."\textsuperscript{67}

Until the United States recognized the threat of insurgency, American military advisers believed the situation in Vietnam was under control. Increased Viet Cong activities forced the United States to reorganize the advisory program in Vietnam. This reorganization eventually caused American combat troops to suppress the guerrilla activities of the Viet Cong. However, one group of U.S. advisers had been

\textsuperscript{65}Eckhardt, \textit{Command and Control}, 28.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{67}Vien, \textit{The U.S. Advisor}, 20.
dealing with the threat of insurgency on a limited level since 1958. This group of advisers was the United States Army Special Forces or Green Berets.

A brief history of the organization of the Special Forces during the American advisory period will demonstrate the effectiveness of this counterinsurgency unit. Chapter three provides a thorough examination of the development and implementation of counterinsurgency warfare by the Special Forces.

The preferred Army mission for SF was not counterinsurgency but unconditional warfare, where Special Forces could support traditional, conventional operations. Yet, Special Forces excelled in the field of counterinsurgency in Vietnam. In 1958, the Vietnamese special forces received training from the U.S. Special Forces, and by 1959 these Vietnamese troops had evolved into the modern ARVN units and 77th Vietnamese SF battalions which would play a crucial role in the years to come.

In 1961, U.S. and Vietnamese decision makers gave approval to train and arm the Montagnard tribesmen in Darlac Province. The Village Defense Program that began in Darlac

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68 Kinnard, The War Managers, 92.

69 Thompson, De Oppresso Liber, 45.

Province eventually evolved into the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), the most successful of all counterinsurgency measures taken by the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) ran, funded, and coordinated the original program and had the SF supply the troops.\textsuperscript{71} On February 14, 1962, a detachment from the 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) and members of the Luc Long Dac Biet (LLDB), the Vietnamese Special Forces, began training Rhade (Rah-day) tribesmen at Buon Enao.\textsuperscript{72}

During Operation Switchback in July 1963, the United States phased out the Central Intelligence Agency from the CIDG program due to the recent CIA fiasco in Cuba (Bay of Pigs Invasion).\textsuperscript{73} The Special Forces assumed official control of the CIDG program, and by the end of 1963, 11,000 strikers (offensive troops) and 40,000 hamlet militia had been trained.\textsuperscript{74} However, in 1963, due to pressure from MACV and the South Vietnamese armed forces, the CIDG program became more aggressive.\textsuperscript{75} Strike force troops were being used more often as light infantry in patrolling and ambushes. By 1964, the development of the CIDG program became secondary in

\textsuperscript{71}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 102.
\textsuperscript{73}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 120.
\textsuperscript{74}Kelly, \textit{U.S. Army Special Forces}, 35-37.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 49-52.
nature to the increasing need for experienced counterinsurgency fighters. CIDG personnel became shock troops and were rarely used to defend their own villages. The chief military advisers at MACV wanted to use the SF trained strikers to take the war to the Viet Cong and stop the border infiltration.\textsuperscript{76} This reliance on CIDG troops to fight the Viet Cong in the field had many negative affects. It eliminated the training of the hamlet militias, SF troops and experienced strikers were spread very thin throughout the Highlands, and it made the established camps vulnerable to attack.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1964, MACV realized the need for a full Special Forces Group (SFG) in Vietnam, and in October the 5th SFG took over control of all SF activities.\textsuperscript{78} By March 1965, 1,465 SF personnel were stationed in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{79} The Special Forces continued to run the CIDG program until 1970, when it was Vietnamized (controlled by the South Vietnamese).\textsuperscript{80} The Green Berets played a very crucial, counterinsurgency role in Vietnam. Throughout the Johnson and early Nixon administrations the number of SF personnel in Vietnam

\textsuperscript{76}Kelly, \textit{U.S. Army Special Forces}, 52.

\textsuperscript{77}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 112.

\textsuperscript{78}Kelly, \textit{U.S. Army Special Forces}, 74.

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{80}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 215.
increased, and the CIDG program rapidly grew. Special Forces soldiers and SF trained Vietnamese troops were also used in support of conventional U.S. and Vietnamese units.

The United States' military advisers played a crucial part in our country's involvement in Vietnam. The initial advisory program appeared successful in that it prepared the South Vietnamese armed forces to deal with an overt attack from North Vietnam. However, the advisory program took too long to respond to the threat of insurgency and, as events in Vietnam deteriorated, it was apparent that the United States had three choices. One was to pull out of Southeast Asia completely. The second choice was to completely develop and implement counterinsurgency warfare tactics and strategies. The final choice was to involve American combat troops in Vietnam. For a decade and a half the U.S. had been involved in Vietnam and too much time, money, and effort had been put into this cause. The United States would finally become involved in an open conflict that would eventually lead to our own Dien Bien Phu. Our own Dien Bien Phu refers to the military and political events that caused the United States to finally withdraw from Southeast Asia. If our country's leaders had paid more attention to the deteriorating situation of the advisory efforts in Vietnam, then maybe they would have chosen to pull out of Vietnam or to fully implement an effective counterinsurgency program.
CHAPTER TWO:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE ON THE HOMEFRONT
AND ABROAD

Counterinsurgency warfare became an important element of the United States' arsenal against communist aggression during America's involvement in Vietnam. The Eisenhower administration primarily focused on supporting the French prior to 1954, and assisting the Republic of Vietnam between 1955 and 1960. During the Kennedy administration, counterinsurgency (CI) received official recognition and became a legitimate component of America's political and military mission in the Republic of Vietnam. President Kennedy's avid support of CI warfare led to the creation of the U.S. Navy's S.E.A.L. (Sea, Air, and Land) teams and the continuation of the U.S. Army Special Forces. SEAL teams performed active counterinsurgency operations such as, gathering intelligence and eliminating Viet Cong insurgents, while the Special Forces primarily acted as instructors for indigenous personnel. The Special Forces were personal favorites of Kennedy, who authorized them to wear their distinctive green berets.\(^{76}\)

It was during the Kennedy era that the United States had several options concerning the nation's position in South Vietnam. In 1963, President

Kennedy could have escalated America's involvement in Vietnam by introducing U.S. combat forces, he could have decided to continue supplying South Vietnam with financial aid and military assistance, or he could have slowly withdrawn American assistance and advisors.

However, with the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, the situation in Vietnam became the responsibility of the new President, Lyndon B. Johnson. President Johnson continued with Kennedy's flexible approach in Vietnam, and he eventually deemed that it was necessary to escalate the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia. With the chaotic political climate in South Vietnam, due to the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, and the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Johnson chose to introduce American combat forces to the Vietnamese conflict. Johnson could not simply pull out of Vietnam during this critical period. A withdrawal from Vietnam would have damaged Johnson politically, and it would have negative effects on American foreign policy. If Johnson had withdrawn from Vietnam, the United States would appear to be abandoning an ally in their time of need. This option was completely unacceptable due to the negative political and foreign policy aspects of such a choice. A withdrawal from Vietnam may have caused President Johnson to lose re-election to the White House, and the United States would lose the confidence of other allies, especially in Europe. The United States increased its
commitment to the Republic of Vietnam, and counterinsurgency warfare continued to play an important although smaller role in Southeast Asia.

Between 1964 and 1968, the United States gradually escalated the war in Southeast Asia, and counterinsurgency units assumed a subordinate role under the conventional units deployed throughout Vietnam. The Tet Offensive clearly demonstrated how ineffective the conventional tactics were against the Viet Cong and NVA. President Johnson's hopes for re-election ended with the Tet Offensive of 1968. Tet was a military victory for the United States and the South Vietnamese; the Viet Cong insurgents were practically destroyed and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) suffered extreme casualties. Yet, this offensive was a psychological victory for the North. After 1968, it appeared that the United States and the Republic of Vietnam were losing the war against the North. Sir Robert Thompson, a noted expert on counterinsurgency warfare and advisor to the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, suggested that the United States lacked the willpower to continue the struggle. 77

Richard M. Nixon inherited America's struggle in Vietnam, and it was during his term as President that the United States began to turn the war effort over to the South

77 Sir Robert Thompson, Peace is Not at Hand (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1974), 1-2.
Vietnamese. On March 29, 1973 all remaining U.S. combat troops departed from South Vietnam and within two years the NVA captured Saigon.\textsuperscript{78} America's years of advice, financial aid, and commitment of combat forces ended with the military and political defeat of the Republic of Vietnam. However, counterinsurgency warfare, now known as low intensity conflict, remained a vital component of the U.S. military.

President John F. Kennedy's flexible response to potential communist expansion during the Cold War included an expanded nuclear capacity, an increase in the conventional military capabilities of the United States, and the development of counterinsurgency or anti-guerrilla warfare.\textsuperscript{79} Kennedy emphasized the development and implementation of counterinsurgency warfare during his administration, yet CI warfare was definitely not a new concept. Guerrilla warfare and counter tactics existed centuries before the Vietnam conflict. Recent events in Malaysia and the Philippines greatly influenced the Kennedy administration. Sir Robert Thompson, a key British expert on counterinsurgency, served as Deputy Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Defense in Malaya between 1957 and 1961. During this period the United Kingdom fought and defeated communist insurgency in the Federation of Malaya. Thompson played a key role in the

\textsuperscript{78}Summers, \textit{Vietnam War Almanac}, 57-59.

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 213.
development of the counterinsurgency tactics that defeated the communist insurgents throughout Malaysia, and Thompson's expertise allowed him to serve as Head of the British Advisory mission to Vietnam between 1961 and 1965.\textsuperscript{80}

The Strategic Hamlet Program, developed by Thompson for use in Malaysia, emerged as part of the early CI program in South Vietnam. For Thompson's Strategic Hamlet Program to succeed, certain basic principles of counterinsurgency had to be implemented. First of all, Thompson believed that insurgency was a war of the people and that the government under attack had to maintain authority and law and order throughout the country.\textsuperscript{81} Without political and economic stability, a country under insurgent attack could not provide security for its citizens. Thompson's next principle of CI stated, "that the government must function in accordance with the law."\textsuperscript{82} Basically this principle meant that if the government acted outside of the law and alienated innocent members of the population, the government was morally wrong, and this lawlessness would create more problems. Thompson's third principle called for a coordinated overall plan between

\textsuperscript{80}Summers, \textit{Vietnam War Almanac}, 341.


\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., 52-53.
the military and civilian authorities.\textsuperscript{83} This plan should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the military, police, and administrative branches within the government. Economic and social considerations would also have to be discussed and coordinated. Thompson believed that the overall plan should be carried out in a positive manner that would force the insurgents to react to the government measures. The fourth CI principle held that, "the government must give priority to defeat political subversion and not the guerrillas."\textsuperscript{84} Thompson realized that if the insurgent political organization were eliminated, the guerrillas would have limited supplies, recruits, and intelligence. The government could then destroy or capture the remaining guerrillas. Finally, Thompson asserted that during the guerrilla phase of insurgency the government must secure the guerrilla base area first.\textsuperscript{85} Basically, this meant that government forces should absolutely control the regions under guerrilla influence. This tactic focused on the highly developed areas first, since they were easier to secure and control. Government forces could then move towards the periphery and eventually destroy, capture, or disband the insurgents.

\textsuperscript{83} Thompson, \textit{Defeating Communist Insurgency}, 55.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 55-56.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 57-58.
Thompson developed these basic counterinsurgency tactics for use in Malaysia, and under his guidance these same principles became the framework for the Strategic Hamlet Program during the Diem regime. President Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's younger brother, controlled and directed the Strategic Hamlet Program from 1962 until their assassination in 1963. Sir Robert Thompson and American advisors had little influence over the development of the program. Diem and Nhu used the Strategic Hamlet Program to try to control the rural population with little concern about social and political reform. Nhu also used the program to obtain a political and military power base for his possible rise to the Presidency. In his race for power, Nhu allowed the Strategic Hamlet Program to move too quickly, and so many of the programs early successes ultimately failed. President Diem and his brother failed to realize the problems of displacing so many rural Vietnamese from their homes. The majority of these Vietnamese people were farmers and Buddhists. So the displacement from their ancestral homes caused economic, social, and religious problems that the Government of Vietnam failed to take into consideration. The


Diem government succeeded in isolating the population from the Viet Cong, yet the people were unhappy with this program. President Diem did not provide his people with the proper social and political reforms to maintain order and stability. The Diem government also allowed and at times encouraged the number of completed strategic hamlets to be exaggerated. Province chiefs lied about the state of their hamlets to appease President Diem and American advisors. Many key U.S. advisors knew of the exaggerated number of strategic hamlets, yet they did not want to cause any problems with the Diem government. A perfect example of this sort of deception and what happens to those who cause waves occurred in the Mekong Delta in 1962. General Paul D. Harkins, first commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, arrived there for a field inspection. A briefing was held, and the Vietnamese commander exaggerated the number of functioning strategic hamlets under his jurisdiction. After the briefing, Lieutenant Colonel Fred Ladd, the division advisor, informed General Harkins that the number of strategic hamlets were "flagrantly exaggerated." Harkins reprimanded Ladd for questioning the word of a Vietnamese officer.\textsuperscript{88} For performing his job, Lieutenant Colonel Ladd, a West Point graduate, ruined his chances of becoming a General grade

officer. The Vietnamese were too eager to please their American advisors and vice versa. Another blatant example of appeasement was this quote from a Vietnamese general to an American friend, "Your Secretary of Defense loves statistics. We Vietnamese can give him all he wants. If you want them to go up, they will go up. If you want them to go down, they will go down."  

It was obvious that by 1963 counterinsurgency efforts in South Vietnam were not as successful as everyone had hoped. Many CI warfare experts were even questioning the validity of the Strategic Hamlet Program. Roger Hilsman, Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research between 1961 and 1964, was an avid supporter of the Strategic Hamlet Program. Hilsman viewed the conflict in Vietnam as a political battle and thought that the South Vietnamese government should use guerrilla tactics against the Viet Cong. According to Hilsman, the Strategic Hamlet Program remained an effective strategic concept, yet he was very skeptical about how the Diem government directed this program. Hilsman believed that the Government of Vietnam (GVN) relied too heavily upon large scale operations and conventional tactics, and he was aware of the lack of social,

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89 Hilsman, To Move a Nation, 451-452.
90 Ibid., 451.
political, and economic reforms in South Vietnam. Hilsman's advice and experience, gained when he served with Merrill's Marauders and the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, did not solve the counterinsurgency problems in Vietnam. Three months after the assassination of President Kennedy, Hilsman resigned his post due to differences of opinion over Vietnam policy with the new administration.

Another important player in the early counterinsurgency era was Edward G. Lansdale. During World War II, Lansdale served in the Office of Strategic Services and the U.S. Army in the Pacific Theater. After the war he joined the Air Force, in the year of its inception into the U.S. armed forces, and between 1954 and 1957 he served as a military advisor and liaison officer for the Central Intelligence Agency in South Vietnam. General Lansdale also served as an advisor to the Philippine government during the communist sponsored Huk revolt between 1950 and 1953. There he helped develop effective counterinsurgency and psychological warfare procedures that eventually led to the defeat of the rebels.

It was a natural step for Lansdale to be stationed in Vietnam as an advisor for the newly appointed Diem

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91Summers, Vietnam War Almanac, 193.


93Ibid., 157-158.
government. He brought his experiences from World War II and the Huk rebellion in the Philippines to the Republic of Vietnam, and he eagerly began to organize and prepare a viable counterinsurgency doctrine to fight the Viet Cong. The organization of the military, agrarian economic reform, and the development of a stable government that could protect its citizens were among his chief concerns. General Lansdale was a controversial figure, who had a unique understanding of the potential dangers of communist insurgency. He understood that the protection and allegiance of the population was the key element in defeating the "people's war" waged by Ho Chi Minh and other communist revolutionaries.\footnote{Lansdale, \textit{In the Midst of Wars}, 372.}

Many would argue that Lansdale placed too much faith in the Diem government and that he was too emotionally involved in the circumstances in Vietnam. Yet, General Lansdale was assigned to the Pentagon between 1957 and 1963, during the crucial years of development for an effective counterinsurgency program. Perhaps, if Edward Lansdale had been in Vietnam during this period, he could have provided the guidance and advice that Diem desperately needed during the Strategic Hamlet Program.\footnote{Bernard B. Fall, \textit{The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis} (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), 382-383.}
The historian and noted expert on the First and Second Indochina Wars, Bernard B. Fall, could have taught American policy makers a great deal about the problems faced by the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. In 1963 Fall's book, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, was published in the United States. This book provided its audience with a thorough social, political, and military analysis of Vietnam's past and present. Fall, unlike the majority of U.S. advisors, had a keen understanding of the Vietnamese people and their struggles. He even discussed how the Strategic Hamlet Program was a significant failure for the United States and Great Britain. Fall demonstrated the lack of communication between the South Vietnamese and its allies, and he examined the false sense of success that was conveyed to the Kennedy administration by the South Vietnamese and their American and British counterparts.\(^{96}\) The Thompson mission was also criticized by Fall for not ending the Strategic Hamlet Program when the British team discovered that it was not functioning successfully in South Vietnam.\(^{97}\) However, the works of Bernard Fall were largely ignored by American officials and military officers.

During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the influence of General Maxwell D. Taylor remained very

\(^{96}\) Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, 382-383.

\(^{97}\) Summers, *Vietnam War Almanac*, 283.
important. General Taylor was a proponent of counterinsurgency warfare, yet he supported CI warfare without fully comprehending the situation in Vietnam. An important factor for Taylor's support of counterinsurgency warfare dealt with the preservation of the United States Army in the nuclear age.\textsuperscript{98} Taylor feared that the Army would not be needed in an era where nuclear weapons and rapidly advancing technology could possibly maintain the national security of the United States. And it was Taylor's idea of the combined use of nuclear, conventional, and counterinsurgency elements throughout the military that became the vital part of Kennedy's flexible response against communist aggression. Under President Johnson, Taylor served as Ambassador to South Vietnam and as a Special Consultant to the President. Taylor truly did not understand the social and political situation in Vietnam, yet he remained as a key advisor through two administrations.

After the assassinations of President Diem and President Kennedy in 1963, counterinsurgency warfare played a significantly smaller role in the strategies and tactics implemented by the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Two important events took place in 1964 that greatly changed the direction of the war effort. This was the year that North Vietnam sent regular combat units, not Viet Cong guerrillas,

\textsuperscript{98} Summers, \textit{Vietnam War Almanac}, 283.
across the border into South Vietnam. The introduction of NVA units proved that Ho Chi Minh's war of national liberation was preceding as planned. NVA units fought ARVN and U.S. units only when they (NVA) had a distinct military advantage or if they somehow were forced into a battle. The next event was the Gulf of Tonkin incident. This supposed attack on U.S. naval vessels led to the introduction of U.S. combat troops in Vietnam and the bombing of key military sites in North Vietnam. President Johnson fully committed the United States to a limited war against North Vietnam. Counterinsurgency warfare became merely a component of a conventional war.

There were only two viable counterinsurgency programs implemented during the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The Civilian Irregular Defense Group, under the guidance of the U.S. Army Special Forces will be fully examined and discussed in chapter three. A joint Military Assistance Command, Vietnam and Central Intelligence Agency program, the Phoenix Program, existed from 1968 until 1972. The Phoenix Program was established to identify the estimated 70,000 members of the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI) scattered throughout South Vietnam.99 Suspected members of the Viet Cong infrastructure had to be identified by three separate sources, and then this information would be turned over to

99Summers, Vietnam War Almanac, 283.
the Phoenix committees. The committees would then review all available intelligence on the identified VCI member and take appropriate measures to eliminate this individual.\textsuperscript{100} Between 1968 and 1971 17,000 VCI were given amnesty, 28,000 were captured, and 20,000 were killed, the majority in combat.\textsuperscript{101} This program was part of the pacification efforts waged during the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The Phoenix Program ended due to an effective North Vietnamese propaganda campaign that called Phoenix an assassination program.

As the conflict in Vietnam developed into a conventional war fought against an unconventional enemy, counterinsurgency warfare became a mere aspects of this chaotic struggle. However, President Kennedy's favorites, the U.S. Army Special Forces, continued to develop and implement counterinsurgency warfare tactics throughout this period. And it is their successes and failures that I will examine in chapter three.

\textsuperscript{100}Summers, \textit{Vietnam War Almanac}, 283.

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 283.
CHAPTER THREE:
SPECIAL FORCES AND COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

During the Vietnam War, all branches of the United States military developed counterinsurgency warfare units under the insistence of the Kennedy administration. The U.S. Army Special Forces or Green Berets (Special Forces is used only to describe this particular unit in this chapter) played a significant role in the field of counterinsurgency. Special Forces will be discussed in full detail throughout this chapter, while other CI units (SEALs, Air Commandos, Army LRRPs, etc.) will be briefly examined to show a distinction between these units and the Special Forces. Counterinsurgency warfare had become an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy due to the new threat of communist sponsored wars of national liberation. President Kennedy and many of his chief advisers believed that CI units could impede and eventually defeat communist insurgency. This aspect of Kennedy's flexible response to communist aggression also required financial and military assistance as well as, political, social, and economic reform for the nation under covert communist attack. However, the inability of the Diem government to provide adequate reforms and the patience, willpower, and fervor of communist North Vietnam led to a protracted conventional war fought against an elusive enemy. CI warfare units served in a variety of unconventional roles geared to-
wards a conventional and technological war waged against an enemy who relied upon guerrilla tactics to achieve a political goal.

The majority of counterinsurgency warfare units remained a viable component of the U.S. armed forces after the Vietnam Conflict. United States military officials learned of the importance of maintaining specialized combat units within the armed forces, instead of developing such units when the need arose. A perfect example of this policy concerns the disbandment of ranger units after World War II and Korea, only to reinstate and retrain ranger units during Vietnam. The U.S. Army Ranger Battalions remained in active service after the Vietnam War, and these units continued to play an important role within American conventional and unconventional military doctrine.

The Ranger Battalions of Vietnam and of the current U.S. Army date their heritage to Roger's Rangers, who fought for the British during the French and Indian War. Their most recent descendants were the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs), pronounced Lurps, who served in Vietnam as part of the 101st Airborne Division. Army LRRPs and United States Marine Corps Force Recon teams served as the eyes and ears of the conventional units with which they were assigned. These Army and Marine reconnaissance units patrolled in small teams and gathered intelligence, called in artillery and air strikes, set up mechanical and physical ambushes, and cap-
tured enemy troops for interrogation. LRRPs and Force Recon teams used CI warfare tactics to fight the Viet Cong and NVA, while serving under the jurisdiction of conventional combat units.

The United States Air Force and Navy also had counterinsurgency warfare units serving in Vietnam. Air Commando Squadrons were the contribution to CI warfare by the Air Force. The First Air Commando Squadron, formally the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, became operational in the summer of 1963.\textsuperscript{102} Air Commando squads provided conventional and CI warfare units with reconnaissance, surveillance, close air support, rescue, transportation, supplies, and psychological operations. The Air Commandos were disbanded after the Vietnam War, yet the Air Force maintains units with similar CI warfare or Low Intensity Conflict (LIC, current military reference to CI) capabilities and functions. Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) teams operated in an official CI capacity for the U.S. Navy. SEAL teams could be deployed by sea, air, or land, hence their name, and the SEALs primarily operated throughout the Mekong Delta in IV Corps. U.S. Navy SEALs gathered intelligence and proved to be very effective at ambushing Viet Cong units operating in the Mekong Delta. The

SEALs continued to function as part of the Navy's special warfare detachment after Vietnam.

However, of all the CI warfare units which operated in Vietnam, the U.S. Army Special Forces succeeded in developing a CI program that remained independent from the conventional military doctrine. Special Forces soldiers worked, trained, and fought alongside the indigenous population with which they lived. The Civilian Indigenous Defense Group (CIDG) program remained one of the most successful CI doctrines developed during the Vietnam War.

The primary role of a Special Forces (SF) twelve man A Detachment (A Team) was to develop, organize, equip, train, and direct indigenous military forces in unconditional warfare (UW) and foreign internal defense (FID). Special Forces typically supported conventional operations, yet SF excelled in the field of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam. In 1958, the Vietnamese Special Forces received training from the U.S. Special Forces, and by 1959 these Vietnamese troops had evolved into the modern ARVN units and 77th Vietnamese SF battalions which would play a crucial role in the years to come.

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104 Thompson, *De Oppresso Liber*, 45.
Before the Special Forces and the CIDG program in Vietnam can be fully understood, one must examine the history, organization, training, and purpose of the Green Berets. The next several pages will demonstrate why the U.S. Army Special Forces were the best suited and experienced counterinsurgency troops within the American Armed Forces.

The heritage of the U.S. Army Special Forces can be traced from the exploits of Roger's Rangers during the French and Indian War to the tenacious and cunning deeds of the men of the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS) and Merrill's Marauders during World War II.\footnote{105} Colonel Aaron Bank, a former OSS operative, became the first commander of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), on June 20, 1952, with a strength of ten men.\footnote{106} The humble beginnings of the 10th SFG and the gradual increase in the size and scope of Special Forces groups can be attributed to men like Colonel Bank, who believed in the need for soldiers that were trained in unconventional warfare.

Initially, the 10th SFG was developed to exploit the resistance and guerrilla potential of the expected Soviet invasion of Western Europe, where SF troops would be deployed behind enemy lines to aid resistance fighters. The basic SF


\footnote{106}{Ibid., 21.}
field unit was the A Team, which initially included seven noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and one officer. A Teams later included ten NCOs and two officers. Each SF soldier trained in irregular warfare and his own military specialty, while being cross trained in the specialties of his team members. Special Forces military specialties included operations and intelligence, light and heavy weapons, demolitions, communications, and field medical training. SF troops also studied the geography, language, and customs of the areas of the world in which they might serve. The men of the 10th SFG underwent thirteen months of training so that they would be prepared to teach their skills to others.

In November of 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent the 782 men of the 10th SFG to Bad Tolz, Germany to train and prepare for World War III. The men of the 10th SFG developed a good relationship with the local population and the German soldiers with whom they trained. SF troopers learned by their mistakes and trial and error. One of their greatest attributes was their ability to improvise, and the SF and German soldiers, acting as guerrillas, taught the American Seventh Army valuable lessons about the use of guerrilla war-


\[108\] Ibid., 40-41.

\[109\] Ibid., 40-42.
fare.\textsuperscript{110} Men from the 10th SFG were sent throughout Europe and the Middle East to exchange training and ideas. Special Forces soldiers were now acting as inexpensive goodwill ambassadors for the United States, yet they were struggling for their own official survival in Germany and the United States.

The staff of Headquarters, U.S. Army Europe in Heidelberg, Germany believed that the concept of sending American soldiers behind enemy lines to act as resistance fighters served no value.\textsuperscript{111} Many high ranking officers within the Army also shared this view of the Special Forces. SF soldiers were usually distrusted and looked down upon by other traditional and conventional units. After the Korean War ended, there were huge cuts in manpower throughout the military, and the 10th SFG and the 77th SFG at Fort Bragg, North Carolina had to fight for their survival.

The 10th and the 77th persisted during the late 1950's and continued to train throughout the world. Three officers and thirteen NCOs from the 77th SFG were redesignated the 14th SF Operational Detachment and shipped to the Far East in June 1956. At the same time, five officers and seventeen NCOs from Fort Bragg formed the 8,231st Army Special Operations Detachment and were assigned to Camp Drake, Japan. These two units would eventually form the nucleus of the 1st

\textsuperscript{110}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 44-45.

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., 48.
SFG Far East Detachment in June 1957, at Okinawa. The men of the 1st SFG had trained in Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. This training exposed the 1st SFG to the languages and customs of Asians and allowed them to be the first Green Berets to officially serve in Vietnam in 1958.

During Project WHITE STAR, Special Forces soldiers gained valuable experience in Laos that would aid them in their CI operations in Vietnam. However, it was the combination of their comprehensive training and field experience that allowed Special Forces units to develop and implement a successful CI program in the Republic of Vietnam.

By the 1960's, the thirteen month training program developed by Colonel Banks and the original members of the 10th SFG had evolved into a comprehensive guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency system. Special Forces soldiers were all three time volunteers. They had volunteered for service in the U.S. Army, airborne school, and Special Forces training. The men who passed the initial physical and mental requirements for Special Forces would then begin branch training. During the eight weeks of branch training, the SF recruit studied communications, tactics, medical aid, special

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113 Thompson, *De Oppresso Liber*, 45.

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airborne techniques, and weapons (domestic and foreign).\footnote{Robert B. Asprey, "Special Forces: Europe" Army 12 (Jan 1962), 57.} If the SF volunteer survived branch training, he would qualify for specialist training. Demolitions, communications, and weapons specialist training lasted five weeks, while medical specialist troops underwent a forty-four week training course.\footnote{Ibid., 57.} At this point, the SF soldier would be assigned to an operational detachment with a Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg.

Yet, the SF volunteer's training was not completed. He would now train for thirteen weeks at various posts in jungle, arctic, amphibious, and swamp survival and patrolling. During this period, the SF recruit might also receive training at specialized schools such as ranger, language, mountain, underwater, psychological warfare, and counterinsurgency.\footnote{Ibid., 57.} The Special Forces soldier has now received between twenty-six and seventy-one weeks of training, and he would now be prepared for an overseas assignment. Field assignments throughout the world allowed Special Forces troops to further develop and fine tune their new skills. Green Berets were stationed all over the world and the majority of SF soldiers would eventually serve a tour of duty in Vietnam.
As the Green Beret trooper completed his official training and received his orders, he packed his duffel bags with the knowledge that he was prepared to carry out the primary mission of the U.S. Army Special Forces. The SF trooper was a soldier by vocation, but his primary purpose involved the instruction of his skills to allied soldiers and guerrilla fighters. Special Forces could be viewed as the military version of the Peace Corps. Green Berets taught, advised, and worked with indigenous populations throughout the world. These American soldiers in their distinctive green berets not only instructed native populations in military tactics and strategies, but the SF also developed civic action programs for these people.

The primary military mission of the Special Forces was stated as, "... to develop, organize, equip, train, support, and control guerrilla forces and to conduct guerrilla warfare in support of conventional military operations." In the case of the Vietnam War, SF troops waged a guerrilla war against the Viet Cong and eventually the North Vietnamese Army. Their training and mission allowed the SF to act as anti-guerrilla advisers and fighters in support of conventional units. The American military escalation during the Vietnam War affected the programs of the Special Forces, and

at times the SF were misused by conventional military commanders. As with any elite unit, the Special Forces were perceived as shock troops and commandos who could perform a variety of functions. Special Forces were and remain among the most highly trained soldiers within the U.S. military. However, the use of SF soldiers and the indigenous troops they trained as conventional soldiers caused problems and interruptions in their primary role as anti-guerrilla fighters in Vietnam.

Secondary missions included psychological operations, intelligence, evasion and escape, providing resistance against hostile states, performing missions for theater commanders, and providing advisers and specialists to accomplish these missions.118 For a Special Forces A Team to succeed in its mission, then it had to become an integrated component of the indigenous troops under its instruction. As stated in the 1958 Special Forces field manual, "The special forces team and the local guerrillas comprise one force, and this cohesiveness is vital to successful U.S. Army operational control." SF soldiers lived, worked, fought, and died alongside the troops they trained. The Green Berets brought a knowledge of a people's customs, language, and religion when they deployed behind enemy lines. Special Forces did not ex-

ploit or alienate the people they instructed because the SF soldier cared for and depended upon these people.

The Special Forces also performed intelligence and psychological operations, but before these types of operations could be carried out the SF advisers had to train the indigenous troops. First, a Special Forces Operational Base (SFOB) would be established by the Special Forces Group deployed in the military theater of operations. The SFOB would command and support Special Forces A Teams throughout its operational area. Once an A Team was established, it would develop and initiate a training program for indigenous personnel. The basic training program would include the following: 1) care and use of individual and crew-served weapons, 2) camouflage and concealment, 3) organization and command of forces, 4) security and warning systems, 5) first aid, 6) map reading and use of the compass, 7) march discipline, 8) supply economy, and 9) physical conditioning. This initial training would have to be completed in a short period of time due to the nature of guerrilla and counterinsurgency warfare. Eventually, the indigenous troops would receive advanced training in intelligence, counterintelligence, tactics, com-


120Field Manual 31-21, May 1958, 48.
munications, and demolitions.\textsuperscript{121} At this point, the indigenous troops would be able to defend themselves and to patrol and set up ambushes against the enemy. The A Team could now gather intelligence and wage psychological operations in their area of operations.

The mere presence of a Special Forces A Team played an enormous psychological role upon American allies and enemies in an operational area. SF personnel were representatives of the United States and helped to promote U.S. objectives and goals.\textsuperscript{122} Psychological warfare operations were geared towards enemy military forces, the local population, guerrillas, auxiliaries and underground movements. The goal of psychological operations was to lower the moral of the enemy by supporting allied guerrillas and providing security and civic action for the local populace.\textsuperscript{123}

Successful psychological operations also provided SF personnel with valuable intelligence. Without proper intelligence, psychological and military operations within a combat area would be severely hampered. A successful intelligence network allowed the SF to monitor enemy troop movements

\textsuperscript{121}Field Manual 31-21, May 1958, 49.


\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., 97.
and operations, and to locate and aid civilian populations who were sympathetic towards the guerrillas' cause.\textsuperscript{124}

Their training, purpose, and mission made the Special Forces an ideal choice to develop the United States' counterinsurgency program in Vietnam. Special Forces personnel were acting as advisers and instructors in the Republic of Vietnam since 1957. Their success with Project WHITE STAR in Laos eventually led to the development of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group, which was the most successful counterinsurgency warfare program implemented during the Vietnam War.

The CIDG program worked in the following way. A Special Forces A Team would establish itself in a centrally located village, prepare simple defenses, recruit and train a small strike force, train the village defenders, and establish a local intelligence and warning network.\textsuperscript{125} The initial phase of the CIDG program was no easy task for Special Forces soldiers because they were located in the isolated regions of Vietnam, had to overcome cultural differences, and needed to win the confidence of the people they were training. By the end of 1962, the Republic of Vietnam declared the Darlac Province (the first province in the CIDG program) secure from


\textsuperscript{125}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 103.
Viet Cong insurgency. This demonstrated the potential success of the CIDG program and guaranteed that the Special Forces would play an increasing counterinsurgency role in Vietnam.

By 1961, the Viet Cong domination of the Central Highlands was a serious problem in terms of security and intelligence for the South Vietnamese government. The South Vietnamese government and American advisers developed the CIDG program to create paramilitary units for minority groups, to strengthen and broaden the CI effort, and to prevent VC propaganda from negatively affecting the ethnic minorities. There was a serious problem with the Montagnards (French term meaning mountainmen) coming under the influence of the Viet Cong. The Vietnamese referred to the Montagnards as moi or savages, and a great animosity remained between the Montagnards and the North and South Vietnamese. Montagnard tribes preferred to remain neutral and distrusted all flat-land Vietnamese. The CIA estimated that there were 700,000 Montagnard and other ethnic tribesmen living on over seventy-five percent of South Vietnam's land mass. South Vietnam could not afford to allow the Viet Cong to control such a large population base.

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126 Francis J. Kelly, U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971

127 Simpson, Inside the Green Berets, 104.
In the fall of 1961, U.S. and Vietnamese leaders decided to train and arm the Montagnards of the Buon Enao village as local militiamen.\textsuperscript{128} This was the beginning of the Village Defense Program, which evolved into the CIDG. The Rhade tribe lived in the village of Buon Enao, which was strategically located in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Population estimates of the Rhade tribe were between 100,000 and 115,000 people.\textsuperscript{129} The Rhade tribe became the ideal test case for the village defense program.

Captain Ron Shackleton commanded the A Team, from the 1st SFG, that would train the Montagnards at Buon Enao. Shackleton's medic established the initial rapport with the villagers of Buon Enao by supplying them with basic medical aid. The A Team immediately began to train village defenders and strike force units (the only paid troops under CIDG) in basic military tactics. By the time Captain Shackleton's team had completed a six month tour of duty, a 1,800 man strike force had been established, 280 medics had been trained, and 10,000 village defenders protected 129 Rhade hamlets.\textsuperscript{130} The experiment at Buon Enao was a huge success and the CIDG program expanded throughout the Darlac Province.

\textsuperscript{128}Thompson, \textit{De Oppresso Liber}, 47.

\textsuperscript{129}Kelly, U.S. Army Special Forces, 22.

\textsuperscript{130}Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 110-111.
and eventually every combat theater in Vietnam would be affected by the CIDG program.

The CIDG program was funded and coordinated by the CIA under operations Parasol and Switchback, while the Special Forces supplied the personnel and controlled the actual program. Between November 1962 and July 1963, the CIA were officially phased out of the CIDG program under operation Switchback.\textsuperscript{131} The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam now directed the overall CIDG program, the SF continued to control and run the program, and the CIA unofficially funded the program. This was the perfect system for counterinsurgency doctrine in Vietnam. CIA funding allowed the Special Forces to bypass the U.S. Army logistical system, which was a bureaucratic nightmare, and to purchase the majority of CIDG supplies locally. This system provided the Special Forces and their CIDG troops with great flexibility and a quick response to supply emergencies. The CIDG program did not have to rely upon ARVN or other U.S. units for equipment, food, ammunition, and other materials. It was a self-sufficient, inexpensive, and successful CI program.

As the CIDG program expanded throughout the mountains, deltas, and highlands of Vietnam, the need for a permanent Special Forces Group to be stationed in country became apparent. On October 1, 1964 the 5th SFG, with a strength of

\textsuperscript{131}Thompson, \textit{De Oppresso Liber}, 52-53.
1,297 men, was assigned to the Republic of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{132} The Special Forces were now prepared to expand and develop the CIDG program throughout the Vietnamese countryside. CIDG programs allowed Montagnard tribes to defend themselves from VC and NVA attack and prevented communist insurgents from manipulating the Montagnards. The CIDG trained strike forces also patrolled, ambushed, and gathered intelligence against the Viet Cong and NVA.

However, the most important aspect of the CIDG program was the civic action projects developed by the Special Forces troops in each camp. Civic action included the construction of dependent housing, medical patrols, newspapers published in Montagnard dialects, inoculation against disease, and agrarian reform.

There were many ranchers and farmers in the ranks of the Special Forces troops who served in Vietnam. SF soldiers taught Montagnards about the use of fertilizers, weeding, and crop planting.\textsuperscript{133} Prior to this Montagnard tribesmen practiced slash and burn agriculture, which produced less food and destroyed the land. Under the CIDG program Montagnards learned farming techniques that produced more food and ultimately prevented their exploitation from the VC. With these

\textsuperscript{132}Kelly, \textit{U.S. Army Special Forces}, 74.

\textsuperscript{133}Dalton Kast, "Eldean Proehl, Green Beret Farmer" \textit{Green Beret Magazine} 4 (July 1969), 12.
new ideas, Montagnards could remain in the same area with sufficient food and the ability to defend themselves against the Viet Cong.

Medical training and aid were the most influential and productive civic action programs implemented by the Green Berets. It was estimated that in 1965, over one million people had been aided by SF medical programs. The SF medic played a crucial role in the medical civic action program. In a CIDG base camp, the SF medic began the day with sick call at the camp hospital. The medic had to constantly deal with the superstitions, primitive medications, and customs of the Montagnards.\(^{134}\) SF medical personnel also worked alongside CIDG trained doctors and nurses in CIDG hospitals. These facilities were built by CIDG troop labor and provided the best medical care for CIDG soldiers and their dependents.\(^{135}\)

The entire CIDG program was designed to allow indigenous personnel to learn to provide and care for themselves. It was the ultimate goal of a Special Forces A Team to train CIDG personnel in one camp well enough, so that the A Team could move on to another area. The Civilian Irregular Defense Group program lasted nine years, and thousands of SF

\(^{134}\)Fernando Rulz, Jr., "SF Medic Wages His Own Kind of War..." *Green Beret Magazine* 1 (April 1966), 16.

troops trained and advised several hundred-thousand Vietnamese civilians to defend and protect themselves.\footnote{Simpson, \textit{Inside the Green Berets}, 101.} Through the CIDG program, SF soldiers were involved in every aspect of counterinsurgency. The Green Berets were the perfect military advisers because they truly cared about the people they lived, worked, and fought beside. If the United States and the Republic of Vietnam had not escalated the conflict into a conventional war, it was possible that the CIDG program might have defeated the communist insurgents.
CONCLUSION

The Vietnam War remains a brutal and tragic conflict in which nearly two million people died (this includes French troops during the First Indochina War). American politicians and military officers repeatedly say that they will not involve the United States in "another Vietnam. "There will never be another Vietnam War, yet the United States continues to act as the world's policeman. Now our government is less concerned about the spread of communism, though the United States still pursues a foreign policy of power, influence, and stability. American foreign policy remains biased towards our own political and social points of view. The Vietnam War clearly demonstrates the biases of American foreign policy.

During Vietnam, the United States tried to "Americanize" South Vietnam's government, military, and society. In trying to maintain their freedom and stability over the North Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese lost their identity and culture. This period was an ideological struggle for the Vietnamese people. During the Japanese occupation, the First Indochina War, and the Vietnam War (Second Indochina War) many Vietnamese fought to preserve their way of life. The South Vietnamese lost their ideological struggle first to capitalism and finally to communism. American foreign policy makers failed to recognize the unique culture of the
Vietnamese people, and this failure contributed to the withdrawal of the United States from South Vietnam.

However, the United States has a responsibility to assist nations who request our aid, though we should not try to recreate a nation in our own image, as we did in Vietnam. According to Frances Fitzgerald's book, *Fire In The Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, the three fundamental concepts of Vietnamese society were composed of the state, the village, and the family. Fitzgerald demonstrated that France and especially the United States corrupted the Vietnamese people by destroying their way of life. The wars in South Vietnam destroyed the agricultural base of this nation and displaced the population from their ancestral homes. By removing the South Vietnamese people from their village sand separating them from their families, the United States and the government of South Vietnam disrupted the Vietnamese way of life. Fitzgerald made many strong arguments against America's involvement in Vietnam, yet she did not suggest any alternatives other than the fact that U.S. participation in Vietnam was wrong. Her most important argument involved the American need of a better understanding of the Vietnamese as a people, a culture, and a society. This nation's loss in Vietnam had harsh political, social, and military repercussions throughout American society. Yet, it was the common people of the Republic of Vietnam who paid the heaviest price. The South Vietnamese
people were misled by their own government, military, and key ally, the United States.

Why did the United States' counterinsurgency policies in Vietnam fail to prevent the communist takeover in 1975? Primarily, the majority of American advisers and officials lacked a clear understanding of the guerrilla war waged by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Initially, U.S. advisers prepared the South Vietnamese to defend their nation against a conventional invasion from the North. However, this invasion did not occur until America's withdrawal from Vietnam. Many would argue that the invasion of South Vietnam began in 1964 with the introduction of NVA regular troops. This was not a typical military invasion, and the NVA did not fight a conventional war. The NVA fought an unconventional war against the American and ARVN units they engaged. Simply put, the NVA usually fought only when they had the advantage, and if they were overwhelmed by the enemy they simply fled to sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos.

Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. provided a clearer understanding of America's involvement in Vietnam in his book, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*. Colonel Summers' work was first published in 1981, and it was one of the first books that focused on the strategies and tactics of the Vietnam War. Summers' main arguments revolved around why U.S. strategy failed in Vietnam. According to Summers, the Vietnam War was a tactical and logistical success for the
U.S. military. The United States did not achieve an overall victory in Vietnam due to the neglect of a proper military strategy. Summers blamed this neglect primarily upon civilian analysts and counterinsurgency warfare. He argued that there was too much emphasis upon CI warfare doctrine and that counterinsurgency hampered the United States' conventional military capabilities.

There was a problem in U.S. military strategy and perhaps counterinsurgency should not have been pursued to the extent that it was in Vietnam. Yet CI warfare remained an important aspect of U.S. military strategy due to the internal threat of the Viet Cong. Summers placed too much emphasis on the external threat of North Vietnam, and he argued that the VC waged a guerrilla war so that the NVA could achieve a conventional victory. North Vietnam finally won a victory in Vietnam with conventional tactics. However, it was the earlier guerrilla warfare tactics of the VC that forced the United States to withdraw and allowed the North to finally defeat the South. The United States needed to focus on the external as well as the internal threats to achieve victory in Vietnam. ARVN and American conventional forces should have been used to hold and defend areas, while CI units destroyed the Viet Cong infrastructure in that area.

Summers also suggested that the United States should have pursued the tactical offensive, but that American troops were hampered by a reliance upon counterinsurgency
strategies. Regular U.S. troops usually did not rely upon CI strategies or tactics to fight the VC or NVA. The concept of "Search and Destroy" was a conventional warfare approach to fight the Viet Cong. This concept failed due to bad publicity and the fact that regular military units were not suited for CI warfare. The typical American soldier did not understand the type of warfare waged by the Viet Cong or the NVA. Colonel David H. Hackworth, a company and battalion commander in Vietnam, demonstrated this lack of understanding in his autobiography, *About Face: The Odyssey of an American Soldier*. Hackworth constantly thought of ways to "out guerrilla the guerrilla," and to protect his men. A perfect example was the "mad minute" at dusk. This simply meant that Hackworth's troops could fire their weapons for one minute. Occasionally, VC saboteurs would be killed outside the perimeter, and Hackworth's men were able to test their weapons and release their frustrations. The random use of a mad minute discouraged VC saboteurs from unit areas, and this practice should have been used by all U.S. and ARVN troops in Vietnam.

Hackworth also discussed the bureaucratic nature of the United States Army, and the fact that Vietnam was a place where many officers could gain another credential in the pursuit of their careers. He contended that the U.S. Army learned the wrong lessons from the Vietnam War. Hackworth believed that the war was lost at the fighting level, and
that many of the general grade level officers in today's military were the same men who used Vietnam to pursue their careers. In Vietnam these officers learned how not to fight a war. On the strategic and tactical levels, Summers work correctly discussed the majority of problems faced by the American military in Vietnam. However, the sad fact remains that the United States lost the Vietnam War both on the strategic and tactical levels. General Bruce Palmer, Jr.'s book, The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam, examined several other levels on which the Vietnam War was lost. Palmer believed that the war was lost at the strategic, diplomatic, domestic, and political levels. He also discussed how the U.S. misjudged the political subversion (caused primarily by the Viet Cong) in South Vietnam, and how America underestimated the abilities of the Viet Cong and NVA. Finally, Palmer reviewed the reasons for America's failure to understand the nature of the war in Vietnam. The NVA used conventional warfare tactics, but they fought an unconventional war combined with the guerrilla war waged by the Viet Cong. Each of the books discussed to this point supplied a unique and better understanding of the nature of the war in Vietnam and some of the reasons the United States lost this tragic conflict.

By 1973, the United States had withdrawn from Vietnam and the guerrilla war waged by the Viet Cong had drastically reduced the morale of the South Vietnamese military and
population. From 1954 to 1964 American military advisers focused on conventional military strategies and tactics. During this period counterinsurgency units and tactics were viewed as a minor component of traditional U.S. military doctrine. This viewpoint was especially true between 1964 and 1973, when U.S. combat troops were deployed to Vietnam. Counterinsurgency units played a subordinate role to conventional units.

Counterinsurgency also failed due to the lack of initiative by the United States and the Republic of Vietnam to institute proper social and political reforms. The alienation of the South Vietnamese people by their own government allowed the VC and NVA to thrive and prosper. Control of the population was the key to success for both sides. If the South Vietnamese could deny the communists access to the population, the Viet Cong could be captured or destroyed. However, the majority of South Vietnam's attempts at population denial failed to supply the common people with a sense of trust, order, or stability. On the other hand, the Viet Cong simply had to demonstrate how the South Vietnamese government could not protect and did not care about the needs of its citizens. The VC would also use violence and terror to convince the population that the political aims of the North were in their best interests.

The guerrilla war waged by the Viet Cong proved to be a very effective strategy in the defeat of South Vietnam.
Truong Nhu Tang's book, *A Viet Cong Memoir*, provides an excellent understanding of the motivations of the Viet Cong and their uneasy relationship with North Vietnam. Tang was a high ranking Viet Cong official, and his book demonstrated the extreme patience and willpower of the VC in their struggle for unification. The Viet Cong conducted a three-pronged approach to war that was composed of political, military, and diplomatic aspects. While the United States and South Vietnamese focused on the military aspects of the conflict in Vietnam, the Viet Cong fought a political struggle. The VC used propaganda and limited military victories to separate and isolate the South Vietnamese government from its allies and potential allies. However, there were certain CI units and programs that hampered the Viet Cong's progress.

The U.S. Army Special Forces relied upon unconventional military strategies and tactics to fight the enemy. Their primary mission was to train and advise friendly troops in counterinsurgency tactics. Special Forces soldiers lived, worked, and fought alongside the indigenous troops they trained. The Civilian Irregular Defense Group program remains one of the most effective counterinsurgency tactics developed during the Vietnam War. CIDG programs denied sizable portions of the population from VC and NVA recruitment and allowed segments of the Vietnamese people to defend themselves. This program was funded by the CIA and
run by the Special Forces. CIDG camps provided local populations with protection and security from the Viet Cong. The Special Forces and the CIDG program focused on the social, political, and military aspects of the war.

Another CI program that centered entirely on the political war in Vietnam was the Phoenix program. This program dealt with the capture or elimination of the Viet Cong infrastructure. In many regions, the Phoenix program effectively reduced the number of VC operatives within an area. The Phoenix program would eventually be discontinued due to a successful propaganda campaign waged by the Viet Cong. If the United States and South Vietnam could have maintained CI programs like Phoenix and CIDG, then it is possible that the Viet Cong insurgency could have been defeated. These programs helped to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure and prevented the recruitment of thousands of Vietnamese by the VC and NVA. Population denial and the destruction of the VC infrastructure were essential elements in winning the CI war in Vietnam. Counterinsurgency programs such as Phoenix and CIDG should have been a vital part of an overall military strategy in Vietnam. A combination of conventional and unconventional (CI) tactics may have achieved a victory in Southeast Asia for the United States and the people of the Republic of Vietnam.

One of the most important lessons learned from the Vietnam War, was the value of counterinsurgency warfare
units. The majority of the CI units that served in Vietnam remain in active service in the U.S. military. Usually, such units are disbanded after a war. Why are the U.S. Army Special Forces and U.S. Navy SEALs still inactive service nearly twenty years after Vietnam? I believe that the United States must maintain such units due to the political nature of war and the world. Today wars are fought over ideology and not nationalism. The wars and conflicts of the latter half of the twentieth century have also been fought throughout the "Third World." In these regions of the world, conventional military power might not be feasible. Specialized CI units provide the United States with a relatively inexpensive and effective alternative. Yet, the United States military continues to rely on technology and firepower. Our next Low Intensity Conflict, current terminology for counterinsurgency warfare, might be misinterpreted as a conventional war and we would once again find ourselves bogged down in a political and military quagmire.

Thorough work involving the development of guerrilla warfare throughout history; provides an excellent understanding of the military and political ramifications of guerrilla warfare.


Article pertaining to the training and function of the soldiers of the United States Army Special Forces.


This book examines U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine from the Korean War through the late 1970's; primary focus upon Southeast Asia and Latin America.


Bowman examines the relationship between the U.S. Army and counterinsurgency warfare and supplies and a thorough analysis of this relationship.


Magazine article about a Civilian Irregular Defense Program hospital and the training and responsibilities of indigenous personnel.


Excellent source in understanding U.S. Army's role as advisers in Vietnam with a break down of the years involved and what happened during those years.

Extensive study of U.S. and Soviet special military operations and deals with the Cold War, U.S. passivism, and the concept of counterinsurgency.


Eckhardt supplies an overview of the entire U.S. involvement in Vietnam, this work contains a plethora of information and thoroughly examines the U.S. Army's participation in Vietnam.


Fall provides an excellent historical analysis of the First and Second Indochina Wars with viewpoints from the Vietnamese people and the soldiers who fought during this period.


This work discusses the nature and problems of the Vietnam War, excellent source about Vietnamese society and culture.


Excellent work about military life and the military during peace and war; Hackworth's autobiography provides a thorough evaluation of warfare from a soldier's viewpoint.


Halberstam examines the political and military leaders during America's involvement in Vietnam, an excellent source about the decision makers and the consequences of their actions.

Source from the Vietnam Studies that discusses the U.S. military logistical and supply procedures during the Vietnam War.


Comprehensive source on the foreign diplomacy of President Kennedy with a special emphasis on the Vietnam Conflict.


Article that examines the social and agricultural aspects of U.S. Army Special Forces personnel.


Kelly, who served as commander of the 5th Special Forces Group from 1966-1967, analyzes the role of the Green Berets during the Vietnam War; excellent source for anyone interested in the history of the Special Forces.


Primary source written from the viewpoint of the South Vietnamese military; provides an understanding of the history and problems of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam.


In this work Khuyen examines the development and problems of logistics for the military of South Vietnam.

This work deals primarily with the 1965-72 period of U.S. intervention, but supplies a brief overview of the advisory effort; Kinnard gives an outstanding reassessment of the Vietnam War from the viewpoint of the men who fought it.


Good source that breaks the Vietnam Conflict into three areas the advisory years, the years of intervention, and the years of withdrawal.


Lansdale submits an exceptionable autobiographical account of his years in the Philippines and South Vietnam as a military adviser.


Meyerson supplies the reader with an outstanding survey of the U.S. Army's role in Vietnam, this book is a good starting point for someone interested in research on Vietnam and has some remarkable photographs.


Comprehensive work that examines the development of counterinsurgency warfare in the United States during the twentieth century.


Palmer reviews the purpose of the U.S. Army in Vietnam and explores the problems and possible solutions to America's role during this conflict.

Story about the responsibilities of Special Forces medics and how they were very important in communicating with Vietnamese soldiers and civilians.


Simpson supplies a thorough analysis of the role of the Special Forces from its meager beginnings to its role in Vietnam, a good and interesting book.


Comprehensive study of the Army's involvement in Southeast Asia; discusses strategies, tactics, problems, and solutions.


A summary of U.S. involvement during the Vietnam War and examines American military aims and purposes.


Thorough examination of the strategies and tactics of the Vietnam War; Summers offers explanations to why the United States lost the war on the strategic level.


Summers provides the reader with an alphabetical listing with definitions and facts about the people, places, battles, and events of the Vietnam War; includes a chronology, suggested readings, and thorough index.

Tang, a former official in the Viet Cong, submits his views of the war and the relationship between the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army; interesting source about how the Viet Cong fought the war.


Brief illustrated history of the wars in Southeast Asia with photographs and excellent index.


Interesting book about the history of the Army Special Forces, their mission, and training; contains exceptionable photographs and illustrations.


Thompson speaks of his experiences in Malaya and South Vietnam; complete discussion of the Strategic Hamlet Program including problems and solutions.


Thorough examination of the conduct and peace negotiations of the Vietnam War; includes problems still faced by the South Vietnamese government.


This book supplies the reader with an insight to the Vietnam Conflict from the South Vietnamese point of view; military type manual that deals primarily with command and operation.

In this work Truong demonstrates the importance of and the problems faced by the South Vietnamese militia units.


Fascinating source on the political, social, and military history of communist China.


Supplies an excellent overview of the entire U.S. involvement in Vietnam; contains a chapter on the air war and the Tet Offensive.


Army manual on the mission and purpose of Special Forces guerrilla warfare strategies and tactics.


Updated Army publication on guerrilla warfare; includes information suited for American operations in Southeast Asia.


Document on the training and missions of Special Forces personnel; contains material on psychological warfare and civic action programs.

Manual contains information on specific operations of Special Forces units; guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, and psychological warfare.


Vien, a former South Vietnamese Army officer, discusses the Vietnam Conflict and its purpose, strategies, tactics, politics, and difficulties.


This work furnishes a South Vietnamese viewpoint of the role of the U.S. advisor and is presented in a military style that is easy to follow and has a sufficient amount of information.
VITA

William (Bill) Kincer Friedl was born in Beckley, West Virginia on November 19, 1968. His family moved to Tazewell, Virginia before his second birthday, and Tazewell became Bill's hometown during the formative years of his life.

He attended Tazewell Elementary School, Tazewell Middle School, and Tazewell High School. Bill graduated from high school in June 1987 and enrolled at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in August. In May 1991, Bill received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history and a minor in sociology. He then began his graduate education at V.P.I. & S.U. and will receive his Master of Arts degree in history in the spring of 1994.

Bill currently lives in Tazewell with his parents, June and Chester Friedl, and he plans to pursue a career in education and historical research. His younger brother, James Friedl, attends Radford University and assisted in the editing of this thesis.

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