IV. A. 4.

EVOLUTION OF THE WAR

US TRAINING OF THE VIETNAMESE NATIONAL ARMY, 1954 - 1959
UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS
1945 - 1967

IV. A. 4.

EVOLUTION OF THE WAR

US TRAINING OF THE VIETNAMESE
NATIONAL ARMY, 1954 - 1959
1. Report of the Saigon Military Mission (SMM), August 1954-
August 1955 (S).

2. JCS telegram to CINCPAC 971802, 30 March 1960; JCS-4-906-60,
15 August 1960. Cf., Duncanson, Dennis J., Government and Revolution

3. J. Lawton Collins, Special Representative of the United States in
Vietnam, "Report on Vietnam for the National Security Council," January 20,
1955 (TS). See also NSC documents throughout the period 1950-1960 which
are consistent with this statement of objectives and consequences.

4. "The key to this problem [the Indochina war] is a strong and effective
Nationalist army with the support of the Population behind it." Debriefing,
M/General Thomas J. H. Trapnell, Jr., 3 May 1954, in OSD files 082/092.2
Indochina. U.S. decisionmakers seemed to agree virtually unanimously with
this statement.

5. In April 1953 CHMAAG General Trapnell reported that French observers
had returned from Korea with little but a list of reasons why U.S. training
procedures could not be effectively applied in Indochina. Msg, CHMAAG
Indochina to AC of SG-3 and CMFE, NS6142, DA-IN-257701, 15 April 53.
Although the minutes of the Bipartite U.S.-French Conversations (First
Session, April 22, 1953, 3:30 p.m., Quai d'Orsay) reported that "The
French missions which have been received in Korea were very useful.
Marshall Juin himself has brought back information the French propose to
use in the formation of the Vietnam army," the qualifiers added, even at
this high diplomatic level ("But the problem is not the same in Indochina
as in Korea. The problems facing the two armies are not comparable, but
some lessons can be applied") lend weight to the Trapnell Interpretation
that the French visits to Korea had been largely a waste of time (S).

6. This plan, outlined to then Chargé d'Affaires Gullion, was dismissed
as "fantastic," although it was seen that this Vietnamese attitude raised
serious problems. Msg, Gullion to Acheson, 204, 25 March 1950 (S). History
of the Indochina Incident, Historical Section, JCS. Series B, 1 February
1955 (TS). (Hereinafter referred to as JCS History.) In May 1954, Ngo Dinh
Luyen, Bao Dai's personal representative, told Philip W. Bonsal that Bao Dai
sought U.S. help for the National Army. Memcon, May 18 and 20, 1954 (TS),
OSD Files 1954.

7. Memorandum for SECDEF from Service Secretaries, "Draft State Department

8. Memorandum for Record, "Meeting of President's Special Committee on
Report by the Ad Hoc Committee to the Assistant to the Secretary for International Security Affairs..." ND, Enc1 to (TS) Memorandum, Acting SECDEF to Service Secretaries, "Forty Additional Vietnam Battalions," 19 February 1953.

JCS History.

Msg, CHINAAG IC to CSUSA, MG 1651 DA, 091515Z June 54, DA-IN-64188 (9 June 1954) (S).

Msg, Murphy to Amb (Paris), TOSEC 392, 10 June 1954 (TS).

Msg, SECSTATE to Amb (Paris), 4551, TEDUL 191, 12 June 1954 (TS).

JCS History.

Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Suspension of U.S. Military Aid to Indochina in Event of a Cease-Fire," April 30, 1954; Memorandum from SECDEF to Service Secretaries and JCS, July 30, 1954.

Msg, CHINAAG Indochina to DEPTAR, MG 2062A, 271130Z July 1954, DA-IN-74757, (TS). JCS History. Although interpretations of the Geneva Agreements with regard to ceilings as they applied to U.S. military forces varied, the Department of State interpreted the agreement as fixing the number of forces at or below the level existing on 11 August 1954.

JCS History.


Letter, SECDEF to SECSTATE, 12 August 1954 (S).

Memorandum SECSTATE to SECDEF, 18 August 1954 (S). JCS History.


Memorandum, SECSTATE to SECDEF, October 11, 1954 (TS).


Msg, SECSTATE to AmEmb (Saigon) 1679, 22 October 1954 (TS).

Memorandum, SECDEF to JCS, 26 October 1954 (TS).
With reference to the question of training Vietnamese forces the Joint Chiefs of Staff desire to point out that in addition to the current unstable political situation in Vietnam the terms of the Geneva Armistice Agreement have been interpreted to limit the strength of MAAG, Indochina to 342 personnel. Even if all these military personnel were replaced by U.S. civilians to perform the normal functions of the MAAG and the military personnel were thereby released for training duties only, the number of U.S. personnel would permit only limited participation in the over-all training program. Under these conditions, U.S. participation in training not only would probably have but limited beneficial effect but also would assure responsibility for any failure of the program." (Italics added). Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Development and Training of Indigenous Forces in Indochina," 19 October 1954 (TS).

James M. Gavin, Crisis Now, p. 49.

Memorandum to SECDEF from JCS, "Indochina," 17 November 1954 (TS).


NIE 63-7-54, 23 November 1954 (S). Excluded from this estimate are those Nga Hao forces under the control of the VNA or the French.


Discussions with a member of US MAAG in 1954-1955 period (U).

"...the government by force and bribery has drastically reduced the importance of these groups to challenge its authority." NIE 63.1-3-55, 11 October 1955. "All significant sect resistance in South Vietnam has been eliminated..." NIE 63-56, 17 July 1956. (S).

NIE 63-5-54, 3 August 1954. (S).

Ibid.

NIE 63-7-54, 23 November 1954 (S).

In fact, many estimates failed to make any distinction between northern and southern forces. See MAAG Narrative Statement dated August 23, 1958 (S), which estimated "Viet Cong strength in North Vietnam" at 268,000.


NIE 91, 4 June 1953 (S).

NIE 63-7-54, 23 November 1954 (S).

NIE 63.1-2-55, 26 April 1955 (TS).

NIE 63-5-54, 3 August 1954 (Italics added) (S).
45 NIE 63-7-54, 23 November 1954 (S).
46 Minutes of Meeting between President Diem and Deputy Secretary Quarles,
10 May 1957, 15 May 1957 (S).
47 Memorandum for SECDEF, "U.S. Policy in the Event of a Reversal of
49 Memorandum, SECSTATE to SECDEF, October 11, 1954 (TS).
50 See Note 27 above.
51 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Development of Defense Information
Relating to Certain U.S. Aid Programs (Vietnam)," 13 April 1956 (TS).
52 See, for example, T. U. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, esp. Chapter I.
53 Memo for SECDEF from JCS, "Studies with Respect to Possible U.S.
54 Memorandum for SECDEF from the JCS, "Concept and Plans for the
Implementation, if Necessary, of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact,"
11 February 1955 (TS), paragraphs 6 and 7.
55 Ibid., paragraphs 6-9.
56 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Military Consultation under
57 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Concept and Plans for the
Implementation, if Necessary, of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact,"
11 February 1955 (TS).
58 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Development and Training of
59 Ibid.
60 NSC 5612/1, September 5, 1956 (TS). "The NSC at its meeting on 7 June
1956 b. Noted that the President's view that it would be desirable for
appropriate U.S. military authorities: (1) to encourage Vietnamese military
planning for defense against external aggression along lines consistent with
U.S. planning concepts based upon U.S. policy." Memorandum for Service
Secretaries and JCS, from ASD(ISA) "Capability to Deal with Local Aggression
in Vietnam," no date (TS). "Limited initial resistance was subsequently
defined as "resistance to Communist aggression by defending or deploying
in such a manner as to preserve and maintain the integrity of the
government and its armed forces for the period of time required to invoke
the UN Charter and/or Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty or the
period of time required for the U.S. Government to determine that considera-
tions of national security require unilateral U.S. assistance and to commit
U.S. or collective security forces...." Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS,
From December 1955 on, MAAG reports either implicitly or explicitly assigned the counter-aggression mission to the Vietnamese Army. In December 1955 the MAAG reported, that the VNA would have the capability to delay a Viet Minh attack across the 17th parallel for 60 days following a year's concentrated training of a 10-division force. MAAG Country Statement for 1955, December 1955 (S).

SNIE 63-6-54, 15 September 1954 (S).

62 cf. particularly "Report of the SEM August 1954-August 1955 (S). By April 1956, NIE 63.1.2-55 (TS) reported that "French policy is openly committed to the replacement of Diem at the earliest possible opportunity." Although U.S. policy toward Diem was variable, French policy, however negative, seemed to enjoy the virtue of consistency.

63 NIE 63.1.2-55, 26 April 1955 (TS).

64 Ely, Général D'Armée Paul, Memoires, L'Indochine Dans La Tourmente, Chapters XI and XII.

65 Msg, Heath to SECSTATE, 1761, 8 November 1954 (S); Msg, Collins sgd Kidder to SECSTATE, 1830, 15 November 1954, DA-IN-95015 (16 November) (TS). JCS History.


67 Msg, Dillon to SECSTATE, 2433, 8 December 1954 (TS). JCS History.

68 NIE 63.1.3-55, 11 October 1955 (S).

69 JCS History.

70 NIE 63.1.3-55, 11 October 1955 (S).


74 NIF 63-7-54, 23 November 1954 (S).

75 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, Retention and Development of Forces in Indochina," 22 September 1954 (TS).

76 NIE 63.1.3-55, 11 October 1955 (S).

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Indochina," 17 November 1954 (TS).


83 The theme of diversion of the VNA from training by combat runs throughout the period. The reduction of French participation in TRIM is revealed by the following table: TRIM Officer Strengths, March 1955-March 1956 [Source: "Study on Army Aspects of the Military Assistance Program in Vietnam," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1 June 1960, (S)].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Officers</th>
<th>French Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/55</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/55</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/55</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/55</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/55</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/56</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/56</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 Msg, CHMAAG Indochina to CINCPAC, 091330Z, August 1955 (TS). JCS History.

85 Memorandum for SECDEF from JCS, "Revised Force Base for Vietnam," 19 August 1955 (TS). In his memorandum of 29 July 1955 to the JCS requesting JCS evaluation of the 150,000 force basis, Actg ASD(ISA) questioned the inclusion of the mission "to check external aggression," insisting that circumstances if it is to be acceptable to U.S. Government authorities." (TS) Subsequent DOD approval of this force level constituted, in effect, approval of the counter-aggression mission.

86 JCS History.

87 Actual Strengths of Vietnamese forces was as follows: [Source: "Study on Army Aspects...," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1 June 1960, p. C-5 (S)].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/55</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/56</td>
<td>152,000</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/57</td>
<td>138,600</td>
<td>4,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/58</td>
<td>131,500</td>
<td>4,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/59</td>
<td>135,500</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/59</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Large excesses of equipment in Vietnam resulted from the decrease in numbers of both the FEC and the VNA; the VNA were totally incapable of assuming logistical responsibility, and the withdrawal of the FEC resulted in the dumping of mountains of equipment on the Vietnamese; further, the French were confronted with a deteriorating situation in North Africa and were concerned with salvaging the best equipment for their own use and refused to allow U.S. personnel into their installations and supply dumps to inventory both the qualitative and quantitative status of inventory. ["Study on Army Aspects...", U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1 June 1960, pp. D-6 - D-8. (S)].

Hsq, CHMAAG Indochina to CNA, MG125A 100810A February 1955, DA-IN-117629 (S). JCS History.


Letter, SECDEF to SECGSTATE, 13 December 1956 (S).

Memorandum for SECDEF from ASD(ISA), 25 January 1956; letter, SECDEF to SECGSTATE, January 31, 1956 (S).

See letter from Deputy Under Secretary of State to SECDEF dated 1 May 1956 (S) which details restrictions on TERM as well as summarizing State Department views regarding TERM.

TERM per se was disbanded and its personnel assigned to MAAG in 1960. By some TERM was labelled a "subterfuge" from the military point of view (see "Study on Army Aspects..." pp. D-1FF); that it was probably also a useful subterfuge from an intelligence point of view is revealed by Allen W. Dulles' strong endorsement of SECDEF's desire to augment MAAG Vietnam, which concludes his statement regarding the need for additional CIA slots under military cover in Vietnam. Memorandum for SECGSTATE from Director, CIA, 16 December 1955 (S).

JCS History.


viz. MAAG statements: "Permanent reorganization...along U.S. lines and associated regroupment is not yet complete" (31 December 1955); "Continuing reorganization and regroupment...along U.S. lines.... The reorganization and realignment of the logistical base upon U.S. lines has been slow...." (30 June 1956); "While continuing reorganization and training along U.S. lines...." (12 December 1956); "Reorganization of the Vietnamese Army along U.S. lines is progressing but is not yet complete...." (30 June 1957); "Reorganization of the Vietnamese Army along U.S. lines is progressing but is not yet complete.... TOE's and TD's for ARVN units have been prepared by MAAG and forwarded to ARVN for review." (31 December 1957); "Most of the desirable elements of the United States system, as they apply to the Vietnamese Armed Forces, will eventually be reflected in the procedures used by Army." (26 August 1958); "The training being conducted is generally along U.S. lines...." (25 November 1958 - 21 March 1959). (All S).
MAAG Vietnam Narrative Statement, November 1958, revised to include all changes through 31 March 1959 (S). Apparently the NVA was excluded from this comparison.

"Preferably, two U.S. advisory personnel should be assigned to each battalion size unit." MAAG Country Statement, 30 June 1956 (S). Authorized Advisor positions were as follows:

**AUTHORIZED NUMBER OF ADVISORS, AUTHORIZED STRENGTH PER UNIT**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corps</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5(5)</td>
<td>10(5)</td>
<td>15(5)</td>
<td>15(5)</td>
<td>100(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>30(3)</td>
<td>30(3)</td>
<td>30(3)</td>
<td>35(5)</td>
<td>35(5)</td>
<td>35(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>35(1)</td>
<td>35(1)</td>
<td>31(1)</td>
<td>26(1)</td>
<td>26(1)</td>
<td>29(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battalion</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>672(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abn Brigade</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranger Co.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7(7)</td>
<td>7(7)</td>
<td>18(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools and Tng Centers</td>
<td>26(6)</td>
<td>26(6)</td>
<td>26(6)</td>
<td>22(6)</td>
<td>22(6)</td>
<td>42(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92(11)</td>
<td>97(16)</td>
<td>98(16)</td>
<td>106(25)</td>
<td>106(25)</td>
<td>939 (53.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available information does not permit accounting for the balance of MAAG strength for any of the years considered. According to RAC, "There are no data available on the actual number of U.S. Army advisors in the RVN before 30 November 1961."

MAAG Vietnam Narrative Statement, November 1958, revised to include all changes through November 1959 (S).

Ibid.

The fact that the army marched, as it were, on its Counterpart Fund did not secure its exclusion from politics after all, therefore, and in the end the army killed Ngo Dinh Diem when the U.S. suspended the CIP in order to bring him to his senses." Duncanson, op.cit., p. 293.

...discipline was affected by distaste to inflict punishment on the slack or insubordinate and, with that, loss of face, so that such misdemeanors as absence without leave (outright desertion was rare) and neglect to carry out operational orders became very common." Ibid., p. 290.

Memorandum, Dr. Edward W. Weidner to Mr. Leland Barrows, USMC, "Recommendation for American and Vietnamese Action Re Civil Security," October 11, 1954.
105 NIE 63-56 (S).


109 Despatch, Saigon to State 276, 4 January 1960 (S).

110 Despatch, Saigon to State, 400, 29 May 1959 (S). JCS History.

111 The best available account of the Civil Guard dispute is contained in John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, pp. 64-70.

112 PACOM Weekly Intelligence Digest 30-58 (S).

113 Page C-22.

114 Duncanson, op. cit., p. 305.

115 Speaking in 1954, President Eisenhower gave eloquent testimony to this type of reasoning: "If you could win a big one, you would certainly win a little one." (Quoted in Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 25).

116 PACOM Weekly Intelligence Digest, 18 May 1956 (S), p. 16.

117 Ibid., p. 17.

118 Report of the SRM, August 1954-August 1955 (S). This Mission, headed by then Colonel Edward Lansdale, USAF, was particularly concerned with unorthodox methods of combatting the Communists. Colonel Lansdale subsequently served as a member of TRIM under O'Daniel, but his activities were specialized.

119 e.g., "Tactical unit personnel and equipment have been employed on numerous occasions in the government's agricultural land development program, civilian relocation and resettlement program and in pacification and security missions. Such operations reduce the effectiveness of formal training programs... The Civil Guard should eventually assume complete responsibility for internal security of the nation." MAAG Narrative Statement, November 1958 (S), revised to include changes through 31 March 1959 (S).

120 Consider, for example, not only U.S. efforts to establish clear lines of authority from the GVN to its armed forces, but also that no discussion has been found in the available data pertaining to the desirability of a complete tri-service establishment, complete with a Marine Corps.

121 Army Information Digest, November 1960, pp. 36-37.


Duncanson, op. cit., p. 293.


Vol. II, pp. 54-56.


"For some reason," wrote General Samuel T. Williams, "many advisors seem more ready to assist in drawing up division and corps problems than they are in building and supervising problems for the smaller unit." Military Review, Vol. 41, July 1961, p. 13.
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U. S. Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations: Obligations and Other Commitments, ICA, Office of Statistics and Reports, July 1, 1945 through June 30, 1961 (Preliminary).

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NSC Action 1086-a, b, c, April 15, 1954. (TS)

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NIE 35, August 7, 1951.(S)

NIE 35/1, March 3, 1952.(S)

NIE 35/2, August 27, 1952.(S)

NIE 47, October 31, 1952.(TS)

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NIE 10-3-54, June 1, 1954.(TS - Limited Distribution)

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NIE 63-5-54, August 3, 1954.(S)

NIE 63-7-54, November 23, 1954.(S)

NIE 10-7-54, November 23, 1954.(S)

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NIE 63.2-57, May 14, 1957.(S)

NIE 63-59, May 26, 1959.(S)

NIE 14.3/53-61, August 15, 1961.(S)

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Letter, SF(DEF to SECSTATE, December 13, 1956. (S)

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