

CIA Plays Big Role in 'Other War,' Helps Finance Viet Pacification

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MYTHO, South Vietnam—The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was not created by Congress as an instrument for social reform.

But it has assumed that function, among others, in the course of its very substantial involvement in the affairs of South Vietnam.

It is, to a considerable extent, the patron saint and financier of the revolutionary Development program through which the government of Prime Nguyen Cao Ky hopes to pacify and befriend the peasantry. It has attempted to transform primitive Montagnard tribesmen into "armed social workers" whose mission is to win over their kinsmen to the cause of Saigon. CIA money and CIA men have been injected into the American civilian establishment assigned to pacification, economic development and social and political reform.

The agency, in short, is deeply involved in the management and financing of the "other war" in Vietnam.

It got into this business following the collapse of the "strategic hamlet," program of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. Out of that experience came Political Action Teams and later the Revolutionary Development teams that are now sent out from Saigon as political missionaries to the villages and hamlets. They are paid by the CIA.

At the beginning of the American involvement in these programs, in 1964, "there was a lot of flap," an official recalls, "over who should run it."

The most obvious choice was the U.S. Agency for International Development, but it was felt in the American Mission that AID was "a damned cumbersome bureaucracy" that would need at least two years to get a program started.

Accordingly, the then Ambassador, Maxwell Taylor, instructed his office of Special Assistance—the local euphe-

mism for CIA—to take over the program until other agencies—namely, AID—could gear up for the work.

Two explanations have been given for his decision.

The CIA says, "We were the only people around who knew anything about counter-insurgency programs."

An official outside CIA declared, "The CIA had assets no other agency had. It had, for example, a budget with a certain amount of flexibility. It had a corps of dedicated officers. Its people had an intellectual flexibility that comes from not being beaten up by Congress all the time. As it turned out, however, they found themselves just as trapped for competent people as the rest of us."
In any case, the CIA got the

job and, in early 1966, joined with the Vietnamese Ministry of Revolutionary Development in the creation of the Vungtau training center for RD cadre. The CIA paid the bills and helped devise the training program.

Major elements in the program were virtually lifted straight out of the Vietcong training manuals, including propaganda techniques, the taking of a census of peasant grievances, and propaganda songs for peasant children.

The CIA agents learned techniques for eliminating the enemy's political structure. They even were ordered to wear black pajamas, the traditional Vietcong uniform.

By late 1966, the CIA turned over operational control of the program to a new American agency, the Office of Civil Operations, or OCO.

OCO has since become CORDS (Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support) and is now under the command of Gen. William C. Westmoreland. But the CIA stamp remains. It helps underwrite CORDS, as it did OCO, and it continues to supply many of the personnel used by the agency. Thus, the program and its successes and failures are still somewhat a responsibility of an agency created for intelligence and clandestine warfare.