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# The Washi

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## The Bunker Approach

The first thing to note about the latest reorganization of the American bureaucracy in Saigon is how it came about. It is very largely the work of Ellsworth Bunker, the new Ambassador. And the second thing to note is that Mr. Bunker, at his stage in life—and being the sort of man he is—is not likely to be anything less than the President's top man in Saigon, in fact as well as name. Looked at in that light, the assignment to the military of primary responsibility for "pacification" programs is probably wise, if not indeed inevitable, given the way this crucial aspect of the struggle has been going up to now.

But it will only turn out to be wise if it is made to work out in practice the way it appears on paper, which is to say, not as a big new grant of power to the military high command, but as an important added responsibility, with top authority remaining in the hands of the Ambassador.

The best argument for putting the military in charge of what is so deceptively labeled "the other war" rests on sheer efficiency. As it has been, the lines of command have been tangled and the primary responsibility has been blurred by a loose division of labor between MACV, the military mission under General Westmoreland, and the civilians in the embassy. A basic problem has been that the military has had first call on vital resources—transportation, communications,

and the like—and the top military priority has always been the big shooting war. Now it will be squarely up to the military to give "pacification" the necessary "logistical" support.

In addition, the first order of business in "pacification" is to provide a security shield behind which political, social, economic and psychological programs can operate. And the people who must furnish the security, in the last analysis, must be the Army and the local militia forces of the South Vietnamese. It is logical for United States military men to have special responsibility, not just for clearing and holding populated areas, but for helping train the South Vietnamese to do it for themselves. The alternative is for our troops to do it for them—*indefinitely*.

Against these arguments for bigger military responsibilities in "pacification" are even stronger arguments for ultimate civilian control. The perfectly understandable temptation of the American military, even at this late stage of the war, is to want to push ahead faster than the South Vietnamese may be able to move, to want to take on more of the chore themselves. Down this road lies the danger of Americanizing the war. At the end of the process lies the even greater danger that military security will become an end in itself, that not enough attention will be paid to political reform and the possibility of "national reconciliation," by which more moderate members of the Vietcong insurgency might be brought peaceably into the political system, locally and piecemeal, if not nationally. The best assurance of a balanced pacification effort must be found in ultimate civilian control under an Ambassador who plainly sees the need, as Mr. Bunker has put it, for "patience and restraint to fight a limited war with limited means for limited objectives."