

PACIFICATION PUSH BEGUN IN VIETNAM

New Program, Most Costly
Yet, Aimed at Vietcong's
Political Apparatus

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WASHINGTON, April 6—The most ambitious and costly pacification program yet planned for South Vietnam has been put into effect by Saigon and Washington.

Reportedly costing the United States considerably more than \$1-billion and Saigon an undisclosed sum, the 1971 "Community Defense and Local Development Plan" would greatly expand pacification activities, which are aimed at destroying Communist subversive forces and widening self-government and development.

The 304-page plan, a copy of which was made available to The New York Times, lists as the "top priority" for the year the "neutralization" of the entrenched Vietcong political apparatus.

Authenticity Confirmed

The authenticity of the document was confirmed by Administration sources who declined to discuss the contents because of the plan's confidential character.

Already in operation since March 1, and endorsed by the American command in Saigon, the new plan is reportedly the subject of wide controversy among United States officials, some of whom term it unrealistic and artificial.

Administration officials were

Continued on Page 15, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

unable to provide cost figures to the United States for previous pacification programs, but they said that the current plan, financed almost entirely in its military, security and civilian aspects by the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, was much more costly because of its increased scope.

Acknowledging for the first time that the activities of the Vietcong apparatus remain a major problem in 8 of South Vietnam's 44 provinces, including four in the allegedly pacified Mekong River Delta, and that South Vietnamese forces often prefer to "accommodate, rather than resist, the enemy," the plan provides for:

¶Expansion of the People's Self-Defense Force—the civilian antiguerrilla combat organization in rural areas—from 500,000 to four million. Women would be enlisted in combat units and children of both sexes over the age of 7 in supporting units.

¶Establishment of an elaborate "people's intelligence network" to inform on enemy activities.

¶Elimination in the year starting last month, through killing or capture, of 14,400 Vietcong agents under expansion of the three-year-old Operation Phoenix, an intelligence-gathering program that is supported by the United States military.

Wider Social Benefits

The new pacification plan, which went into effect March 1, also seeks to complete the program of holding elections in all villages and hamlets; spur land reform by setting a goal of distributing nearly a million acres of land to farmers, and widen social benefits. This would be done by providing new assistance to 216,000 war veterans, and increasing aid to 43,002 disabled soldiers, 33,743 parents of dead servicemen, 71,005 war widows and 284,000 war orphans. In addition, the plan hopes to resettle 430,000 war refugees in new homes.

Other innovations in the 1971 pacification plan include programs for ethnic minorities and for cities where crime is increasing.

Endorsed by Abrams

Elaborated upon by the South Vietnamese Government, approved by President Nguyen Van Thieu and his Cabinet and fully endorsed by Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, the United States commander in Vietnam, the plan is designed to dovetail with the Nixon Administration's policy of Vietnamization, under which combat responsibilities are being gradually assumed by the South Vietnamese forces.

While the Administration here and the Saigon Government report success for pacification programs that began in 1969, some American experts question their effectiveness so far and are skeptical about the soundness of the new plan.

Their main criticism is that the whole pacification effort depends too much on the 8,000 United States officials and advisers in the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support programs, an agency known as CORDS.

The agency, which supervises projects from Operation Phoenix to rural economic programs, is chiefly made up of Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency employees, although it includes officials of the State Department, the Agency for International Development and the United States Information Agency.

Reports from the field indicate that CORDS officials are

frequently not aware of the true state of affairs in districts and villages and that their colleagues in civilian government and the police fail to carry out their tasks.

Critics of the pacification program point to this statement in the 1971 plan:

"In some areas, the people are reluctant to associate with the Government of Vietnam for fear of retaliation by the enemy. Civil officials often become the target of enemy terrorism and assassination and thus are reluctant to perform their government tasks.

"Some police hesitate to conduct operations against the V.C. because they fear retaliation, and local security forces, under the threat of terrorism, often accommodate, rather than resist, the enemy."

The critics raise the question of what will happen if CORDS is phased out and ask whether, as an alternative, the agency may not have to be maintained in South Vietnam indefinitely.

Three Major Objectives

As expressed in the 1971 plan, the over-all concept of pacification consists of the three objectives of "local self-defense, local self government and local self-development."

The philosophy of the program is stated as follows in the plan:

"In his efforts to achieve political control of the Republic of Vietnam, the enemy attempts to demonstrate that the Government of Vietnam is not capable of governing the country or of providing credible security to the people. His offensive operations and the resultant reaction operations by friendly forces produce adverse effects on security of the people. The most effective way of assuring security of the Vietnamese people is to keep enemy forces away from them and by neutralizing the Vietcong infrastructure. Without the V.C.I., enemy main forces cannot obtain intelligence, manpower and food, nor will they be able to prepare the battlefield or move."

The plan emphasizes that the "strategic concept of national security" is not dependent on the presence of American forces and "paves the way for the transfer of the responsi-

bility for security from military agencies to civilian ones."

To assist this proposed transfer and supervise the new police functions the South Vietnamese and United States Governments have turned to Sir Robert Thompson, the British counterinsurgency expert.

Sir Robert, who carried out two confidential missions for President Nixon in Vietnam in 1969 and 1970, has been in Saigon since February. In an interview published in the current issue of U.S. News & World Report, Sir Robert said that Saigon's ability to counter subversion "has steadily improved all the time."

The pacification plan emphasized that among the 1971 targets is the reduction of "enemy terrorist incidents" to 6,010. The document did not report how many such incidents occurred in 1970, but said that the current target was to reduce them by 75 per cent in "secure areas" and by 50 per cent in areas "still undergoing pacification."

Statistics included in the plan showed that the military region that includes 15 provinces south of Saigon and in the Mekong Delta poses the most serious security problems.

The delta has been declared by the Saigon Government to be virtually pacified, except for U Minh Forest area, and all American troops left the area in 1969. But the plan reports serious problems with an entrenched Vietcong apparatus in the provinces of Vinhlong, Dinh Tuong, Kienhoa and Anxuyen. Similar problems are reported in Binh Dinh province in the central part of the country and in Quangnam and Quang Tin Provinces in the northern part, adjoining the demilitarized zone.

The plan urges that special police units be assigned to these provinces.

To deal with the Vietcong apparatus the plan provides for 700,000 weapons to be issued this year to the People's Self-Defense Forces and for the establishment of an intelligence operation reaching into all of South Vietnam's villages and hamlets. The "people's intelligence net" is designed to keep track of Vietcong families, build up Vietcong dossiers and blacklists, and offer rewards to informers.