

**Matter of Fact**

# Secrets of Success In Vietnam War

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## Phan Thiet, Binh Thuan Province

**W**HAT IS being done right here in Vietnam, that was being done wrong here? In other words, why does one find the Viet Cong already defeated, or near to defeat, in all the same Vietnamese provinces where they used to seem unbeatable.

Here in Phan Thiet, the capital of the nation's fish sauce industry, the foregoing questions are as powerfully obtrusive as the strong smell of fish. For here I am finishing a grueling course of provincial visits through the length and breadth of Vietnam, from Binh Dinh in the north to Binh Thuan in the south, where John Paul Vann now leads the U.S. effort.

Province-hopping in Vann's helicopter has taught the same lesson as an earlier round of province - hopping in the delta country.

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**T**HE LESSON is simple. Hanoi's most precious, most absolutely irreplaceable asset in this war, the Viet Cong structure in the countryside, either has been, or will soon be, or is in visible danger of being destroyed. All the provinces are on the same road.

What, then, are the secrets of this remarkable success, which has been so repeatedly declared to be totally impossible? The answer comes, I think, in two parts; and the first part of the answer is undoubtedly President Nixon's Vietnamization program.

Vietnamization was certainly impossi-

ble before the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong suffered the horrible losses of the Tet Offensive. And Vietnamization has been producing quite unexpected extra dividends since President Nixon began it.

In particular, the South Vietnamese government and army have been most markedly improved. With the Americans leaving, in fact, the South Vietnamese know that they have got to make it on their own.

So ARVN units are very much more effective this year than they were last year. And it is a general rule that all newly named province and district chiefs, like newly named military commanders, are on the average strikingly superior to the men they replace.

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**A**S TO THE second secret of the success now being achieved in South Vietnam, it was simply getting the cart behind the horse in the vital work of pacifying the countryside. The horse is security. People still talk luridly of Viet Cong "terrorism." But in the delta, for instance, VC terroristic incidents are currently occurring at the rate of two a month per 100,000 of population.

As to the cart that the horse pulls along, it is the well being of the country people. Whenever and wherever approximate security is restored in this rich land, a new prosperity blooms in the villages with astonishing speed. So you get the kind of results that I came to see in this province.