UNITED STATES PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF
COUNTERINSURGENCY: VIETNAM, 1960 TO 1965

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This thesis describes the development of psychological operations capabilities, introduction of forces, and the employment in Vietnam during the period 1960-1965. The complex interplay of these activities is addressed, as well as the development of PSYOP doctrine and training in the period prior to the introduction of ground combat forces in 1965. The American PSYOP advisory effort supported the South Vietnamese at all levels, providing access to training, material support, and critical advice. In these areas the American effort was largely successful. Yet, instability in the wake of President Ngo Dinh Diem’s overthrow created an impediment to the ability of psychological operations to change behaviors and positively affect the outcome.
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Any project such as this rarely ends where the author intended upon setting out. Along the twists and turns many people provide key advice, some direct, some without their knowledge, which help guide the author to the end. Though they are not responsible for the end product, they are important in helping bring the project to a conclusion. I wish to thank Dr. Robert Citino for agreeing to oversee this project and providing useful advice at key points along the way. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Geoffrey Wawro and Dr. Michael Leggiere for their assistance as committee members. This project never would have come about without the encouragement of Dr. Adrian Lewis. I am also indebted to Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Michael Barger for access to his collected documents and advice and guidance on conducting PSYOP. Amy Mondt at the Texas Tech Vietnam Archives, John Wilson at the LBJ Library, and the staff of the USASOC Archives were very helpful in finding materials for this project. I also owe a debt to Peter Kaiser for research help on this and other projects, and CSM Friedman at psywarrior.com for advice and background information on PSYOP. Most importantly, I wish to thank my wife, Gail, for support and encouragement and critical proofreading.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACTIV</td>
<td>Army Combat Team in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agit-prop</td>
<td>Agitation-Propaganda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Covert Action Station (CIA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chieu Hoi</td>
<td>the GVN <em>open arms</em> program to induce defections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDG</td>
<td>Civilian Irregular Defense Group (South Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTZ</td>
<td>Corps Tactical Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRV</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBIS</td>
<td>Foreign Broadcast Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-2/S-2</td>
<td>Military staff section responsible for intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-5/S-5</td>
<td>Military staff section responsible for civil/military affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPWD</td>
<td>General Political Warfare Department (South Vietnam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of Vietnam (South Vietnam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSPAO</td>
<td>Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command-Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACPD</td>
<td>MACV Psychological Warfare Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACV-SOG</td>
<td>MACV Studies and Observations Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDCAP</td>
<td>Medical Civic Action Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOI</td>
<td>Ministry of Information (South Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTT</td>
<td>Mobile Training Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLF</td>
<td>National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAM</td>
<td>National Security Action Memorandum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPC</td>
<td>Office of Policy Coordination (CIA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAVN</td>
<td>Peoples Army of Vietnam (North Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Popular Forces (South Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLWAR</td>
<td>Political Warfare (South Vietnam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYACT</td>
<td>Psychological Action</td>
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<td>PSYOP</td>
<td>Psychological Operations</td>
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<td>PSYWAR</td>
<td>Psychological Warfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Regional Forces (South Vietnam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVN</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVNAF</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>U.S. Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>USIA</td>
<td>U.S. Information Agency</td>
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<td>USIS</td>
<td>U.S. Information Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Viet Cong</td>
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<td>VIS</td>
<td>Vietnam Information Service (South Vietnam)</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is early morning on 8 December 1966. A battalion from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division surrounds the village of Chanh Luu thirty kilometers north of Saigon. This is part of Operation Fairfax, General William Westmoreland’s push to clear Viet Cong from the area surrounding the capital. Men painstakingly comb the red sand road in search of mines as they approach the village. At 0800 hours, mobile field teams of the 246th Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Company armed with food, PSYOP posters and leaflets, and loudspeakers enter the formerly Viet Cong (VC) controlled village. The children of the village eagerly swarm around as the Americans distribute candy.

Meanwhile, work begins to remove all traces of VC propaganda from the village. In their place are fresh colorful posters and a pro-government slogan is painted on the wall of the only stone building in Chanh Luu. A wizened grandmother crowds the team to get a specially designed calendar as soldiers visit the village shops.

Integral to the PSYOP mission, the fighting age men of the village are assembled for intelligence interviews. There are many suspected VC in this village. Some of the hardcore VC fire when Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and U.S. soldiers attempt to apprehend them. The situation is quickly brought under control, leaving nine VC dead and several wounded. American casualties are slight.¹

This was the opening phase of what was eventually the most intensive use of psychological operations in American history. This minor action in a long war begs the question, what brought these men to the remote village of Chanh Luu on a bright

¹ Staff Film Report 67-2: Chanh Luu, Vietnam, 27 min. (New York: Army Pictorial Center, 1967). This film provides combat camera footage of the operation.
Tuesday morning and eventually led numerous PSYOP programs and to the dispersion of as many as fifty billion leaflets in an area the size of California?²

This thesis seeks to illustrate psychological operations in Vietnam during the period 1960-1965, focusing on the development of capabilities, introduction of forces, and the decisions that created the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) to manage all PSYOP policy in the war. Rather than an isolated examination, this thesis seeks to set these operations within the wider context of Vietnam and the Cold War propaganda war that the United States simultaneously fought. This study looks at PSYOP use across the entire theater and all U.S. agencies involved with PSYOP. The complex interplay of these activities is addressed, as well as the development of PSYOP doctrine and training in the period prior to the introduction of United States ground combat forces in 1965.

PSYOP alone cannot achieve strategic objectives; at best it can assist with tactical changes in behavior and support long-term shifts in outlook by the targeted population. Beginning in the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and continuing into that of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, many in key leadership positions saw PSYOP as an essential element in maintaining influence during the Cold War. Throughout this period Edward G. Lansdale, a proponent of psychological operations and long-time advisor on operations in Vietnam, had a tremendous influence.

As a consequence, three elements were developed to implement psychological operations. However, this doctrine was formulated without understanding the prerequisites for conducting psychological operations in a counterinsurgency environment. From 1960 to 1965, the United States had to improvise and adapt current structures and doctrine to meet this challenge. In this they largely succeeded.

² Calculated from various data sources related to monthly leaflet production. No single accurate source for figures exists.
Throughout the years, terminology related to psychological operations has shifted meaning and connotations. Buzz words for each generation further confuse the issue. Thus, prior to an investigation into the historical use of PSYOP by the United States, a statement of definitions is required. The term propaganda is derived from the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), founded by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. This group was formed to spread Christianity to other nations. Until World War One, the term maintained a benign connotation. This began to modify due to the use of discredited atrocity propaganda during that war. By the end of World War Two, the term propaganda had fallen into general disrepute in America, but still retained its benign meaning in military doctrine.

The term psychological warfare (PSYWAR) came into vogue after 1940 to describe propaganda use in wartime. However, in the Cold War era, the less aggressive sounding term psychological operations gained popularity. By 1962, PSYWAR was narrowly defined as PSYOP directed against hostile nations or armies. As then described in United States Army doctrine, PSYOP encompassed “those political, military, economic, and ideological actions planned and conducted” to influence foreign citizens. This included PSYWAR, psychological actions (PSYACTS), and propaganda. The term PSYACTS referred to military activities performed for their planned psychological value.

During the Vietnam War, psychological operations were conducted as strategic, tactical and consolidation PSYOP. Strategic PSYOP is typically directed at large
segments of the target nation's population using “themes which exploit economic, military psychological and political vulnerabilities” and are “usually designed to reduce the effectiveness and internal control apparatus of the target government.” At the strategic level, one is concerned with the broad themes and global target audiences. Often the goal is to influence a relatively small number of actors, such as leaders, to behave in a way consistent with military goals. On the operational level, we find such activities as assisting deception operations, and during the Vietnam War, what was then called consolidation PSYOP. This focused on the civilian population, “with the objective of facilitating operations and promoting maximum cooperation among the civilian population.” Tactical PSYOP is focused on the immediate tactical situation. Moving civilians off the battlefield and encouraging enemy surrender are key tasks of tactical PSYOP. At the strategic and operational level, radio broadcasts and targeting of international press became principal methods of dissemination during the Vietnam War. Personnel involved in PSYOP used subjectively truthful information to encourage targeted groups to react in a desired way, assessed groups and used the information gathered to assist the field commanders in making decisions to further U.S. interests.

The mutual goal of tactical, operational and strategic level PSYOP is to find weaknesses or vulnerabilities in the target audiences that make them susceptible to messages, and thereby influence behaviors. For instance, a group of isolated soldiers, low on food might be highly susceptible to a theme that offers lenient treatment and food for surrendering. More so than other branches of the Army, PSYOP can operate at once at all levels of war. A tactical PSYOP team with a loudspeaker may be the only

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6 Department of the Army, Department of the Army Field Manual 33-1, Psychological Operations (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 21 June 1968), 1-3.
7 Ibid.
method of dissemination for a strategic message. On the other hand, strategic PSYOP messages aimed at international audiences to build support for an action can quickly spread through the international press to affect the operational and tactical levels, as these stories are acquired by local press. Thus, effective PSYOP requires coordination of messages to prevent information fratricide.

The weapons of the PSYOP unit include loudspeakers, leaflets and handbills, face-to-face talking points, and gifts. In PSYOP parlance, these are generically referred to as product. Face-to-face referred to direct communication with key leaders and villagers and is often considered the most persuasive form of PSYOP. By working with key local leaders, developing relationships and utilizing product, tactical PSYOP teams hope to influence the target audience. Consistency of message, themes, and symbols aimed at informing and influencing behavior are required for PSYOP to be effective.

Within all levels of war, psychological operations can be conducted using white, gray or black messages. White PSYOP refers to messages that are clearly ascribed to the element publishing the message. In other words, the author of the message is not hidden, such as Voice of America radio broadcasts. Gray refers to product with no clear author. Often these are leaflets or posters on which no identifying source is featured. This was the most widely used form of PSYOP in the Vietnam War. Black PSYOP is ascribed to a party other than the one actually producing it. During the Vietnam War, white and gray PSYOP were primarily conducted by the U.S. Army and the Joint U. S. Public Affairs Office, while the CIA and later Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Studies and Observation (MACV-SOG) were principally responsible for black PSYOP.
In the military, PSYOP is the only element specifically tasked to communicate with and influence foreign populations. While other branches frequently come in contact with civilians, their attention is on their specific tactical mission. Infantry focus on closing with the enemy. Artillery units focus on indirect fire. Military Intelligence is often more focused on gathering order of battle information. All branches are focused on security. In this context, they often see civilians as an obstacle that must be kept at arm’s length. During this period, Special Forces and Civil Affairs functioned similar to PSYOP. However, only the psychological operations personnel have as their primary mission interacting and influencing civilians and enemy forces.

Despite the tremendous effort put forth during the war, very little was written about PSYOP afterwards. A wealth of primary source material covering PSYOP in the Vietnam War survives. However, few secondary sources exist that analyze it and less still written on tactical PSYOP employment. This literature is more limited when looking at the period before 1965. Within this small universe, even less was written by someone not directly involved in the operations in Vietnam. Thus, little has been written by someone who can remain historically dispassionate while still understanding the arcane art of tactical PSYOP. This thesis seeks to fill this gap.

Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis provides the most in depth study of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operations in Vietnam in The OSS and Ho Chi Minh: Unexpected Allies in the War against Japan. This narrative history of OSS operations affecting French Indo-China provides a solid documentation of those activities and as such tackles Morale Operations (MO) Branch operations in the region. The author also
details the use of the OSS by Ho Chi Minh for his own propaganda purposes during his consolidation of power after the surrender of the Japanese.

_Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad_ by Kenneth Osgood provides a detailed look at the development and use of propaganda throughout the 1950s. He argues that this program was all encompassing and skillfully merged black, gray and white PSYOP at all levels. However, this contains little information directly concerning Vietnam. In looking at the development of military PSYOP in the Cold War, Alfred Paddock’s _U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins_ provides the most detailed assessment but contains very little information related to the use of PSYOP in Vietnam. However it is an excellent guide to the bureaucratic struggles to develop an Army Special Warfare PSYOP capability.

In _Public Affairs: The Military and the Media 1962-1968_, William Hammond comes to the conclusion that the contradictions inherent in President Johnson’s strategy of graduated pressure and his attempt to avoid public criticism by keeping the war out of view, laid the groundwork for a collapse in credibility. Hammond claims the public affairs program was built upon a foundation of sand due to dishonesty by the Johnson administration. However, Hammond’s focus is on the public information system rather than the effort to influence the Vietnamese people.

_Psychological Operations: Principals and Case Studies_ offers essays by various authors on all aspects of PSYOP. Several of these address the development of PSYOP and its early implementation in Vietnam. One by series editor Colonel Benjamin Findley, argues that “the U.S. PSYOP objectives in the Vietnam War were ill-fated from the
beginning, primarily because of the ‘foreign invader’ image of the United States.”

According to Findley, the lack of coordination among agencies conducting PSYOP was compounded by a scarcity of trained PSYOP personnel.

Caroline Page uses extensive resources to investigate the effects of the official U.S. information campaign from 1965 to 1973. While her study, *U.S. Official Propaganda during the Vietnam War, 1965-1973: The Limits of Persuasion*, is focused on the strategic level, it is still useful to examine when studying the overall PSYOP program in Vietnam. As the title suggests, Page came to the conclusion that President Lyndon Johnson was limited in his ability to persuade because of inherent credibility problems. The author asserts that good will in the press initially overlooked this, but set the stage for a credibility gap as the war progressed. According to Page, Johnson boxed himself in with his rhetoric regarding negotiations. However, *U.S. Official Propaganda* has little to say about the period before 1965.

The most recently published history on the topic is *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond*. Its author, Robert Kodosky, also only briefly discusses the period prior to the foundation of JUSPAO. Kodosky argues that field commanders regarded PSYOP as a tactical weapon that they could use to instill fear or capture prisoners. He finds little evidence that the United States made a concerted effort to change hearts and minds. Kodosky argues that the JUSPAO structure undercut U.S. credibility by blurring the lines between fact and the lies he claims were used to influence the Vietnamese. Throughout the war, the major

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By far the most comprehensive review of PSYOP activities in the Vietnam War is Psychological Operations Supporting Counterinsurgency: 4th PSYOP Group in Vietnam, a thesis from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College by LTC Michael Barger. Barger provides an overview of PSYOP activities preceding the full military commitment in 1965. He then covers the activities of the 4th PSYOP Group until 1971, when the last PSYOP units were removed from Vietnam. Contrary to Kodosky, Barger argues that “JUSPAO cannot be faulted for failing to fix all of the coordination and control problems it was created to address because JUSPAO did as good a job as could be done, given the resources it had to work with.” Among these resources was a lack of trained personnel compounded by an inadequate understanding of PSYOP capabilities by tactical commanders. He notes these problems often relegated PSYOP to side show status.

With these caveats, he argues that the program was successful. Although Barger provides some details on the period before 1965, the overall focus is on the period from 1965-1971 and on the operations of the U.S. Army’s 4th Psychological Operations Group.

Analysis of Official U.S. Military Psychological Warfare Efforts in the Vietnam Conflict is a 1968 Boston University dissertation by Joseph J. McDonough. McDonough stresses the cultural barriers that limited PSYOP effectiveness in Vietnam. He concludes that in general, official military PSYOP efforts were ineffective. McDonough also blames the lack of PSYOP training and cultural understanding. He further argues the U.S. should

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11 Ibid., iii.
not have carried the prime responsibility for PSYOP in the war. South Vietnam should have had the lead, with the U.S. PSYOP personnel acting as advisors.

Robert Chandler, a U.S. Air Force intelligence officer during the Vietnam War, published his doctoral dissertation, *U.S. Psychological Operations in Vietnam, 1965-72*, as *War of Ideas: the U.S. Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam* in 1981. Both are unique and useful studies of PYSOP in Vietnam. The author’s thesis is that the U.S. propaganda campaign in Vietnam was doomed to failure. Chandler argues that the way America fought the war subjected the U.S. to counter-propaganda themes portraying them as aggressors and fed the enemy’s successful propaganda program. He also asserts that U.S. forces could not create national unity for the Vietnamese. However, both studies suffer from the author’s close association with the activities and much of the research was done before information from the war was declassified.

*A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam* was commissioned in 1980 by the U.S. Army in the wake of the defeat in Vietnam to “analyze lessons that should be learned from three decades of US involvement in Vietnam.”

The authors present a harsh critique of the conduct of PSYOP in Vietnam, stating “we too often reverted to form and attempted to solve the problems through organization, hardware and quantifiable data.” The military, according to the authors, did not effectively integrate PSYOP into operations planning. The authors concur with Kodosky that the mixing of civilian and military PSYOP under JUSPAO was unsuccessful. The study concludes that the U.S.

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13 Ibid., vi.
was overly focused on the number of leaflets dropped rather than on “face-to-face by trained PSYOP personnel.”

‘Cease Resistance, It’s Good for You!’ a History of U.S. Army Combat Psychological Operations is the official U.S. Army Special Operations history of PSYOP. Author Stanley Sandler covers tactical PSYOP from the American Revolution to the First Gulf War, but the majority of his study covers the period after World War One. He argues that the major failure of PSYOP in Vietnam was not quantity, but quality. A lack of institutional emphasis after the Korean War had left the military with few PSYOP trained personnel; they lacked experience and did not have sufficient language training.

Broadcasting in an Insurgency Environment: USIA in Vietnam 1965-1970, William Hoffer’s dissertation, covers much more than the title implies. It details the development of South Vietnam’s broadcasting system in the years preceding 1965 and provides a primer in Vietnamese culture. Hoffer’s thesis is that the lack of local content in broadcasting gave a freehand to the National Liberation Front’s (NLF) superior face-to-face propaganda effort outside urban areas. However, he finds that, “despite problems, the USIA [U.S. Information Agency] funding and training effort aimed toward full South Vietnamese (SVN) control of broadcasting was largely successful.” He also found that the system was relatively effective in spreading PSYOP themes. Like Chandler, Hoffer argues that the use of USIA to conduct an information campaign on behalf of the Vietnamese government was a problem and Hoffer also questions the legality of JUSPAO because it was not authorized under the statute forming the USIA.

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The focus of Harry D. Latimer’s 1973 monograph entitled *US Psychological Operations in Vietnam* is the non-military PSYOP effort run by USIA and its provincial representatives. He notes that due to a lack of military PSYOP personnel, USIA was tasked to fill many PSYOP positions in JUSPAO. Latimer argues that because no combined U.S./South Vietnamese PSYOP organization was created, the United States largely ran its own program and tarnished the theme of Vietnamese government legitimacy. As most studies reviewed for this paper, Latimer also focuses on the period after 1965.

Surprisingly, on the subject of black PSYOP, much more has been written. In *The Secret War Against Hanoi: Kennedy’s and Johnson’s use of Spies, Saboteurs and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam*, Richard H. Shultz studies the covert side of the Vietnam War. He provides background on the black program and its transfer from the CIA to Military Assistance Command, Vietnam-Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG). Shultz argues the few successes of the program were overshadowed by fundamental flaws in the organization and control of these operations. Additionally, obstacles at the U.S. national-level further hindered effectiveness. The way President Johnson fought the war created strategic uncertainty that undercut the program. The administration sought to avoid Chinese involvement in the war and negative impact on President Johnson’s *Great Society* agenda by placing strict limitations on U.S. action in the North. Eventually, to maintain credibility of the PSYWAR program, pressure on the North had to increase. The critical failure was that it did not. Shultz also notes a troubling lack of training of PSYOP soldiers and operational experience in conducting black operations.
Thomas Ahern is the author of two declassified CIA official histories pertaining to black PSYOP in Vietnam. *CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam 1954-1963* and *The Way We Do Things: Black Entry Operations into North Vietnam 1961-1964* each contain details of the development of black operations and the transfer of these operations to MACV-SOG. Kenneth Conboy and Dale Andrade expand on this in *Spies and Commando: How America Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam*. However, the focus in all these books is on agent operations and less on the black PSYOP program. Each of these books finds germs of black PSYOP success within a wider failure.

No consensus among this small body of work exists on the degree of success, or the cause of failure, for the U.S. PSYOP program in Vietnam. This is unusual because the Vietnam War was arguably the most intensive use of PSYOP in history. Even more conspicuous is the lack of historical coverage of the early phase of the U.S. entry into Vietnam. During this phase, America’s PSYOP support was largely advisory. This thesis hopes to fill that hole by explaining the process and structures that developed in the early phase of the war, and how that affected the future conduct of PSYOP in the war.
CHAPTER 2

AMERICA AND PSYOP

The use of PSYOP by American’s predates the Revolution. In the years prior to the American Revolution, propaganda was used extensively in an effort to mobilize people for or against continued unity with Great Britain. As could be expected in any war in which hearts and minds were so necessary for success, this effort increased after hostilities began. Among the Revolutionary War PSYOP programs were efforts to encourage Canadians to rebel, to maintain Indian neutrality, to influence foreign support, and to encourage desertions. Most of these activities were ad hoc arrangements by interested people rather than formal organizations. During the Revolution, propaganda consisted largely of printed items like pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers.  

The first American leaflet of the Revolutionary War was printed in May 1775 after the battles at Lexington and Concord. It was directed towards the British regiment at Boston and called on them to join the American cause. The *Bunker Hill* leaflet followed, which sought to induce British desertions by contrasting the conditions of British and Rebel soldiers in Boston. It was in this context that a program to induce the German auxiliaries to desert was born. This was the most extensive PSYOP program by the American’s during the war.  

The effort was conceived shortly after the contracts for German auxiliaries were signed in the winter of 1776, but gained momentum when these troops arrived that

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summer. That May, General George Washington encouraged Congress to raise some Germans residents to work among the auxiliaries to excite “a spirit of disaffection and desertion.” This program eventually offered the Hessians “free exercise of their respective religions…rights, privileges and immunities of natives,” and, perhaps most importantly, fifty acres of land.

Hessian soldiers deserted for many reasons. The exact numbers and motivations are less clear. Of the 30,000 German auxiliary troops sent to America, about 18,000 returned to Germany. This left approximately 12,000 who died, deserted or were otherwise unreported. Several factors may have limited the effectiveness of the American propaganda campaign. The soldiers were all foreigners, far from their families and most did not speak English. The Hessians held the people of German ancestry in America in contempt, believing them to be vagabonds and criminals who had fled their homeland. Additionally, repeated tales of Hessian plunder and pillage reinforced the initial fear with which Americans viewed these soldiers. These factors restrained desertion and enhanced group identity. The program appeared successful at encouraging landless German prisoners to stay in America after the war ended, but was less successful at encouraging desertion among active soldiers. After the war, no attempt was made to continue the propaganda organization, such that it was. The nation had made a

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choice—with PSYOP as well as the army as a whole—to rely on a militia and individual
genius rather than organization and doctrine in developing its military.

Little evidence of the American military use of PSYOP can be found in the following
sixty-years. During the War of 1812 some improvised operations occurred, such as
General William Hull’s “bombastic proclamation to the people of Canada,” but the next
major use of propaganda by the U.S. military came during the war with Mexico. This
presented itself in General Winfield Scott’s successful pacification campaign. The
Seminole and Creek Wars taught General Winfield Scott hard lessons on unconventional
warfare. In the war with Mexico, Scott hoped to avoid such problems by “maintaining strict
discipline within his own army, paying for all provisions acquired in Mexico, guaranteeing
Mexican property rights, and recognizing the sanctity of religious structures.”

Throughout the campaign from Veracruz to Mexico City, Scott fully integrated what are
now known as PSYOP and Civil Affairs into his military operations. In this war America
depended on the genius of a man rather than an organization, but the results argue that
he was the right man for the effort.

After capturing Veracruz in March 1847, Scott imposed martial law. He paroled
enemy prisoners, distributed food to hungry citizens, and issued proclamations. Scott
issued strict orders for his soldiers to respect religious property, and he even attended
catholic mass. Scott went so far as to publically hang U.S. soldiers for killing Mexicans, to
impress upon the people that he could be counted on to follow through with his
proclamations. These actions helped overcome resistance to the American occupation.

25 Ibid., 179.
Scott ordered that the “army would continue to advance—presenting at once the olive branch and the sword.” By guaranteeing Mexican property rights he built credibility thru his actions. This strategy freed Scott’s lines of communication to the coast as he advanced and limited guerrilla effectiveness. The American military marched into Mexico City in September 1847, crowning a major accomplishment. Outnumbered and operating far from home, Scott had achieved victory by integrating PSYOP as an important element in his strategy. In fact he was so successful that while in Mexico City, a group claiming to represent more than half of the Mexican congress offered to make Scott president. They further offered “$1.25 million plus the president’s normal salary” and ultimately, annexation of Mexico to the United States.

It is not surprising that no doctrine was developed or lessons learned from this war because the America PSYOP effort depended on the brilliance of General Scott, rather than a formal structure. However, many of America’s military leaders in the Civil War had served with him, including Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. In 1861 America again went to war with no official PSYOP structure. Possibly the most important Union activity related to PSYOP was the promulgation of General Order No. 100 in April 1863. This provided occupying forces with official guidelines for dealing with “recalcitrant civilians and the various categories of partisan fighters captured by the troops. Overall, the document called for moderation in occupation policies, but sanctioned a progression of more stringent measures when the situation warranted.” Just as in Mexico, these requirements were published via newspapers and broadsides. An additional example, the

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27 Johnson, Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory, 188.
28 Ibid., 206.
29 Ibid., 209.
Emancipation Proclamation, fits the category of strategic PSYOP. The target audiences for this included the British government, slaves, as well as residents of the various states. The proclamation was carefully crafted and timed in hopes of having the maximum impact on all these groups.

Perhaps America’s most effective Civil War propagandist was Henry Hotze. He served the Confederacy in what could be labeled the first formal American military PSYOP organization, funded by the Confederate War Department. Zurich-born Hotze moved to Mobile, Alabama in 1856, where he developed solid relationships with influential people and became a journalist.\textsuperscript{31} He spent a short stint as secretary to the United States Legation in Belgium in 1859 and later spent a brief period in the Confederate Army. Confederate Secretary of War, Leroy Pope Walker, asked Hotze “to travel to Europe to communicate with Confederate agents already on the ground in Britain and France.”\textsuperscript{32} Hotze arrived in Britain in October 1861 and was “shocked at the unchallenged monopoly the Northern press had over public opinion of the British people.”\textsuperscript{33} Until this time, Confederate diplomacy and propaganda was based on the power of King Cotton and the hope of forcing Britain to recognize the South due to economic hardship. Hotze devised a better propaganda plan, which included the need for an organization in Europe. Walker’s orders were to “advise the CSA as to the tone of English press, gauge the current of public journals, convince the British public that the South could maintain its independence, and keep the ‘tyranny’ of the Lincoln government constantly before the people.”\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Henry Hotze and Lonnie A. Burnett, Henry Hotze, Confederate Propagandist: Selected Writings on Revolution, Recognition, and Race (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 1.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 16.
By April 1862 Hotze made the decision to establish his own newspaper on a shoestring budget. For the next three years his *Index* spread the Confederate case in England. Hotze was skilled at devising appeals in tune with his target audience. Additionally, he printed pamphlets, which he distributed through British religious journals. His *Address of the Southern Clergy to Christians throughout the World* ran 250,000 copies.\(^{35}\) In the end, the effects of the war outweighed his ability to influence. With the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, the prospect of British recognition faded. Hotze continued to publish the *Index* for months after the war ended, in hopes of keeping it afloat as a business. As strategic PSYOP, the program was well planned and conducted, but only victory on the battlefield could ultimately transform opinions and behaviors.\(^{36}\)

America again entered war in 1898 without an official PSYOP capability, but with a clear need to influence the behaviors and attitudes of foreign civilians and enemy troops. In many ways this counterinsurgency foreshadowed the American experience in Vietnam. Additionally, the war in the Philippines brought the first tentative steps by Military Intelligence into the propaganda field. The latter was mostly in the area of enemy propaganda analysis.\(^{37}\) In this war it once again fell to the commander in the field to develop and control propaganda themes.

In line with President William McKinley’s desires, orders were issued to the troops and proclamations were published to the Filipinos stating that America came “not as despoilers and oppressors, but simply as the instruments of a strong, free government

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\(^{35}\) Hotze, *Confederate Propagandist*, 154.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 23.
whose purposes are beneficent.” On 4 January 1899, General Elwell S. Otis, then a U.S. commander in the Philippines, published an edited version of McKinley’s proclamation in the Philippines which downplayed the establishment of a colonial government. While Otis tried to ignore the issue of sovereignty for the Philippines, the McKinley proclamation directly affirmed United States dominion. However, the president’s original message leaked, and tensions flared over the question of sovereignty. This illustrated the effect of strategic PSYOP on the operational and tactical level of war. In fact, this interplay between strategic and tactical messaging was to be a hallmark of this war, as the telegraph made possible rapid, worldwide communication.

Brigadier General Arthur MacArthur was appointed Provost-Marshal and he immediately began restoring order in Manila. MacArthur assigned a provost guard to serve as a police detachment, set up courts, and hired Filipinos to clean the streets. He also published a proclamation on April 4, 1899 that reiterated the concept for future American policy in the Philippines. The rebels reacted to various American proclamations by tearing them down as soon as they were posted and tried to prevent the dissemination of information about the proposed liberal framework for governance. Despite this, the word spread. Native police were organized and Filipinos were used to propagandize for the Americans by urging the rebels to cease fighting. As the U.S. military expanded its control to the outer islands this general trend continued. This combination of actions and explanations had initial success. However, there were limits. As the rebels increased violence against collaborators, this local support often waned.

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39 Ibid., 38.
40 Ibid., 57.
41 Ibid., 263.
In December 1900, General Arthur MacArthur, then U.S. military governor in the Philippines, instructed his department commanders to apply General Order 100 from the Civil War to their operations, in order to isolate the guerrillas from the civilian population. General Order 100 allowed for the implementation of the rule of law and provided a basis for the successful pacification campaign. He also issued an amnesty proclamation on 21 June 1900 to encourage rebel desertion. Additionally, commanders understood the connection between how the Filipinos were treated and the goal of pacification. American troops were punished for infractions and at least sixty-seven were court-martialed in 1899. This was, in part, to ensure no basis existed for enemy propaganda regarding alleged American atrocities. Without a doubt, some Americans committed atrocities in the Philippines, but frequently accounts of American atrocities were overstated in an effort to support the cause of anti-war groups in America and to influence the upcoming United States presidential elections.

Upon the re-election of McKinley in 1900, the insurrectionist resolve slackened. They had placed all their hopes on a victory by William J. Bryan. Also, after the election, William Howard Taft, then Governor-General in the Philippines, concurred with MacArthur on the need to increase military pressure. Simultaneously they continued the propaganda campaign to pacify the countryside. In April 1901, Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the insurrection, surrendered and issued a proclamation urging those still under arms to surrender. This was a turning point and the major fighting ended rapidly thereafter. Propaganda played only a minimal part in this victory. Superior American military skills and weapons, along with mistakes by Aguinaldo, certainly had much more impact on the

42 Gates, Schoolbooks and Krags, 149.
43 Ibid., 83.
outcome. However, the pacification program, publicized with printed proclamations “brought to many a village the first law and the first peace it had known in years.”

Although the United States practiced psychological operations informally throughout its history, it was not until the First World War that a formal organization was created. In 1917, the United States was unprepared for war, let alone psychological warfare. Unlike previous wars, however, the United States had a well developed advertising and marketing industry which took full advantage of advances in printing, the advent of film, and advanced national marketing campaigns.

The Committee for Public Information (CPI) became the first United States formal PSYOP agency of the war. It focused on domestic and international strategic PSYOP. The program was chaotically run by former journalist George Creel and “agencies proliferated whenever a new idea turned up.” Creel worked directly with President Woodrow Wilson to draft propaganda appeals, often using Wilson’s war aims to create themes.

The CPI’s international effort included influencing American film distributors to compel Swiss theaters to agree to play American propaganda or lose access to more valuable Hollywood product. Other neighboring countries were targeted as well. This was strategic level PSYOP, with which the CPI hoped to weaken German morale as the messages crossed the border. Films contained divisive themes, such as the claim that America was fighting the German government rather than its people. Printed appeals from groups such as the Union of Friends of German Democracy and signed “In the

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45 Linn, The Philippine War, 327.
47 Ibid., 68.
49 Ibid., 33.
name of Americans of German Descent” were published by the CPI in European
ewspapers as well.\footnote{Bruntz, \textit{Allied Propaganda and the Collapse of the German Empire in 1918}, 33.}

Simultaneously, work began in the Military Intelligence section of the U.S. War Department General Staff to develop a military propaganda capability. By December 1917 an organization had been formed. This was part of the Military Intelligence’s 2 Section (MI2), \textit{Psychologic Subsection.}\footnote{Clayton D. Laurie, “The Chanting of Crusaders: Captain Heber Blankenhorn and AEF Combat Propaganda in World War I,” \textit{The Journal of Military History} 59 (July, 1995): 460.} Unfortunately, integration between CPI and the MI2 program was lacking. Heber Blankenhorn, a journalist and son of German immigrants, was to play a key role in the MI2 program. He first joined CPI and advanced the idea of targeting enemy troops with propaganda, as opposed to the strategic focus of the CPI. He hit a brick wall and sought help from Major Charles H. Mason, Chief of MI2. Blankenhorn transferred to MI2 in February 1918 to work in the Psychologic Subsection.\footnote{Ibid., 462.}

Blankenhorn immediately began recruiting “men for General Staff service who had knowledge of European history, languages, and cultures.”\footnote{Heber Blankenhorn quoted in: Laurie, “The Chanting of Crusaders,” 463.} By July this section consisted of twenty-eight persons, including journalist Walter Lippmann. They were approached, within hours of arrival at their French base in August 1918, about producing surrender leaflets. This led to the first American combat propaganda of the war, which consisted of 2,000 leaflets disseminated by leaflet artillery shells on 29 August 1918 near St. Mihiel. These were meant to undercut German rumors that the Americans had a \textit{no surrender} policy. The leaflet simply quoted the American General Order on the treatment of prisoners and listed the daily ration prisoners were
authorized. The response reportedly exceeded expectations. “Within days reports were received that enemy troops were reading and discussing the leaflets.” Among the most effective American themes concerned the steady growth of United States military forces in Europe, which were inexorably tipping the balance against Germany. On one leaflet, the statement: “Will you ever be as strong again as you were in July 1918?” was paired with a drawing of an endless stream of fresh American troops coming over the sea.

The First World War boosted the employment of mass communication, printing, and dissemination to a scale heretofore unequaled. By the end of the war, more than five million American leaflets had been distributed. One report claimed that a third of German prisoners had American propaganda on them when captured in the American sector. As the war drew to a close, between August and November 1918, the section produced twenty-one separate leaflets.

On the measurement side, the Psychologic Subsection introduced some novel methods and gave birth to the study of public opinion in PSYOP. Leaflets were distributed to supported tactical units with English translations and questionnaires in order to facilitate evaluation of effectiveness by G-2 officers after the product was distributed by patrol, aircraft, artillery or balloon. Prisoner interviews were used to assess effectiveness of future products. Before the advent of scientific public opinion surveys, this unit devised a morale analysis chart. Hampered by subjective factors and limited intelligence, it nonetheless made an attempt to track the effectiveness of the propaganda effort and track changes in German morale.

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55 Bruntz, Allied Propaganda and the Collapse of the German Empire in 1918, 63.
57 Linebarger, Psychological Warfare, 70.
The American Expeditionary Force PSYOP effort existed for less than ten months and was only in action for about ten weeks.\textsuperscript{58} Within six months of the armistice, most Psychologic Subsection members were either demobilized or reassigned.\textsuperscript{59} Although it lingered, the Psychologic Subsection was disbanded by 1925, leaving no doctrine and few aware of its wartime participation. Perhaps the most lasting effect of this effort was the most pernicious. Atrocity propaganda as well as themes stressing America was ‘making the world safe for democracy’ led to post-war disappointment and skepticism of propaganda in general. In America this brought into disrepute the endeavor to influence behaviors of foreign targets.

As a consequence, the United States entered World War Two with no psychological operations unit or doctrine, and indeed only one person on active duty with any experience with the First World War PSYOP program.\textsuperscript{60} In a study such as this, it would be impossible to follow all the vagaries of American PSYOP during World War Two. Thus, only the highlights as they pertain to the Vietnam War will be covered here.

On 11 July 1941, Colonel William Donovan was appointed Coordinator of Information (COI). This began the proliferation of often unconnected PSYOP agencies, which frequently performed well, but had little coordination.\textsuperscript{61} In June of 1942, COI split into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), responsible for black PSYOP, and the Office of War Information (OWI) to conduct white and gray PSYOP. The Office of War Information had control over “all domestic propaganda, and over white propaganda

\textsuperscript{58} Linebarger, \textit{Psychological Warfare}, 68.
\textsuperscript{59} Laurie, “The Chanting of Crusaders,” 479.
\textsuperscript{61} Linebarger, \textit{Psychological Warfare}, 91.
abroad except for the Western Hemisphere,” which remained under the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) run by Nelson Rockefeller.62

About this time, the Military Intelligence Division created a military psychological warfare office called the Special Studies Office. This later became the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB). In May 1941, Blankenhorn emerged from retirement to help the PWB, where he found “to his chagrin that the Army was reinventing the wheel.”63 Apparently, the lessons learned in the previous war had been forgotten.

Colonel Robert McClure was ordered in December 1942, to organize the Information and Censorship Section (ICS) of the Allied Force Headquarters in Europe. He was to have a long career in the PSYOP field, eventually being tasked to form the post-war Army unconventional force. The ICS was responsible for the coordination of propaganda activities between OWI, OSS, British Political Warfare Executive, and U.S. Army Combat Propaganda units.64 Later, the ICS became the Psychological Warfare Branch/Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe (PWB/SHAFE). This organization conducted wide-ranging tactical and strategic psychological operations in Europe, especially in support of the Normandy invasion.65

Thus, a series of improvised units and arrangements were created. No specific element was in charge of all information operations. The OSS had responsibility for black propaganda. The Army theater level PWB elements in Europe and the South Pacific conducted tactical and consolidation propaganda. In the United States the OWI was tasked with propaganda and white/gray strategic propaganda everywhere except

62 Linebarger, Psychological Warfare, 93.
64 Paddock, History of U.S. Army Special Warfare, 11.
South America where the CIAA was assigned. This profusion of agencies continued throughout the war with frequent changes in organization names and responsibilities.

Each theater commander defined the exact scope of responsibilities for its assigned propaganda elements. A major lesson learned was that effective PSYOP was a function of command influence. Initially, commanders around the world were skeptical of the usefulness of psychological operations, but as PSYOP units became more effective, they gained respect from tactical commanders. By the war’s end, “even generals like George Patton were asking for front line support because ‘it was definitely recognized that the loudspeakers helped to persuade the enemy to come over with arms in the air.’”66 At the theater level, PSYOP staff ran AM radio stations, conducted leaflet drops and loudspeaker broadcasts, and were also responsible for consolidation PSYOP in liberated areas as well as for command information programs.67

Vietnam was an economy of force effort for America during the war. The main goals were to protect Allied prisoners in the region and ensure the safety of downed airmen. In the final months of World War Two, the Office of War Information produced a monthly review of psychological operations in Asia called the Leaflet Newsletter. It reported that beginning in the summer of 1944, leaflets were dropped over Hanoi. These used a ‘carrot and stick’ theme to encourage humane treatment for downed Allied airmen. This apparently resulted in “the good reception of the crew of a Liberator which came down north of Hanoi, on January 1, 1945.”68 These leaflets were printed in Vietnamese on one side and French on the other, and were reported to be very popular.

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66 Paddock, History of U.S. Army Special Warfare, 7-15.
67 Linebarger, Psychological Warfare, 98.
Despite low literacy, the report stated “those who are unable to read take [the leaflets] to someone who can. In fact, leaflets were bought and sold in the bazaar, the common price being one piaster.”

In December 1944, in response to leaflets warning of upcoming bombing of the Gia Lam railway workshops north of Hanoi, the facility was closed down and workers transferred to other centers. One source noted that “since the bombs reached the earth first, the leaflets were obviously not intended to be effective at that time and 80 Annamites were killed.” The problem of timing occurred frequently. A failure to follow leaflet drops with bombing also hurt the program credibility. These leaflets were often produced by the OWI staff based in Kunming, China. By that winter, they were producing 29,000 leaflets and leaflet newspapers per week, eventually producing as many as three million per week. Overall, the Kunming station printed over twenty million leaflets by the end of the war.

OWI drastically intensified leaflet drops in South East Asia during the last months of the war. During the course of the war through May 1945, only four million had been dropped throughout Indo-China. Nearly three times as many were dropped in the last three months of the war. The major theme urged non-cooperation with the Japanese. Meanwhile, the newsletter reported the “Kunming team was making plans to conduct a large-scale operation in the event of an American landing on the China coast. Leaflets anticipating the landings had already been prepared.” This planning for an invasion of Southern China was a ruse to draw Japanese troops away from actual sites.

70 Ibid.
71 Office of War Information, “OWI Propaganda Against Japan: A Summary,” Leaflet Newsletter, Washington: Intelligence and Leaflet Unit, Area III 1 no. 11, (1 September 1945): 8-9, 14. CARL
72 Ibid., 9, 14.
Simultaneously, OSS agents sought to expand their role in propaganda aimed at Vietnam. Rivalries between the French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and conventional U.S. military forces hampered OSS ability to implement operations in Vietnam. Eventually, OSS headquarters in Kunming encouraged installing a black radio station aimed at the region.\textsuperscript{73}

The death of President Roosevelt changed the political policy regarding Vietnam. At a 25 April 1945 meeting, Deputy OSS Chief in China, Colonel Willis Bird, noted clear directives prohibiting “equipment or arms …given FIC [French Indochina] under any circumstances…OSS may do as much as they can in FIC for intelligence purposes only.”\textsuperscript{74} This led to interaction with Ho Chi Minh, who often went to the Office of War Information building in Kunming to “read Time magazine and any other new literature they happened to have” and to chat with Americans.\textsuperscript{75} The OWI personnel, impressed by his English and interest in the Allied war effort, had “tried to acquire a visa for him to travel to San Francisco.”\textsuperscript{76} Ho was seen as a potentially influential regional leader and the OWI planned to use him to broadcast news to Vietnam. This was dropped due to French objections. Like the OWI, OSS personnel gravitated toward Ho.

The Viet Minh issued their own leaflets encouraging aid to American pilots downed over Vietnam as well as conducting a propaganda campaign to serve their own agenda. Shortly before Ho left Kunming to return to Vietnam, Ho asked for an autographed photograph of General Clair Chennault, commander of the Flying Tigers. Ho also made a seemingly insignificant request for several Colt .45 caliber pistols. He was promptly

\textsuperscript{73} Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis, \textit{The OSS and Ho Chi Minh: Unexpected Allies in the War against Japan} (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 78.
\textsuperscript{74} Willis Bird quoted in: Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis, \textit{The OSS and Ho Chi Minh}, 130.
\textsuperscript{75} Dixee R. Bartholomew-Feis, \textit{The OSS and Ho Chi Minh}, 153
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
given several freshly unpacked ones and the photo. According to one OSS agent, once back in Vietnam, Ho made use of these props at a meeting of leaders from the various resistance groups. Ho “sent for the automatic pistols and gave one to each of the leaders as a present. The leaders considered Chennault had sent these presents personally. After this conference there was never any more talk about who was the top leader.”

His reappearance in Vietnam with obvious access to American agents and equipment helped increase his standing among resistance leaders. Ho used these to help consolidate his authority; particularly the photo of Chennault signed Yours Sincerely.

Due to the pressing needs of the war, most OSS agents overlooked Ho’s Marxist foundations. Archimedes Patti, based at Kunming, had been interested in using Ho for other operations, but the Japanese surrender altered those. The OSS immediately implemented its Mercy Team plan to send teams to secure allied POW’s held by the Japanese. Immediately upon landing in Vietnam, Patti’s team was met by the Viet Minh to add legitimacy to their seizure of power in Hanoi. Patti noted “the Vietnamese came to be seen with the Allies and acquire status in the eyes of their adversaries.” At a military parade on 26 August, they waved American flags while Patti and his team saluted the flags of the Allies, but more importantly the Vietnamese flag. Additionally, during the 2 September proclamation ceremony for the Provisional Government, Chairman Ho Chi Minh read a declaration based on the American Declaration of Independence. By coincidence, two American P-38 Lightning’s “swooped down low over

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77 Bartholomew-Feis, The OSS and Ho Chi Minh, 169.
78 Ibid., 233.
the crowd” further cementing the idea that Ho had America’s backing. All this is not to say America put Ho in power, rather that Ho, a trained propagandist, skillfully used his access to Americans to consolidate his power at the expense of other nationalist leaders.

The United States employed perhaps 2,000 personnel in PSYOP at any given time during the war. It developed a formal psychological warfare organization and published field manuals to support this. According to Eisenhower, “the expenditure of men and money in wielding the spoken and written word was an important contributing factor” in the Allied victory. It is estimated that eight billion leaflets were dropped in the European theater alone. However, in the rush to demobilize, the military PSYOP capability was dissolved as well. Despite urging from several quarters, no historical analysis of PSYOP effectiveness and operations was conducted after the war. This was to make it more difficult to reconstitute the force when it was needed again.

80 Functions of the 5th Army Combat Propaganda Team, 5th Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company, Fifth Army, 5 April, 1944. http://www.psywar.org/psywar/reproductions/5ACPWPB.pdf (accessed 24 March 2010). This is the first example of a field manual that could be found.
82 Linebarger, Psychological Warfare, 168.
CHAPTER 3

COLD WAR PSYOP DEVELOPMENT

As a consequence of the tremendous devastation and loss of life caused by the Second World War and the advent of nuclear weapons, a greater emphasis was placed on alternatives to direct military confrontation in the post-war period. In America, this eventually led to a reliance on the doctrine of massive retaliation and a willingness to maintain at least a minimal psychological operations capability. For President Dwight D. Eisenhower this was expressed in an emphasis on covert action. President John F. Kennedy continued this, but added an expanded Special Forces capability and focus on developing counterinsurgency forces. It is in this context that the U.S. Cold War psychological operations capability was fashioned.

The structure that matured during the early Cold War consisted of three components. Combat propaganda was the focus of the U.S. military, primarily the U.S. Army, but additionally the U.S. Air Force. White, strategic PSYOP was eventually brought under the control of the new U.S. Information Agency (USIA) working in conjunction with its overseas division, the U.S. Information Service (USIS). Additional technical aid to build communications systems in friendly nations was provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Covert, black PSYOP was conducted by the CIA. All elements occasionally practiced gray PSYOP.

In the immediate post-World War Two period the psychological operations force was rapidly demobilized along with the rest of the military. Additionally, in September 1945, the OSS and its Morale Operations (MO) branch were deactivated. Elements of
all these forces were minimally retained within the Central Intelligence Group and in the
Army, but for all practical purposes this was a period of “virtual psychological
disarmament” for the nation.83 Although the wartime value of psychological operations
was acknowledged, the rush to disarm left few elements of the military unscathed. As a
consequence, many operators returned to civilian pursuits. Worse still, no
comprehensive historical study of wartime psychological operations was undertaken.

In 1947, Eisenhower testified on behalf of the Smith-Mundt Act also known as the
U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act. This act became law in 1948 and
provided authorization for U.S. international and cultural programs.84 Eisenhower also
used his influence with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to urge careful study of the World War
Two experience in psychological warfare to “keep alive the arts of psychological
warfare.”85 As noted, Eisenhower had developed a keen appreciation of the possibilities
of psychological operations during the war. He had in fact become an enthusiast of
PSYOP much earlier, while posted to the Philippines in the 1930s. There he engaged in
nation-state building and developed an understanding of the importance of psychological
operations.86 Eisenhower became an advocate for the development of a robust
psychological operations capability during the Cold War.

After initially gutting the PSYOP force, President Harry Truman rethought his
position as the Cold War rivalry deepened. National Security Council memo 10/2
expanded the charter of the nascent Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in June 1948 to

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84 Ibid.
85 Kenneth Osgood, Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 51.
include covert PSYOP under the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). This office developed and supervised covert activities such as black propaganda as well as direct action, unconventional warfare “and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the Free World.”

Meanwhile, as commander of the Eighth Army in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur had formed a special staff section under his intelligence staff “to plan PSYWAR measures to counter aggression in Asia,” in 1949. This section consisted of five members at the time war began in 1950. Although not sufficient for the situation, his foresight at least provided some capability for immediate psychological operations response to the invasion. Thus, on the eve of the Korean War, unlike past wars, America had a functional, albeit tiny, PSYOP structure in place.

Across the military, however, a woeful shortage of psychological operations units and personnel existed. One U.S. Army PSYOP unit, the Tactical Information Detachment at Fort Riley, Kansas, existed when the North Koreans invaded South Korea that June. Immediately after the invasion, this detachment of twenty-four men, part of the U. S. Army Aggressor Center, was reorganized as a Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company (L&L) and sent to Korea in September 1950. The unit was authorized 107 men, but was never able to attain full strength due to personnel

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90 Ibid., 14-15.
turnovers. The company consisted of the headquarters and publication, operations, and loudspeaker platoons.\(^91\)

In 1951, General Robert McClure was selected to organize the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare to develop psychological warfare units and training standards. In this position he was instrumental in developing both the PSYWAR and unconventional warfare capabilities of the Army and restoring neglected skill training.\(^92\)

With the departure of the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) L&L from Fort Riley, a provisional unit, the 5021\(^{\text{st}}\) Psychological Warfare Detachment, was formed to act as a holding unit while the Psychological Warfare Board developed future PSYOP unit organizations and screened military records for personnel with the esoteric skills required for these units. The 5021\(^{\text{st}}\) PWD was also responsible for running the PSYWAR Staff Officers course, as well as Officer and NCO PSYWAR classes at Fort Riley.\(^93\)

Due to problems acquiring personnel and equipment, the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company was not operational in Korea until January 1951.\(^94\) L oudspeakers mounted on vehicles and aircraft became a primary means of conducting tactical PSYOP during the Korean War. Additionally, the units were responsible for consolidation PSYOP and operations against communist partisans in the South. It was not until later in 1951 that the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (RB&L) was organized and deployed to conduct strategic level PSYOP. The 1\(^{\text{st}}\) RB&L Group operated the *Voice of the United Nations* radio station and also provided PSYOP


programming to broadcasters in Japan and Korea. Together the 1st RB&L and 1st L&L often exceeded twenty-three million leaflets produced per week, most disseminated by aircraft and howitzers.95

The establishment of a psychological warfare department at the Army General School in Fort Riley, Kansas helped extend the standardization of psychological operations doctrine which ultimately developed the military PSYOP organization used in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Operations Research Office, operated by Johns Hopkins University, wrote PSYOP manuals, conducted analysis of World War Two and Korean PSYOP activities, and conducted basic PSYOP regional research.96 These activities provided the first analysis of U.S. military PSYOP and helped disseminate lessons learned and ideas for future operations. However, most of these studies were brief and specialized studies. No overall historical analysis was conducted.

Upon formation, the leadership of the new U.S. Air Force immediately sought to define the services’ roles and missions. Among the capabilities Air Force leaders desired was dominance in psychological operations. In February 1948, a Psychological Warfare Division was created at the Air Force Staff level.97 This division began developing plans for creation of an Air Force PSYWAR capability. Initially, a concept for a Special Operations Wing was considered for support to theater PSYWAR staff and operations. In January 1951, “the Military Air Transport Service…was given the mission of organizing, training, and equipping these Special Operations Wings, which for security reasons were designated Air Resupply and Communications Wings of the Air

96 Paddock, History of U.S. Army Special Warfare, 117.
Resupply and Communications Service (ARCS)."98 The 581st Air Resupply and Communications Wing was responsible for conducting leaflet drops as well as supporting unconventional warfare in Korea. The unit’s 581st Operations Squadron operated a variety of platforms for delivering personnel and propaganda, including twelve B-29s, and four each C-119 Flying Boxcars, H-19 Helicopters and SA-16 Albatross amphibious aircraft.99 The wing also contained the 581st Reproduction Squadron that worked along with the 1st L&L Company to print PSYOP product.100 From their base in the Philippines, the 581st ARCW rotated elements to Korea to support operations.101

One unusual segment of the ARCS was the balloon program. Using meteorological research as a cover, ARCS conducted testing and evaluation to “clarify the capabilities that the proposed balloon flying squadrons needed” to drop leaflets in denied areas.102 In November 1952, the 1300th ARCW became the only U.S. Air Force PSYOP balloon squadron activated.

The Air Force developed an outstanding training program for its ARCS PSYWAR officers. This included an intensive three-stage curriculum. Training began with a four-month course at Georgetown University’s Institute of Languages and Linguistics and focused on PSYOP theory and area studies. The second phase “transitioned the students from theory to operations” and lasted as long as three months, depending on the officer’s career track.103 A third phase included advanced language training;

98 Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, 78.
99 Ibid., 80.
101 Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, 38.
102 Ibid., 106.
103 Ibid., 104.
working with other agencies; and Special Forces, Ranger and parachute training. By the
time the program was terminated in May 1953, more than 500 Air Force officers had
completed at least the first phase of the training.

General Munro MacCloskey assumed command of the ARCS in late 1952 and the
Air Force seemed poised to become the dominant service for PSYWAR. MacCloskey
quickly initiated Operation Think, a program that challenged ARCS’s 500-plus PSYWAR
officers to develop programs and PSYOP campaigns.\(^{104}\) This proved to be a last flash
of brilliance for USAF psychological operations. By the fall of 1953 the Air Staff ordered
ARCS to “confine itself to projects requiring implementation only by the Air Force.”\(^{105}\)
The Air Force’s brief primacy in the PSYOP field began to wane with the deactivation of
the ARC Wings. This effectively killed the Air Force PSYOP program. By 1954, the
remaining capabilities were largely transferred to Air Force Reserve and National Guard
units.\(^{106}\) The ARCS had been a victim of inter-service rivalry. McClure had championed
the primacy of the Army in psychological operations and urged that the Air Force
become “essentially a supply agency for unconventional warfare activities.”\(^{107}\) In other
words, the Army sought to limit Air Force influence on military PSYOP doctrine and
training.

Studies conducted to assess Korean War PSYOP found a number of problems. An
Operations Research Office study in January 1951 reported a lack of trained PSYOP
personnel plagued operations. At this time Army PSYOP training consisted of a small

\(^{104}\) Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, 108.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., 104.
\(^{106}\) Ibid., 93.
\(^{107}\) Paddock, History of U.S. Army Special Warfare, 133.
school staff and little more than PSYWAR extension courses and Field Manual drafts.\textsuperscript{108} According to the report, this hampered operations at all levels. There were few PSYWAR personnel at Eighth Army with training or experience. At division level and below, all were reportedly untrained.\textsuperscript{109} The study found a lack of command emphasis, which was critical to effective PSYOP. Units below division relied on dual-slotted personnel to run the PSYOP effort in Korea, which left little time to focus on PSYOP in the heat of battle.

In an effort to overcome this shortcoming in personnel, a pamphlet explaining what PSYOP capabilities were and how to request support was disseminated among forward units, but without personal contact the effect was limited. “These officers might use leaflets if they know what leaflets exist and how readily available they are,” noted the author, but in the heat of battle they did not take the initiative to look into a program that could monopolize their time and was of dubious effectiveness.\textsuperscript{110} On the positive side, a combat report by the 14\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Regiment from March 1952 stated “psychological warfare, in our present situation, is worthwhile.”\textsuperscript{111} Another from the 158\textsuperscript{th} Field Artillery in August 1952 noted “enemy morale does not seem as high as in previous periods… [and] the number of deserters surrenderring to friendly forces has increased during the period,” crediting this to PSYOP.\textsuperscript{112}

Drawing on experience from World War Two, the evaluation of PSYOP product effectiveness in Korea was largely based on subjective indicators such as prisoner interviews. These were ineffective due to the haphazard system used to conduct them.

\textsuperscript{108} Paddock, \textit{History of U.S. Army Special Warfare}, 56.
\textsuperscript{110} Pettee, \textit{U.S. PSYWAR Operations in the Korean War}, 37.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 17 February 1953, 18.
in Korea. The report noted “the tendency of prisoners to try to please the captor by
giving the desired answers.” The PWB at Eighth U.S. Army was also limited by its
meager research capabilities. Indirect evidence of PSYOP radio effectiveness was
measured by evaluating the resources the enemy assigned to countermeasures such
as jamming and punishment for listening to the broadcasts.

A later evaluation of PSYWAR was conducted by Captain Herbert Avedon, who
had served with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and later as commander of the
1st L & L CO in Korea. This all encompassing after-action review was compiled in
August 1953, to address problems and hopefully to lead to changes in training, doctrine,
and organization of PSYOP forces based on lessons learned. According to the study,
two and one-half billion leaflets were dropped during the war. This included 1,200
separate leaflet messages. The study found problems with PSYOP equipment,
particularly airplane mounted loudspeakers that could not be understood from safe
flying altitudes, and extremely heavy and immobile tactical loudspeakers. Avedon also
reported a lack of coordination among PSYOP elements.

A major difficulty was access to intelligence relevant to PSYOP. While most military
intelligence organizations focus on order of battle data, topography, and enemy force
locations, psychological operations requires a much more complex set of data. This
human terrain data was frequently overlooked by conventional forces. The task to
evaluate operations was given to G-2, but they had little interest in performing it. For
instance, the report states, “no one in PSYWAR radio operations seems able to come

113 Pettee, U.S. PSYWAR Operations in the Korean War, 46.
114 Avedon, Psychological Warfare Operational Deficiencies Noted in Korea, 36.
116 Avedon, Psychological Warfare Operational Deficiencies Noted in Korea, 26-43.
forth with reliable statements as to the size of the potential radio audience.” This made it impossible to gauge the effectiveness of the entire PSYWAR radio effort. Avedon also noted the lack of an overall master plan for the conduct of PSYWAR. The report itself was delayed because of renewed attempts to deactivate Army PSYOP when the war ended. By November 1953 the decision was made to retain a smaller force, and the report was disseminated.  

While the war was ongoing, the 6th Radio Broadcast and Leaflet (RB&L) Battalion was formed in April 1952 from elements of the 5021st PWD at Fort Riley and moved to Fort Bragg the following month. The mission of an RB&L Battalion was to provide psychological warfare support at the theater of operations level. This was the basic PSYOP unit for the conduct of wartime PSYOP. It was designed as a semi-cellular unit. Each cell was meant to be autonomous so that task organizations could be created to fit any eventuality. Unlike a standard U.S. Army unit in which the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) prescribed a specific number of platoons or teams, PSYOP units were designed to be flexible and command a mixture of teams and specialties. Rather than an integrated company structure, each team was considered self-sufficient and could be detached to support combat units. However, these were placed administratively under the standard command group staff sections, hence its semi-cellular structure.

With activation of the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg in May 1952, McClure was given the task of training and developing psychological warfare and

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117 Avedon, Psychological Warfare Operational Deficiencies Noted in Korea, 50.
118 Ibid., Memorandum for Record, 28 August 1953.
120 Department of the Army, Field Manual 33-5 Psychological Warfare Operations (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, March 1955), 32.
Special Forces units. Under the OSS, teams had been given digraph designations in part to conceal their function. For instance, SI was responsible for secret intelligence, the SO branch performed special operations, and the MO branch conducted black PSYOP under the cover of morale operations. This naming method carried through to the post war conventions of the PSYOP and Special Forces units. It is not surprising that both the PSYOP and Special Forces continued this method of designation from the OSS given that many of the organizers had served in the OSS.

The contemporary naming rule for a twelve-man Special Forces A-team derives from the original digraph FA. By 1960 the F was removed. However, psychological operations units maintained a digraph designation into the 1970s. AA, AB and AC designated command and control teams at the company, battalion and group levels respectively. In the 1955 version of U.S. Army PSYOP doctrine, the command and control teams retained the staff sections that are generally found in a military unit, such as the S-2 for intelligence or S3 for operations, in the RB&L Battalion structure. However, all other elements were cellular in structure.

Regardless of the various PSYOP Table of Organization and Equipment versions, in general, the first character designated the type of PSYOP mission and the second a subset of that mission. For instance, F referred to propaganda analysis and design, G to production and printing, H to mobile loudspeaker and propaganda teams, I to radio, J to heavy printing, and K to consolidation. The HA, HB and HC teams were the primary

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121 Paddock, History of U.S. Army Special Warfare, 140.
operational units within a PSYOP company, providing mobile command, loudspeaker, and audio/visual teams respectively.

The 1955 version of the Army PSYOP doctrine directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) was the approval authority for psychological warfare plans, policies, and guidance. Any deviations required immediate notification of the JCS with the reasons for the change. Outside of a military theater of operations, the National Security Council was the responsible agency.\(^{125}\)

At the national level, the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) was created in 1951 to coordinate at the NSC level, activities of the State Department, CIA and military service support in countering the Soviet Union in the information war. Although it only lasted for two years, the PSB laid a foundation upon which Eisenhower based his policy making Operations Coordinating Board. He created this under the National Security Council (NSC) “to co-ordinate implementation of Cold War planning.”\(^{126}\)

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Even before he was elected, Eisenhower “promised a coherent national security strategy that accorded paramount significance to psychological considerations.”\(^{127}\) After he won the 1952 election, Eisenhower established a Committee on International Information Activities. He later established two key agencies that were designed to streamline the control of psychological operations “so a symphonic theme can be played which will be heard and enjoyed by the people of the world and our people.”\(^{128}\) Eisenhower’s *New Look* strategy assumed the Cold War was going to last indefinitely, necessitating a shift to political and psychological means to advance the United States’ interests during a long struggle.\(^{129}\)

The U.S. white PSYOP agency responsible for this was the U.S. Information Agency created by Congress on 3 August 1953.\(^{130}\) According to Eisenhower, the purpose of the USIA was to “submit evidence to people of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance the legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace.”\(^{131}\) The Director of the USIA was responsible to the president through the NSC.\(^{132}\) While the main focus of USIA was overt, it was seen as a mutually supporting element of the entire psychological operations effort. The USIA operated the *Voice of America*, as well as international cultural and educational exchanges. It also coordinated, through the NSC, messages and themes used by the military and CIA. The agency’s overseas arm was the United States

\(^{127}\) Kenneth Osgood, Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 47.


\(^{129}\) Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 55.

\(^{130}\) U.S. Information Agency, *USIA Administrative History*, USIA Box 1, folder 1, LBBL. (hereafter *USIA Administrative History*).


Information Service, which fell under the direction of the U.S. Ambassador in each country.\textsuperscript{133} In Vietnam, the USIS “provided advisory and material support to the [Vietnamese government] propaganda effort and coordinated military training assistance.”\textsuperscript{134} By 1960, USIS personnel had over five years of experience conducting PSYOP in Vietnam. While Eisenhower sought to avoid a propagandistic tone, Kennedy brought in Edward R. Murrow as USIA Director and immediately changed to a more aggressive stance. His new mission statement included actively “influencing public attitudes in other nations.”\textsuperscript{135}

Often working in tandem with USIS, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided assistance in building modern communication capacity to help in dissemination of supporting themes in countries such as Vietnam. This included conducting technical studies to determine optimal broadcast facilities and locations as well as aid in constructing stations. USAID also provided assistance to the pacification effort in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{136}

The third leg of United States psychological operations was the Central Intelligence Agency. Propaganda consumed 40 to 50% of the CIA budget in the 1950’s, mostly in the form of gray PSYOP. However, throughout the 1950s, the CIA continued to develop its black PSYOP capabilities. In part, Eisenhower appointed Allen Dulles as director of the CIA because he “shared the president’s faith in the efficacy of covert action and

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{135} USIA Administrative History, 1-8.
psychological warfare.” This capability was to be used frequently throughout the decade.

Operation PBSuccess is a good example of the mutually supporting interactions of black, gray and white PSYOP. In the operation to overthrow the government of Guatemala, a CIA black PSYOP team created news designed to be amplified by the USIA white operation. The program was executed against the leadership of Guatemala, while simultaneously targeting the wider world opinion to justify the coup. News media throughout the region were targeted and the CIA tasked to create stories that could be used to support the white program. At one point the chief of station requested all other stations “able to support efforts to discredit the Guatemalan government as communist-controlled should report on action taken so that the material, when possible, can be picked up for play in the Western Hemisphere.” This chief suggested themes to use in this effort. For example, the author recommended a theme that hinted at Soviet intentions in Guatemala. The CIA also operated a black radio station in Nicaragua and conducted leaflet drops. A declassified internal history published by the CIA states that part of the plan was to have a submarine land a cache of Soviet weapons, and arrange for this to be discovered for propaganda purposes. Before this could be implemented, however, “a ship carrying 2,000 tons of Czech weapons and ammunition arrived” and the international furor created obviated the need for the CIA ploy.

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137 Osgood, Total Cold War, 8.
138 From Chief, WH to Chief of Station, Lincoln, 8 June 1954, Subject: KUGOWN Propaganda Guidance, CIA Online Archives.
139 Progress Report—PBSUCCESS for the 8-14 June 1954, 15 June 1954, CIA Online Archives. This includes examples of suggested stories to plant and spread through various channels.
140 CIA’s Role in the Overthrow of Arbenz, 12 May 1975, CIA Online Archives.
An after action history, however, was less than laudatory of the PSYOP endeavor. The initial leaflet drop “caused the opposition to spring into action right at the moment when the inner organization was necessarily the most active.”\textsuperscript{141} This nearly caused the failure of the entire operation. The Chief of Project argued, however, that this criticism may have been Monday morning quarterbacking and that other aspects of the PSYOP program were useful.

As noted, American psychological operations in Vietnam dated from the end of World War Two. Upon their return to Vietnam at the end of the war, the French formed Vietnamese PSYOP units in an attempt to build a colonial army to defeat the Viet Minh. In order to enhance this, by the end of 1953 the French sought the advice of America’s premier advocate for PSYOP support to counterinsurgency operations. Edward G. Lansdale, originally a journalist, served in the OSS during World War Two and conducted PSYOP. At the end of the war, he joined the OPC where he first served in the Philippines coordinating operations to defeat the Hukbalahap Rebellion in central Luzon. Lansdale helped to mold Ramon Magsaysay into a hero and later president of the Philippines. For this success, Lansdale became known as a man who accomplished any mission he was given. Lansdale, although never a CIA employee, was detailed from the Air Force to support CIA missions in Asia, and eventually Vietnam as “chief of a second station, reporting neither to McCarthy in Saigon nor to the chief of the Far East Division, but directly to Allen Dulles.”\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} Memorandum for Chief of Project, Subject PM Operation, 8 July 1954, CIA Online Archives, 7. This document provides an after-action review of the Guatemalan operation.
\textsuperscript{142} Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., \textit{CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam, 1954-1963} (Washington: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000), 15. CIA Online Archives.
Lansdale notes that he was first asked to visit Vietnam in 1953 to advise and assess the French PSYWAR program. “General Cogny [Commander of French Forces in Vietnam] was strengthening his psychological warfare organization then and invited my comment” on PSYWAR teams, Lansdale wrote.\(^{143}\) This was the beginning of a long and influential relationship between Lansdale and PSYOP in Vietnam. About this time the 1\(^{st}\) Vietnamese PSYWAR Battalion was formed from the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) Armed Propaganda Companies on 1 July 1953 to conduct mobile propaganda in the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) Military Regions.\(^{144}\)

After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the nation rapidly sought to disengage from Vietnam. The subsequent Geneva Accords required temporarily dividing Indo-China at the 17\(^{th}\) parallel and the regroupment of Viet Minh forces to the North. The accords also provided for a period in which civilians could choose to move north or south of the line. After a brief return to the Philippines, Lansdale was rushed back to Vietnam after the Geneva Accords were signed, as the CIA’s Saigon Military Mission (SMM) chief. The U.S. had to move quickly to put people in place before restrictions on military manpower under the accords were implemented. Lansdale rapidly built a team and conducted psychological warfare in Vietnam for more than a year. During this period he met Ngo Dinh Diem after Diem returned to Vietnam to become president. Lansdale secretly furnished him with funds and assisted in PSYWAR training for South

\(^{143}\) Edward G. Lansdale, Lecture at Armed Forces Staff College, 7 January 1960, 3. Vladimir Lehovich Collection, Folder 07, Box 01, TTVA.

\(^{144}\) Organization and Operation of the 1\(^{st}\) PSYWAR Battalion, Undated Briefing, 1963, Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 03 - Insurgency Warfare, Folder 05, Box 15, TTVA.
Vietnamese units.\textsuperscript{145} Additionally he was credited with encouraging nearly one million people to move south by spreading rumors in the North.\textsuperscript{146}

Despite defeat, the French initially retained control of the South Vietnamese Army psychological warfare branch in the confusing aftermath of the accords. The French used the branch’s radio facilities to discredit Diem, who did not support French interests. To counter this Lansdale “arranged the loan of a US Navy officer from the task force then transporting refugees and placed him at the radio station, whose Vietnamese commander had been his classmate and friend at the US Army’s Psychological Warfare School at Fort Bragg.”\textsuperscript{147} He admits he was only able to adjust the editorial slant slightly.\textsuperscript{148} At the same time the regular CIA station established its own transmitter, which the president’s brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, used to “proselytize army officers and to announce new adherents—some authentic, some notional—to Diem’s cause.”\textsuperscript{149}

Lansdale realized that the National Army was the sole nation-wide organization in the South Vietnamese government. Despite its shortcomings, the army contained the basis for a nationwide communication system and an “officer corps with some training and experience in leadership and administration,” including nearly all field grade officers being college educated.\textsuperscript{150} Thus, the South Vietnamese Army was the only force capable of extending the writ of the new government into areas that the Geneva Accords required the Viet Minh to vacate.

\textsuperscript{147} Ahern, Jr., \textit{CIA and the House of Ngo}, 44.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 45.
Under Lansdale’s guidance, the United States assisted in training the psychological warfare forces to accomplish this. A hasty instruction program taught soldiers how to enter a village and greet civilians in a respectful manner. Additionally, he built Armed Propaganda Teams (APT). These were 20-man squads trained in psychological warfare, heavily armed and equipped with U.S. Navy loud-hailers, bull horns, and some larger French voice amplifiers. The men were selected for their patriotic motivation and “carried leaflets, booklets and posters, and at times, phonographs, films, film projection equipment, and simple medicines.”

These APTs operated on an area support basis rather than the direct support role U.S. PSYOP doctrine envisaged. In a counterinsurgency, this made more sense. Time is essential to develop the relationships and trust needed for PSYOP to change behaviors. Rather than shift areas every time a supported unit moved, the APT could focus its effort on one area. “The teams were successful in penetrating remote regions,” according to Lansdale, “attracting crowds through the distribution of simple medicine (such as aspirin) or showing of movies—and then talking to the crowd to explain the peaceful mission of the Army, the aims of the Free Vietnamese government, and then distributing leaflets and booklets.” One ploy the teams used was to offer to exchange a villager’s old, faded photo of Ho Chi Minh, for a fresh new color photo of South Vietnamese President Diem. Lansdale stated, “The teams knew that if they entered the huts and pulled down the pictures of Ho Chi Minh, they would only anger the villagers.”

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152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
Throughout 1955, APTs supported South Vietnamese operations to secure former Viet Minh areas vacated in accordance with the Geneva Accords. Beginning on 8 February, an air drop of leaflets was coordinated with radio speeches by Diem and loudspeakers explaining the peaceful mission. USIS assisted the Vietnamese G-5 staff in developing tapes, leaflets, and posters for these operations. Teams later used bicycle messengers to deliver mimeographed newspapers to remote villages. Lansdale reported that a major effect of all this activity was an increase in raw operational intelligence. Maintaining a brotherly attitude towards the civilians helped overcome the intimidation by the Viet Minh. Lansdale dominated the conduct of PSYOP in Vietnam for more than a decade. His relationship with Diem was a key factor in maintaining U.S. influence with the GVN as well as affecting the views of American leaders.

After Lansdale left, the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAGV) continued providing assistance in developing South Vietnamese psychological operations units. This included providing advanced training in PSYOP for selected personnel. For instance, in August 1957, the RVNAF General Staff requested that MAAGV “reserve one place for Vietnam in the study tour program for 1958-1959 to send one field grade officer of the Office of Psychological Warfare” to the United States. The purpose of the visit was study American methods of organization and operations of the Psychological Warfare Branch at Fort Bragg. Additionally, Lt Colonel Nguyen Van Chau, Director of Psychological Warfare Actions, was scheduled to attend a Psychological

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Warfare Seminar at Okinawa starting 25 May 1958, although it is unclear if he did so.\(^\text{156}\)

The following year, MAAGV programmed nine slots for RVNAF to attend the Psychological Warfare Officer Course at Fort Bragg. This six week course was scheduled to begin 16 February 1959 and was followed by a nine week Information Officers Course.\(^\text{157}\)

Meanwhile, the Viet Cong strategy after 1957 focused on utilizing their own armed propaganda units, but normally they were no match for the well-armed ARVN. The VC organization in the South began to atrophy under the increased pressure. “The increasing dissatisfaction of southern cadres with this situation had probably contributed to the January 1959 resolution of the 15\(^{\text{th}}\) Party Congress which sanctioned armed struggle to overthrow the Diem government.”\(^\text{158}\) By late 1959, assassinations had doubled from the eleven per month average in 1958. Viet Cong initiated attacks averaged over 100 per month and the ARVN faced a series of setbacks as districts began to fall to VC control.

In this context, U.S. officials began to look more critically on the man who until recently was viewed as a miracle man. In May 1960, Diem began to experiment with Agrovilles in an effort to deny VC access to the population. These required moving villagers to newly built hamlets that could be more easily defended. Despite problems with implementation, the system helped regain control of a larger percentage of the population.\(^\text{159}\) However, under the surface, Viet Cong propaganda teams began to develop support in some areas. It was impossible to assess “how quickly the Viet Cong

\(^{156}\) Chief CATD Division Memorandum: Psychological Warfare Seminar- Okinawa, MAAGV Records.
\(^{157}\) MAAG to RVNAF General Staff, 24 November 1958, MAAGV Records.
\(^{159}\) Ibid., 331.
might shift from propaganda, intimidation, and assassination to effective military action.”

The military, USIA and CIA PSYOP components were each well established and had well-developed doctrine by the 1960s. Additionally, they were composed of personnel with wide experience in the art of PSYOP. Perhaps the weakest leg was the military component. The dissolution of the Air Force PSYOP training program meant that the Army was the sole proponent for PSYOP doctrine and training. With limited resources and support, this left a gap. Yet, with the distribution of the 1955 Field Manual on *Psychological Warfare Operations*, a solid doctrine existed. Additionally, a training center had been created to train soldiers on how to conduct these operations. With these caveats, the U.S. military was better prepared to enter the Vietnam War than any previous war. More importantly, central control of at least the military segment of PSYOP was set with the decision to make the Army the chief organization for training and doctrine. At the national level, structures were in place to implement and coordinate presidential directives across a wide spectrum of psychological operations agencies. In Vietnam, a nascent PSYOP structure had been created and successfully aided in the formation of the nation. Regardless, the government was increasingly under pressure and an expansion of the war was on the horizon.

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CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION OF FORCES

American involvement in South Vietnamese psychological operations began to grow quickly. This became especially pronounced after the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. However, the main components initially remained the small U.S. Information Service (USIS) group of about six officers, the CIA Station in Saigon, and a few military advisors.

During this period, the Center for Vietnamese Studies in Saigon began conducting opinion surveys on behalf of USIS in order to help evaluate PSYOP themes and products. These surveys were “designed to assess the impact and effectiveness of various information media on particular audience groups and to learn the relative importance of mass media and personal contact in international communications.”¹⁶¹ One lesson learned was the need to pretest products and surveys with the Vietnamese.¹⁶² These initial surveys must be viewed skeptically, because the systems to conduct them were still in their infancy. However, they do allow for some estimation of trends in public opinion among urban Vietnamese.

For instance, a survey of teachers was conducted in 1960 to assess their media preferences. This group was seen as a critical intermediate target audience. By effectively targeting them, wide dissemination of credible messages could be accomplished through the teacher’s perceived legitimacy with their students. Thus knowing whether the 57.5% who reported listening to the radio every day was precisely

¹⁶¹ Center for Vietnamese Studies Bureau of Social Science Research: USIS Media Survey of Teachers, August 1960, 1, Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 11 - Monographs, Folder 05, Box 11, TTVA.
¹⁶² Ibid., 2.
accurate, was less important than knowing that radio was generally a good method of reaching teachers.¹⁶³ Skill at conducting the surveys grew with time.

The U.S. Army began a PSYOP advisory effort in Vietnam on 27 April 1960, “when the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) first directed the deployment of psychological warfare (PSYWAR) personnel to Vietnam.”¹⁶⁴ At nearly the same time, the North Vietnamese were reevaluating their policy toward South Vietnam. On 23 September 1960, the “Party Committee ordered all provinces to launch [a] general uprising.”¹⁶⁵ Later, on 20 December 1960, the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam was formed as a branch of the Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN).¹⁶⁶

Shortly after his election, President Kennedy placed renewed emphasis on counterinsurgency and ordered an evaluation of capabilities and needs. Immediately prior to Kennedy’s inauguration, Gen. Edward Lansdale conducted a fact-finding trip to South Vietnam from 2 to 14 January 1961. Within his first week in office, Kennedy expressed his desire that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) get “guerrillas to operate in the North.”¹⁶⁷ This expanded program was to involve greater use of black PSYOP against North Vietnam. All this was an indication of the rapid shift in U.S. policy towards Vietnam. Despite this, Kennedy began to transfer much of the worldwide responsibility for irregular warfare from the CIA to the Pentagon in reaction to the failed Bay of Pigs operation later that spring.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Center for Vietnamese Studies Bureau of Social Science Research: USIS Media Survey of Teachers, 13.
¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 67.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.
Upon Lansdale’s return from Vietnam he produced a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense. Lansdale was then Deputy Assistant to the Secretary Defense for Special Operations. He noted that without mobilizing their total resources, the South Vietnamese could do little more than postpone defeat. This mobilization required the assistance of expanded psychological operations.\(^{169}\) Lansdale argued that, “we must support Ngo Dinh Diem until another strong executive can replace him legally.”\(^{170}\) He noted that American criticism of Diem’s leadership caused the president to feel isolated and that this led Diem to withdraw into a shell. In addition, Lansdale encouraged a change of ambassador as well as other personnel in Vietnam because of their perceived inability to work with and influence Diem. In Lansdale’s mind, Diem was the indispensable man. As Lansdale wrote, “The next time we have become ‘holier than thou’, we might find it sobering to reflect on the DRV [North Vietnam]. Do the Soviets and the Chinese Communists give Ho Chi Minh a similar hard time, or do they aid and abet him?”\(^{171}\)

Lansdale noted that although the Viet Cong (VC) had made gains in 1960, they had “neglected doing sound political work at the grass roots level and broke one of Mao Tse Tung’s cardinal rules. Many people in the South now under their thumb are unhappy about it, but too terrified to act against these new rulers.”\(^{172}\) Treating the people harshly had created opportunities for psychological exploitation by the South Vietnamese, which he discussed in connection with the recently drafted Basic Counterinsurgency Plan for South Vietnam. He wrote of the need to “foster a spirit of

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\(^{169}\) Lansdale to McNamara, Memorandum—Vietnam, 17 January 1961, 4. Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 01 - Assessment and Strategy, Folder 01, Box 02, TTVA.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.

\(^{171}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{172}\) Lansdale to McNamara, Memorandum—Vietnam, 17 January 1961, 11.
national unity and purpose among all elements of the Vietnamese society [and] strengthen the people’s confidence in and respect for the RVNAF as a security force vis-à-vis the VC.”\textsuperscript{173} He also urged that the U.S. endeavor to raise South Vietnam’s international prestige.

The counterinsurgency plan envisaged intensifying psychological operations to keep the populace informed of what the GVN was doing on their behalf in order to “strengthen their feeling of participation in government and thus their loyalty to it.”\textsuperscript{174} Among the goals Lansdale set were expanding communications facilities and an improved public relations and strategic communications policy for the GVN. He also argued for a more robust counterpropaganda program to expose the fallacies of the DRV program.\textsuperscript{175}

To Diem, Lansdale urged a more American-style populist leadership approach by the South Vietnamese president. “Perhaps the wisest move would be to call in the younger people among the opposition. It would be best if you talked to them personally,” he wrote Diem that January.\textsuperscript{176} This harkened back to Lansdale’s experience in American journalism and his effort in the Philippines, but did not take into account Vietnamese conceptions of what a leader should do. Despite his often sage advice, Lansdale was demonstrating a problem of cultural misunderstanding that often encumbered the American PSYOP effort throughout the war.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{176} Lansdale to President Diem, Washington, 30 January 1961. Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 02 - Military Operations, Folder 12, Box 01, TTVA.
In the wake of these discussions, President Kennedy signed National Security Action Memo 2 (NSAM), directing the development of counter-guerrilla forces. “In consultation with other interested agencies,” the president ordered the examination of “means for placing more emphasis on the development of counter-guerrilla forces.” Furthermore, the president wrote National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy on 6 February regarding a strategic PSYOP message in this connection. He asked if a recent counter-guerrilla case study by Lansdale could be used as part of a strategic communication program. Writing Bundy, Kennedy noted that he thought it “would be an excellent magazine article for publications like the Saturday Evening Post. Obviously, it could not go under Lansdale’s signature” but “it seems to me that they would find it interesting and it might serve as an example of what can be done.” If this were deemed not to be a good idea, Kennedy urged that the story still be provided to reporters on background and for use by ambassadors and the CIA in Asia. He ordered that Bundy “make sure that this type of material has good distribution.”

The new administration moved forward quickly on its new vision for low-intensity capabilities in contrast to Eisenhower’s reliance on nuclear deterrence and pushed against bureaucratic inertia in search of results. On 9 March, Bundy sent the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence NSAM 29, in reference to increased guerrilla operations in Viet Minh Territory. The president ordered “that we make every possible effort to launch guerrilla operations in Viet Minh territory at the earliest possible

177 National Security Action Memorandum No 2: Development of Counter-guerrilla Forces. February 3, 1961. JFKL.
178 National Security Action Memorandum No 9: General Lansdale's Story of the Counter Guerilla Case, 6 February 1961. JFKL.
179 Ibid.
time” and ordered prompt reply on what steps were feasible.\textsuperscript{180} That same day he also ordered an increase in military forces in Vietnam. This included sixteen H-34s and four C-130s to be transferred from the Department of Defense to CIA for use by Civil Air Transport, the forerunner of Air America.\textsuperscript{181}

Like many organizations, the CIA was a victim of its institutional memory. Based on OSS operations and early Cold War experience, the CIA focused on agent operations. Despite the poor results of teams infiltrating communist controlled areas, this became the standard CIA response to the demand for action, because that was “the way we do things.”\textsuperscript{182} This aspect of the agency’s operations in Vietnam was to have tragic consequences, while the black PSYOP program it engendered was to have more mixed results.

By 1961, thirty USIS were personnel operating in Vietnam. Additionally, the USIS in Saigon had hired Vietnamese USIS representatives for each province to work alongside the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS).\textsuperscript{183} Over the course of the next few years the USIA budget for Vietnam grew from $.75 million in 1963 to over $2.7 million per year in 1968.\textsuperscript{184} Despite these improvements, Lansdale noted the North was “way out in front” in the propaganda battle. Comparing communications capabilities, North Vietnam had eleven radio stations, all based in Hanoi, while the South had twenty-two government

\textsuperscript{180} National Security Action Memorandum Number 28: Guerilla Operations in Vietnam Territory, March 9, 1961. JFKL.
\textsuperscript{181} National Security Action Memorandum Number 29: Re: Southeast Asia, March 9, 1961. JFKL.
\textsuperscript{182} Donald P. Gregg quoted in: Ahern, Jr., The Way We Do Things, 31.
\textsuperscript{184} U.S. Information Agency, USIA Administrative History, 5-44, USIA Box 1, folder 1, LBJL.
owned stations around the country.185 According to Lansdale, however, the Hanoi stations had stronger signals.186

In April, Lansdale continued to urge that the U.S. emphasize psychological and political support for Vietnam. He pressed for the Vice President to "visit Saigon and announce U.S. determination to support Vietnam's desire to remain free."187 Coincidently, Vice President Johnson visited Vietnam in May 1961 and did just that. Lansdale also wrote of creating a national reconciliation program such as he had organized in the Philippines. This proved to be the forerunner of the successful Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program that Diem announced in 1963.188 Chieu Hoi was designed to entice Viet Cong supporters to back the government.

PSYOP was seen as an integral part of fighting what Kennedy called 'brushfire wars' in the larger ideological struggle between the United States and Soviet Union. In a series of NSAMs in June, Kennedy continued to expand his emphasis on counterinsurgency. He ordered the Defense Department to determine precisely its counterinsurgent force needs. This seems to have been aimed at helping formulate the overall budget.189

Within the active Air Force, most of its unconventional capability was downsized and transferred to Air National Guard in 1954. The Air Force retained a limited capability composed of two troop carrier squadrons, one based at Okinawa. Working in conjunction with the CIA, this unit had supported operations in Tibet. In a response to President Kennedy's emphasis on counterinsurgency, the Air Force expanded and reorganized

186 Proposal (probably by Lansdale) for a Presidential Directive for a Task Force, 19 April 1961, 27. Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 01 - Assessment and Strategy, Folder 01, Box 02, TTVA.
187 Ibid., 29.
188 Ibid., 30.
189 National Security Action Memorandum Number 56: Evaluation of Paramilitary Requirements, 28 June 1961, JFKL.
these into Air Commando Squadrons (ACS).\textsuperscript{190} Elements of these units arrived in Vietnam with C-47 aircraft equipped with belly-mounted loudspeaker systems for PSYOP use in November 1961 as part of Operation Farm Gate. This move was authorized by Kennedy in October along with an expansion of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam. FARM GATE included defoliant aircraft and agent operations support as well as PSYOP aircraft.\textsuperscript{191}

As noted, after action reviews from the Korean War detailed the poor performance of aircraft mounted loudspeaker systems. However, the lesson was apparently unheeded. Tests of the C-47 mounted system in Vietnam found that due to the Doppler effect, the belly-mounted speakers “kept changing pitch as the aircraft approached and departed, leaving no more than two or three intelligible words out of a complete sentence.”\textsuperscript{192} This unit, as a consequence, was relegated to leaflet drops while a technological fix was devised. This took two years and eventually required side-mounted loudspeakers.

As his first year in office drew to a close, President Kennedy was concerned that the military was not doing all it could to utilize civic action in support of psychological operations. Within the limits of military necessity, he ordered DOD to “encourage local forces to undertake civic action projects as an indispensable means of strengthening their society’s economic base and establishing a link between army and populace.”\textsuperscript{193} These often included such tasks as constructing schools or aiding orphanages. In the view of the administration and military doctrine, civic action was perceived as seamlessly supporting the psychological operations effort to influence behavior at the tactical level.

\textsuperscript{190} Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, 130-140.  
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 286.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{193} National Security Action Memorandum Number 119: Civic Action, 18 December 1961, JFKL.
and to help maintain support both domestically and internationally for the mission. Good deeds, while good in themselves, were done for the psychological benefit to be accrued.

The U.S. Army issued an update to its PSYOP doctrine and force structure in January 1962. Now simply titled *Psychological Operations*, PSYWAR had been subsumed within the broader term to refer to the use of propaganda “in time of war or declared emergency.”\(^{194}\) This doctrine expanded and clarified the 1955 manual. While little was changed in the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) for PSYOP units, the doctrine placed much greater emphasis on the role of intelligence in psychological operations. This was clearly a response to problems noted in the Korean War. Also, in line with Kennedy’s preference, PSYOP support to counterinsurgency operations was highlighted. However, this was largely theoretical due to America’s lack of experience in such operations.

The field manual also discussed the importance of measuring PSYOP effectiveness, but was realistic in noting the inherent difficulties. It suggested interrogation of prisoners be used for evidence of effectiveness, and that prisoner panels pre-test product. Captured documents and enemy responses such as “tightening discipline against troops who pick up propaganda leaflets” were also noted as indicators of effectiveness.\(^{195}\) According to doctrine, intelligence was critical to developing the accurate psychological profile required to help the psychological operations officer “identify his targets, reveal their vulnerabilities, and indicate the effectiveness of his effort.”\(^{196}\) However, without a change in TO&E, PSYOP units lacked sufficient intelligence personnel to effectively do this. They continued

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\(^{195}\) *FM 33-5, Psychological Operations*, 1962, 48.

\(^{196}\) Ibid.
to be dependent on a military intelligence system preoccupied with studying enemy order of battle rather than the human terrain so important in counterinsurgencies. Although the enlisted military occupational specialty that comprised most PSYOP positions was military intelligence, they were functioning in a operational rather than analytic role. Additionally, a tour in PSYOP was seen as a career detour for officers, who often had no prior experience in intelligence or psychological operations.

Under this revised doctrine, the now named Broadcasting and Leaflet Battalion and the Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company remained the basic military PSYOP units. The battalion staff was designed around the standard S-sections, but the Radio Broadcast Company, Reproduction Detachment and Consolidation unit were cellular in structure. The separate Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company structure was unchanged.197

The Geneva Accords limited the United States to about 700 military advisors in Vietnam. Seeking to halt the perceived decline in the military situation in South Vietnam, Kennedy approved special presidential military advisor General Maxwell Taylor's November 1961 recommendations for increased U.S. assistance and the quadrupling of advisers to 3,200 men. He also liberalized the rules of engagement and combat roles, allowing advisors to accompany ARVN units in a wider array of operations. This increase included the “commitment of two helicopter companies, a squadron of fighter aircraft, communications, intelligence, and other U.S. elements to the war effort.”198 To oversee this rapid growth, Kennedy established the U.S. Military Assistance Command,

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197 FM 33-5, Psychological Operations, 1962, 244.
Vietnam (MACV) under General Paul D. Harkins in February 1962. The first PSYOP Mobile Training Team (MTT) arrived that same month. 

In line with Kennedy’s emphasis on counterinsurgency, the U.S. Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg began offering a course for counterinsurgency special warfare staff officers in March 1962. The course goal was to “provide commissioned officers and civilian personnel with a general knowledge of the latest doctrine and techniques of unconventional warfare, psychological operations, and counterinsurgency operations.” Additionally, advisors were scheduled for a twelve-week basic course in Vietnamese. This training was done in hopes of overcoming the advisory problems noted. Unfortunately, the advisory effort’s growth continued to outpace the ability to overcome them.

Meanwhile, problems with training, indoctrination and manning plagued the ARVN and Diem was adamant that he form Ranger companies to fight the growing insurgency. After eventually consenting to Diem’s demand, General Samuel Williams, Commander of the Military Assistance and Advisory Group Vietnam (MAAGV), worried about the introduction of Special Forces personnel to train these units, thus causing the total advisory strength in the country to rise above the allowable maximum. To avoid doing so, he brought these soldiers in on temporary duty status. Under this program, several U.S. Army Special Forces teams and three psychological warfare specialists from Okinawa arrived in Vietnam in May.
South Vietnam expanded its PSYWAR force in light of the deteriorating combat situation. On 1 May 1962, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Joint General Staff activated two more PSYWAR Battalions. This provided one battalion each for I, II and III Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ). A fourth battalion was added later. Each battalion consisted of three PSYWAR companies.204 On 12 May 1962, the CIA Covert Action Station (CAS) in Vietnam reported the black radio station run by the Vietnamese Army Psychological Warfare Directorate began broadcasting from the Quang Tri area. This radio station claimed to be an NLF station based in North Vietnam. The target audience for this was NVN military officers and middle class urban residents.205 This was likely the spurious VC Radio Liberation that Colby started. This station broadcast on an adjacent frequency to the real Radio Liberation, and generally sounded like the original, “except for certain false segments that, it was hoped, cast aspersions on the VC in the minds of the listeners.”206

In line with Lansdale’s advice to create a program to encourage desertion, Diem announced the Chieu Hoi program during Lunar New Year, 1963.207 This Open Arms program encouraged VC to rally to the government. That April the ARVN PSYWAR Directorate began publishing a monthly magazine aimed at indoctrinating its soldiers. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces focused each issue on a specific theme such as “Communism in South Vietnam” or “The People of Vietnam.” The underlying psychological objective of the magazine was to educate soldiers on the Chieu Hoi

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204 Effective this date the “Status Report on Covert Actions in Vietnam,” 16 May 1962, 3. CIA Online Archives.
205 Ibid., 1-3.
program and to build support for it. Thus, each issue tabulated the numbers of returnees and weapons since the inception of the program in April 1963. Each also contained the 17 April 1963 proclamation by Diem for all Vietnamese “to return and uphold the just cause of the fatherland and to contribute their efforts along with those of all our people in order to build, in a militant spirit, the new society and civilization where every citizen will be able to develop totally and in full freedom.” Although aimed at the Vietnamese, the magazine was also published in an English and French language edition.

General Edward Rowny was tasked on 6 November 1962 to form the Army Concept Team in Vietnam (ACTIV). The ACTIV mission was to “evaluate new methods of countering insurgency in actual combat” with the focus on helicopter operations. This program, which operated until April 1972, was the largest Army research and evaluation project of the war. Although the initial focus was on helicopters, it was eventually expanded to cover a wide array of topics, including PSYOP. The first of the studies pertaining to PSYOP involved a 1963 evaluation of heliborne loudspeakers “for use in the PSYWAR and civic action aspects of counterinsurgency warfare.” At a conference in Hawaii that May, Secretary of Defense McNamara ordered the study in order to increase tactical PSYOP responsiveness and to overcome the high illiteracy rate in Vietnam. This was critical in light of the failure noted with airplane mounted loudspeakers that had yet to be resolved by the time of the helicopter test. Initial tests proved the system intelligible from 3,000 feet even when traveling at forty-five knots. This capability was required to

208 The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, Monthly Publication of PSYWAR Directorate No. 3: The People of Vietnam, June 1963, Folder 01, Box 02, Vladimir Lehovich Collection, TTVA.
211 Army Concept Team in Vietnam, The Heliborne Public Address System for use in PSYWAR and Civic Action (Saigon: ACTIV, 10 February 1964), iii. (hereafter ACTIV), DTIC AD0348732.
give aircrews a higher survivability rate.\textsuperscript{212} In addition to the aerial loudspeaker test, ACTIV tested audio-visual \textit{Tri-Lambretta’s}. These were three-wheel scooters equipped with projectors and loudspeakers for PSYWAR/Civic Action teams to use at the sector level. Eventually, seventeen 1000-watt and thirteen 250-watt loudspeakers were ordered for helicopter use.\textsuperscript{213}

During the summer and fall of 1963, U.S. PSYOP advisors and Air Commando aircraft increasingly supported ARVN operations. The major themes continued to be the Chieu Hoi program and surrender appeals. The first operational use of the aerial loudspeaker took place in June 1963. In an effort to remove noncombatants from the battlefield, Montagnard tribesmen in contested areas surrounding the Kon Brai outpost in Kontum Province were informed “that after a certain date anyone found in the area would be killed.”\textsuperscript{214} Tapes were made by tribe members and repeatedly broadcast over the area. Within five days 2,400 Montagnards had come to the outpost for aid and protection. It was found through testing that aerial loudspeaker was most effective at night, which also added a safety factor for the crews.

Although the original CIA interest in North Vietnam was to gather intelligence and disrupt the government, by 1963 interest rose in using propaganda to incite resistance forces. This was a delicate matter, however, due to the failure to support Hungarian resistance during the uprisings in 1956. Political limitations placed on the CIA meant they could never do more than agitate the people in the North.\textsuperscript{215}

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\item ACTIV, \textit{Heliborne Public Address System}, 5, 7.
\item MACV, \textit{Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964}, 75.
\item ACTIV, \textit{The Heliborne Public Address System}, 14.
\item Shultz, \textit{The Secret War Against Hanoi}, 20.
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Herbert Weisshart, a covert political action specialist, arrived in Saigon in March 1963 to organize a notional resistance movement for the CIA. Weisshart had experience providing PSYOP support to notional teams in China and later helped to draft OPLAN 34A that transferred the covert operations in Vietnam to the military. Appealing to Vietnamese mythology, Weisshart created the *Secret Sword of the Patriots League* (SSPL). In 1428, this mythological sword had been delivered to the tale’s hero by a turtle swimming in a Hanoi lake. With this sword, the Vietnamese were able to defeat the invading Chinese. Weisshart hoped to create dissension between the Vietnamese and Chinese by utilizing this image. He recalled that “it would provide an ostensible sponsor for real teams on the ground and, if all went well, would provoke paranoia in the DRV hierarchy.” To support this program Weisshart developed operations like Operation Loki, where captured North Vietnamese fishermen were indoctrinated into believing they were in an area controlled by the notional resistance movement SSPL.

Under Operation Loki, North Vietnamese fisherman were kidnapped and brought to Cu Lao Cham Island, or Paradise Island, off Da Nang. They were indoctrinated at an SSPL resistance camp notionaly located in North Vietnam. The men were held several days and then sent home with PSYOP-themed gift baskets. Reportedly, some fishermen sought to be kidnapped to receive the medical treatment provided and, according to later SOG commander John K. Singlaub, a chance to gain “an average of over 20 pounds” during their ordeal. Some of the fisherman knew exactly where they

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217 Ahern, Jr., *The Way We Do Things*, 47.
218 Conboy and Andrade, *Spies and Commandos*, 78-80.
219 Ibid., 110.
were, having visited the island during the course of their lives. Eventually, SOG had to limit the number of times a man could be ‘kidnapped’. In light of this, it is unlikely the overt purpose for the camp succeeded. However, it may have provided other intangible benefits later in the war when the program was used to disseminate faulty intelligence.\(^{221}\)

As part of the increased emphasis on the SSPL program, infiltration teams in the North began to assume a secondary mission of psychological warfare. The first dual mission team, code named EASY, parachuted into the North on 11 August 1963. While collecting intelligence, the team was tasked with spreading SSPL leaflets. Other teams carried special single-use leaflet mortars to disseminate product after their sabotage mission was complete.\(^{222}\)

Throughout the summer of 1963 Diem dealt with a growing Buddhist crisis. Diem’s refusal to allow Buddhist temples to fly flags during Buddha’s birthday celebrations in May 1963 began a wave of riots and self-immolations by monks. This turmoil was seized on by the international press to portray Diem’s government as illegitimate. Unwittingly, this supported a North Vietnamese propaganda effort. Subsequent North Vietnamese histories make clear the extent to which this movement was organized and agitated by agents of the North within the Buddhist movement. Regardless, this had the desired effect and may have helped lead Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge to begin working with coup plotters immediately after his arrival in Vietnam that August.\(^{223}\)

The Viet Cong were being overwhelmed during this period, although it was not clear by press reports. The official PAVN history of the period states:

\(^{221}\) Conboy and Andrade, *Spies and Commandos*, 218-219.
\(^{222}\) Ahern, Jr., *The Way We Do Things*, 49.
\(^{223}\) Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 206-225. This section contains details on the level of infiltration by the North of the Buddhist movement.
Just as the political struggle combined with armed struggle began to develop in late 1960 – early 1961, the enemy launched a vicious counter attack. Using large numbers of troops, superior mobility and heavy fire power, the United States and its puppets constantly attacked our bases in the mountains, mounted sweeps and blockades of the contested areas, and seized and occupied portions of our liberated areas in the lowlands.\(^{224}\)

Prior to the November coup, the North admitted that the South had gained control over more than two-thirds of the rural population and established more than 3,500 strategic hamlets. They further claimed that over 40,000 cadre and soldiers had entered the South by the end of 1963. Rather than the image of a home grown insurgency, it is clear that the North was assuming control of the war as a result of the attrition of the Viet Cong force. According to the official history, “these troops represented 50 percent of the full-time armed forces in the South and 80 percent of the cadre and technical personnel assigned to the command and staff organization in South Vietnam in 1963.”\(^{225}\)

Following the Buddhist crisis, the I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) advisory effort focused on fielding the recently trained PSYOP teams of the 2\(^{nd}\) PSYWAR Battalion. This battalion itself was occupied with “preparations for the national day and the II CTZ anniversary celebrations on 25 and 26 October 1963.”\(^{226}\) That fall, ARVN PSYWAR teams around the country also began to experiment with night psychological operations. One unit near Long An province found this particularly effective and reported “future night PSYOPS missions are being planned.”\(^{227}\) This entailed sending teams out to harass VC armed propaganda teams attempting to persuade villagers to support them.

\(^{224}\) Victory in Vietnam, 109.  
\(^{225}\) Ibid., 115.  
\(^{226}\) ACTIV, Weekly Headway Report 091601Z TO 161600Z OCT 1963, C-6. This study contains reproductions in the annex of MAAGV operations reports for 1963.  
\(^{227}\) ACTIV, Weekly Headway Report 041601z to 111606z SEP 1963, C4.
Meanwhile, in II CTZ Montagnard tribesmen were urged to return to their hamlets by the village chief using an aerial loudspeaker. They had fled to the forest due to threats from VC and the PSYOP effort urged them to return home. The first week 253 Montagnards returned, but it was several more weeks before all could be accounted for.\(^{228}\) The use of the aerial loudspeaker in conjunction with leaflet drops was becoming increasingly common during this period.\(^{229}\) Additionally, in Binh Doung Province a novel capability was tested on 15 October. A newly rallied Viet Cong cadre “personally directed the loudspeaker aircraft to his battalion bivouac area” whereupon he made a live broadcast calling on his comrades by name to rally to the government.\(^{230}\) This proved the usefulness of rapid response loudspeaker broadcasts, when several of his comrades rallied.

The psychological effort began to take precedence in the covert program as the CIA slowly realized that the infiltration operations had been a failure. Periodic conference meetings were held in Honolulu to enable coordination between personnel in Washington and Vietnam pertaining to all aspects of American involvement. By the November 1963 Honolulu Conference, William Colby, CIA Saigon Station Chief, expressed his doubts about the entire agent operation and urged phasing it out. It was in the context of these CIA failures that pressure grew to transfer operations to the Pentagon. MACV expressed a willingness to phase in responsibility for the operations with the “CIA footing the bill until 1 July 1964.”\(^{231}\) However, they envisaged keeping CIA specialists in the new

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\(^{228}\) ACTIV, Weekly Headway Report 021601z to 091600z OCT 1963, C6
\(^{229}\) ACTIV, Weekly Headway Report 181601z to 251600z SEP 1963, C5.
\(^{230}\) ACTIV, Heliborne Public Address System, 12.
\(^{231}\) Ahern, Jr., *The Way We Do Things*, 49.
organization. This raised issues over expanding the program and maintaining the deniability the CIA wanted.

On 2 November 1963, President Diem was overthrown and later murdered. Along with the assassination of President Kennedy later that month, this was a critical juncture for South Vietnam. Despite his shortcomings, Diem had made progress in unifying the nation and fighting an insurgency increasingly manned by Northerners. His death unleashed a period of instability at a vital moment that allowed the insurgency to grow to a structural threat to the nation.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, Vietnamese PSYWAR units were focused on explaining what had happened. A total of 140,000 leaflets were dropped by the 23rd Division during the first week of November 1963. The principal message consisted of explaining the coup d’état and the new military government. As one MACV report described the process in Darlac Province, ten-man teams were attached to each district “to provide each district with a means to counter VC propaganda against the new government.”

After the November 1963 coup, MACV reported a complete change in the Vietnamese desire to use PSYOP, stating that Diem had wanted absolute control over all aspects of psychological operations. However, rather than simply a new found acceptance of PSYOP, the new government leaders were dependent on the United States and more compliant with their demands, regardless of the appropriateness within Vietnamese culture.

An analysis of reports covering the five months between July and November 1963 paint a picture of the intense PSYOP activities being conducted at the end of Diem's

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233 MACV, Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964, 71.
rule. Contrary to MACV claims, the program had been widely supported by Diem, but along lines he deemed to be culturally appropriate. The vast majority of nearly 2,500,000 leaflets dropped during this period were in support of the Chieu Hoi program. The same can be said for the eighty-eight reported loudspeaker missions, although many sorties went unreported. An additional task was to encourage refugee movement. On the ground, teams were reported across the country showing more than seventy films, assisting ARVN PSYWAR team fielding, testing novel equipment usages, such as the audio-visual Tri-Lambretta, and conducting face-to-face communication.234 The ARVN now included three PSYWAR battalions and American advisory support was integrated at all levels. The Vietnamese Information Service was functioning nationally, supported by USIS representatives. However, with the death of Diem this structure was now leaderless.

Meanwhile, a growing black program of dubious value continued. Colby argued that most agent teams had been captured or killed and urged ending the current program in favor of “infiltrating ideas, rather than agents and explosives.”235 The CIA hoped to discontinue infiltration completely by 1965 and thereafter focus on black radio and leaflet operations. Colby bluntly stated, “It isn’t working, and it won’t work any better with the military in charge.”236 McNamara reportedly took the view that if these agent and PSYWAR operations were a failure, the fault lay with the CIA. He urged continuing and expanding them under military control.

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236 Ahern, Jr., The Way We Do Things, 50.
The Pentagon already had prepared what became Operational Plan (OPLAN) 34 to run these operations, which echoed nearly all the current CIA operations.\textsuperscript{237} By the fall of 1963, the decision had been reached to transfer black ops, including the PSYWAR program against the North, from the CIA Covert Action Station to MACV. In a 14 November cable, MACV, CAS and U.S. Ambassador Lodge, all concurred with this change. This transfer placed the operations under OPLAN 34.\textsuperscript{238} The memo noted that expanding the operations, as envisioned, required accepting “a reduction of plausible denial to a level of discrete overt operations.”\textsuperscript{239} This transfer placed CIA officers in the new Special Operations Group run by MACV. Eventually, this organization was renamed the Studies and Observations Group (SOG) in order to preserve its cover. CAS personnel were scheduled to cease support for the agent program over a six-month period from the date of approval, but continue support of SOG PSYOP efforts.\textsuperscript{240}

At the end of 1963, the MACV J3 office split into two sections, Operations and Special Warfare. The latter was responsible for psychological warfare and Special Forces programs and operations. In recognition of the interrelated nature of Civil Affairs, on 1 January 1964, “the Civil Affairs Office, MACV, and the Psychological Warfare Section of the Special Warfare Branch of J3 were consolidated as the PSYWAR/CA Branch under J3.”\textsuperscript{241} This mirrored the existing configuration of the Vietnamese Army and advisory network.

While the PSYOP effort was developing to influence behavior, work was continuing on assessing enemy propaganda to help gauge the effectiveness of the program. One

\textsuperscript{237} Ahern, Jr., \textit{The Way We Do Things}, 50.
\textsuperscript{238} Cable from CIA to State, OSD, WH, Reference DEPTEL 570, 14 Nov 1963, 1. CIA Online Archive.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241} MACV, \textit{Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964}, 52.
such analysis was conducted of VC propaganda activities in Long An Province, near Saigon. It found that the Viet Cong propaganda teams typically consisted of four to five armed men who arrived in a hamlet between seven and nine in the evening. These were usually area natives who stayed in the village until dawn conducting propaganda sessions, “which may either be the house-to-house type of contact or a group meeting and lecture involving all inhabitants.”

At this time handbills and leaflets were distributed to urge villagers to cease support for GVN and the strategic hamlet program using threats and persuasion. The Viet Cong also attempted to ‘jam’ loudspeaker broadcasts by requiring villagers to beat on pots and pans in order to make the broadcast unintelligible. Death threats were also made against villagers, but normally only performed when a specific psychological goal could be achieved.

This cruelty often backfired and ran counter to the normal Maoist concept of building support among the rural population. The report noted in one village, people “were at one time sympathetic to the VC. But when one of the village representatives was murdered by the VC, the inhabitants reportedly turned against the VC. This resentment is not unmixed with considerable fear, however.”

Themes were typical of the Soviet Agit-Prop (Agitation-Propaganda) system. Agit-Prop was a two-tier indoctrination process. For the masses, agitation was geared towards fomenting anger and frustration and relied on slogans. This was hoped to create psychological vulnerabilities that could be exploited by Viet Cong cadre. Propaganda consisted of what could be called the ‘party-line’ explanations used to motivate the cadre.

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244 Analysis of VC Propaganda Activities in Long An Province, 5.
and provided them with ready themes to use on the masses. Printed product was only a supplement to this.245

The study concluded that:

To counter the thrust of VC person-to-person propaganda, similar efforts by the GVN [Government of Vietnam] are called for. The VC agi[t]-prop team reinforces what it says by deeds, onerous though some of these may be. The GVN team should also supplement and reinforce what is said, but by deeds which are positive and concrete. GVN PSYWAR-civic action teams are now attempting to do this. A larger scale effort seems indicated.246

This effort was indeed to grow in the coming year, but government instability limited its effectiveness.

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245 Analysis of VC Propaganda Activities in Long An Province, 7.
246 Ibid., 18.
CHAPTER 5

YEAR OF DECISION

As 1964 unfolded, indications surfaced that the burgeoning joint U.S./ARVN PSYOP program was reaching its physical limitations. On 7 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff were notified that leaflet printing alone was utilizing all available print capability in Vietnam. It was determined that through a bureaucratic oversight, printing plants scheduled for delivery to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) psychological warfare units were never requisitioned. As a result, print capabilities that included Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and U.S. Information Service (USIS) presses in Vietnam as well as locally contracted presses were completely overwhelmed. Subsequently, the U.S. Army Broadcast & Visual Activity Pacific (USAB&VAPAC) was authorized to ship a heavy mobile press from Okinawa to fill this gap. Additionally, the USAB&VAPAC presses on Okinawa were tasked to provide alternative printing.

At the same time, instability in the government as a result of the coup caused the PSYOP effort to lose focus. The need for consistent messaging could not be met in such a situation. This was exacerbated by high turnover in PSYWAR leadership in Vietnam. A last major factor was the new Johnson administration’s own struggle to keep the situation under control while it sought a way forward. These factors dominated the PSYOP effort for most of 1964. Despite these issues, at the tactical level both ARVN PSYWAR and its U.S. advisors and support units continued to expand and test the limits of PSYOP capabilities in support of counterinsurgency operations.

247 PSYCH OPS printing support for MACV, 7 Jan 1964. Digital copy in possession of the author, probably from LBJL.
On 9 January 1964, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) held the largest quarterly psychological operations conference to date. This Saigon conference included all agencies conducting PSYOP in the country, both U.S. and Vietnamese, in order to coordinate and exchange ideas. General Tran Van Don, the South Vietnamese Defense Minister, appealed to the attendees not to rely on technical PSYOP capabilities such as loudspeakers and movies because these were effective, but not sufficient, to change behaviors. Don stated that, “head-to-head talks are still the best and most effective means of propaganda, which the Viet Cong never fail to employ.”

As part of the attempt to seize the initiative in direct communications, VIS teams operated in villages attempting to gain support from, and better understand the needs and desires of the villagers. Normally the VIS teams produced a report, along with the Vietnamese representative of the USIS, to help illustrate what was happening in the rural areas. One such study concluded that only people in remote areas were influenced by Viet Cong propaganda. “On the contrary, the people living in the district, near the market always side with the Government. For example, in this Hamlet (Ky Chau) about 80 percent of the people follow the Government. While 80 percent of the people in 4 other hamlets (in the Viet Cong controlled area) is [sic] ‘influenced’ by the Viet-Cong and follows them.”

The management of black operations against the North transferred from CIA to the Pentagon on 1 February 1964. MACV Studies and Observations Group (SOG) PSYOP consisted of four branches: research and analysis, print media and mail, radio, and an

251 Ibid., 153.
exploitation branch. Herb Weisshart became the chief of the PSYOP sections, as the only CIA officer with managerial status in the new organization. SOG PSYOP expanded on Colby’s original operational concept, emphasizing deception operations.\textsuperscript{252} The first U.S. Army PSYOP soldiers assigned to MACV-SOG included about twenty-two soldiers from Okinawa sent on temporary duty status in January. They were graduates from the PSYOP course. Reportedly none had experience conducting black PSYOP in denied areas, however. Additionally, according to Weisshart, “they lacked area knowledge” of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{253} Besides Weisshart, the CIA was reluctant to send its best people to support MACV-SOG. Meanwhile Colby continued to urge complete withdrawal of the agency from the joint organization and institution of a unilateral psychological program against the North.\textsuperscript{254}

Captain Fred Stables arrived from Okinawa with the second Army element in February and was assigned to the SOG printed media operation. Stables’ team was initially assigned to III Corps to provide cover for entering Vietnam “because the national policymakers did not want a PSYWAR unit in country or the Vietnamese government at that time did not want us there.”\textsuperscript{255} He recalled questioning at the time, how could “a democratic government properly implement covert or PSYOP operations because we’re not a long-range planning kind of a country or government. We always were operating with our hands tied behind our backs simply because of our democratic process.”\textsuperscript{256}

\textsuperscript{254} Ahern, Jr., \textit{The Way We Do Things}, 54.
\textsuperscript{255} Fred Stables, \textit{MACV-SOG OP39}, 72, 76.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., 76.
With the effective transfer of black PSYOP to the military, work continued on developing a functional structure to coordinate PSYOP in Vietnam. On March 16, Johnson indicated his “own interest in the strongest possible information and psychological warfare program,” and gave U.S. Information Agency (USIA) director Carl Rowan authority to expand his agency’s control.257 Johnson assured Rowan “that no worthwhile undertaking shall be inhibited or delayed in any way by financial restrictions.”258 The only stipulation dealt with Viet Cong defection programs, on which Johnson deferred decision.

Among the lessons learned by that point was the need for effective PSYOP coordination. To achieve this, Combined PSYWAR/Civic Action Operations Centers were established in each Corps Tactical Zone. Eventually, this program was extended to division and sector level. Combined, in military parlance, refers to operations conducted by more than one nation. Significantly, this combined PSYOP structure was never implemented at the national level due to South Vietnamese aversion. This hampered coordination as the war progressed; however, at least at the lower levels a connection was developed. These centers generated PSYOP plans and coordinated military and civilian PSYWAR/Civic Action activities.259

General William Westmoreland arrived in Vietnam in early 1964 as MACV deputy commander and later became commander. He had been interested in PSYOP at least since the Korean War. In a Combat Information Bulletin issued in 1952, he detailed a desertion program he had initiated in the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team area

257 National Security Action Memorandum No 325, 17 March 1964, 1. LBJL.
258 Ibid.
259 MAAGV, Lessons Learned no. 40: Corps PSYWAR/CA Operations Center, 23 Mar 1964, 3.
in which a combination of loudspeakers and artillery were used to encourage
desertions. He wrote, “In my opinion this type of operations certainly is deserving of
further study and should this RCT encounter a similar situation in the future I would
certainly like to try a similar scheme again.” This interest in PSYOP carried over when
he became commander of MACV.

In April, PSYOP advisors with PSYWAR teams reportedly began distributing colorful
envelopes during Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAP). These envelopes were pill
containers that portrayed Republic of Vietnam and United States flags with an inscription
reading: The Government of the Republic of Vietnam and the people of the United States
of America wish you a healthy and prosperous life. Teams had also begun conducting
PSYWAR training for Civilian Irregular Defense Group Strike Force soldiers and reported
that the ARVN and Montagnards were working well together in this task. The Government
of Vietnam (GVN) established a PSYOP committee reporting to the National Pacification
Council, in mid April, to supervise field activities. By this time each ARVN Division had a
PSYWAR company attached to it.

Despite these improvements, the post-coup instability severely hamstrung the
PSYOP program and pacification in general. Rather than the decrease in Viet Cong-
controlled villages seen in the final months of President Ngo Dinh Diem’s rule, districts
rapidly fell to the VC after the coup. This was also due in part to an increase in infiltration
from the North, tipping the military balance. By May, the government had lost control of

in Vietnam, 1964-1973. reel 2, MACV Historical Office Documentary Collection, Bethesda, MD: University Publications of
America. (hereafter MACV Records).
262 MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 11-18 April 1964, 32.
2,500 villages.\textsuperscript{263} This occurred in spite of an increase in PSYOP flights, other tactical improvements and innovations, and reportedly “outstanding Psychological Warfare support of provincial pacification activities” by the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS).\textsuperscript{264} At the tactical level, progress was being made, but it could not substitute for a stable government.\textsuperscript{265}

In May 1964, as the government of Vietnam began to consider forming a Political Warfare (POLWAR) structure, the RVNAF Chief of the Psychological Warfare Division headed a group to Taiwan to study the Nationalist Chinese POLWAR system. This differed from a PSYOP structure in that it included operations that could be termed morale and welfare, designed to maintain public and military support for the government. Without their support, or at least acquiescence, winning the war would be difficult. Just as important was denying that support to the Viet Cong (VC). The POLWAR system was designed to aid that task.

With the increase in advisors needed for Vietnam, the Special Warfare Center began offering a six-week Military Assistance Training Advisor Course. This so-called ‘long course’ for advisors was held at Fort Bragg and designed to “provide selected officers and enlisted men with a working knowledge of the duties of a military assistance training advisor in counterinsurgency operations, at the division and lower level.”\textsuperscript{266} It included fifty-four hours of language training, four hours on the advisor’s role in PSYOP, and three on current PSYOP in Vietnam. Topics included the nature of psychological

\textsuperscript{263} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 13-20 June 1964, 22.
\textsuperscript{264} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 5-11 April 1964, 36.
\textsuperscript{265} Memorandum for Bundy, Subject: First status Report on the forty-one Non-military actions in Vietnam, 28 April 1964. National Security Files Country File-Vietnam, Folder 11, Box 74, LBJL.
\textsuperscript{266} United States Army Special Warfare School, \textit{Military Assistance Training Advisor Course}, May 1964, I-1. PSYOP Papers 1961-1968, Box 3, USASOC.
operations and the necessity of integrating psychological operations with tactical operations and civic actions. This was geared toward ensuring all advisors had at least a limited knowledge of PSYOP, regardless of the military branch they were scheduled to assist in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{267} For those unable to attend the long course, an abbreviated version was held in South Vietnam. Additionally, a one week PSYOP course was held in Vietnam specifically for newly assigned Sector PSYOP/S-5 advisors.\textsuperscript{268}

For the fifth time in six months, there was a change in ARVN PSYWAR commanders in May 1964. MACV reported that the “continuous personnel changes in this key assignment seriously handicaps PSYOPS.”\textsuperscript{269} However, on the tactical level many improvements were made. That same month, the ARVN 1\textsuperscript{st} PSYWAR Battalion deployed its Cultural/Drama team outside of Saigon for the first time. Cultural/Drama teams provided entertainment such as music and plays, while supporting MEDCAPS or other PSYOP and civic action operations. Various Corps began to experiment with a weapons turn-in rewards program with positive results. Initiated by Special Forces units, the program quickly spread and leaflets were designed to support this program.\textsuperscript{270} Additionally, despite an overall decrease in Chieu Hoi ralliers since the 1963 coup, military intelligence reported gaining “valuable information from ralliers such as unit designations, locations of arms caches, and indications of Viet Cong intentions.”\textsuperscript{271} By the first week of June 1964, utilization of aircraft for PSYOP support continued to grow. With this, the ability of the Air Force to fill support requests increased. From previous lows of a

\textsuperscript{267} United States Army Special Warfare School, \textit{Military Assistance Training Advisor Course}, IV-2-3.
\textsuperscript{268} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 13-20 June 1964, 35.
\textsuperscript{269} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 9-16 May 1964, 45.
\textsuperscript{270} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 13-20 June 1964, 35.
\textsuperscript{271} MACV. \textit{Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam} 1964, 41.
50% fly rate, nearly 80% of the thirty-six requests for leaflet drops that week were flown.\textsuperscript{272}

At the end of May, Rowan reported to Johnson on the results of the most recent Honolulu conference. He noted the success of a CIA program to train 200 agitation-propaganda teams at the village level.\textsuperscript{273} He also expressed the attendees’ belief that programs aimed at the North portraying the economic success of the South would be useful. In order to implement the committee’s plans however, they recognized the need to expand the CIA program to train radio talent. According to Rowan, the “USIA pledged the use of VOA facilities and/or personnel in such a program.”\textsuperscript{274}

In June 1964, the administration began to reexamine the information program for Vietnam. The issue of the secret nature of America’s growing involvement and undisclosed deaths of American servicemen helped intensify the detachment between what the administration was saying and what reporters saw. Additionally, Rowan told Johnson, after returning from Vietnam, “Lodge’s one-man rule over the U.S. Mission’s public affairs program had harmed coordination of the overall public affairs effort and that Barry Zorthian should take control of the entire program.”\textsuperscript{275} As head of USIS in Saigon, Zorthian was already responsible for the American white PSYOP program there.

In June, Zorthian took control of all public affairs. Zorthian immediately called for ‘maximum candor’ with the press in an attempt to rebuild credibility for public affairs statements. William P. Bundy, deputy to Assistant Secretary for International Security

\textsuperscript{272} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 30 May to 6 June 1964, 39.
\textsuperscript{273} Rowan to President Johnson, Memorandum on the Psychological program in South Viet Nam, 4 June 64, 4. National Security File, Country File Vietnam, Box 53, LBJL.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.
Affairs, noted that the decision to put Zorthian in charge of all information activities in Vietnam should begin to bear fruit. He reiterated Rowan’s claim that the overall press effort had been burdened by Ambassador Lodge. As a consequence of the change, William Bundy reported that “Vietnamese information and PSYWAR activities are also capable of slow improvement, and a number of useful ideas were developed by a group headed by Carl Rowan.”

On the anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Accords in July 1964, PSYWAR units began efforts to publicize a National Day of Shame “to promote loyalty to the government and militancy in the fight against the Viet Cong.” On the ground, teams continued expanded face-to-face interactions to spread the news of the Chieu Hoi program. In the III CTZ, aerial loudspeaker missions were flown in Binh Thuan Province to advise farmers that the GVN was destroying crops grown for the Viet Cong. This program was meant to deprive the VC of food, but also undercut support for them among the populace. The VC had promised to protect farmers who grew food for them. Showing the inability of the VC to do so it was designed to convince farmers that it was “futile to stay in the Viet Cong controlled areas” and thus deprive the VC of support in rural regions. In another program, PSYWAR units across the country exploited the VC massacre of forty Regional Force family members in Dinh Tuong province under the theme of a National Day of Mourning. Regional Forces were South Vietnamese local militia units. The incident occurred after a vicious battle with a battalion-sized Viet Cong element in Cai Be district on 20 July. An extensive national PSYOP campaign was

276 Memo for Secretary from William P. Bundy Subject Highlights of Honolulu Conference, 3 June 64, National Security File, Country File Vietnam, Box 53, LBJL.
277 MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 25 to 31 July 1964, 45.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
conducted to “further incite the people against the Viet Cong” for this and other atrocities.\textsuperscript{280}

A series of SOG initiated agent and sabotage missions at the end of July proved momentous. These maritime attacks heightened North Vietnamese vigilance. As a consequence, the North Vietnamese navy stepped up coastal patrols. On the night of 31 July, these patrols came in contact with the \textit{U.S.S. Turner Joy}, which was conducting signals intelligence patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin as part of Operation Desoto. This set off the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and subsequently led to an expansion in American involvement in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{281}

ARVN PSYWAR tested a new concept that same month. The successful program involved creating a leaflet from a letter by a recent raller to his former comrades. Five VC soldiers reportedly rallied in the first ten days of this program, one bringing in six weapons with him. “He stated that he decided to come in because life among the VC was so miserable, and he knew that he would be well received and treated because he had seen Chieu Hoi leaflets.”\textsuperscript{282}

As previous analysis had shown, VC propaganda teams normally entered disputed villages at night; conducting study sessions, trials and distributing propaganda. To counter this, the PSYWAR units in I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) increased use of \textit{night propaganda teams}. These were designed to counter directly the VC teams by using loudspeakers to harass them.\textsuperscript{283} For the civilians, later analysis showed that:

\textsuperscript{280} MACV Records, reel 2, Military Report, 25 to 31 July 1964, 39, 45.
\textsuperscript{282} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 8 August to 15 August 1964, 47.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
Prolonged exposure of the villagers to VC controls and policies has resulted in a growing disappointment in VC promises, while the intensification of GVN/US operations had led to a declining belief in VC victory. The VC increasingly appear to many villagers in the role of ruthless exploiters of the population and as a constant source of danger.\textsuperscript{284}

To take advantage of this, Vietnamese Information Service (VIS) elements in III CTZ began broadcasting one hour loudspeaker news programs in district market places.\textsuperscript{285} Other Corps remained active as well. The I CTZ conducted a PSYOP/Civic Action course for 200 village officials, while the II CTZ reported that PSYWAR teams attached to the ARVN 22\textsuperscript{nd} Division visited hamlets. These visits included films and gift distribution as well as information about the government pacification program.\textsuperscript{286} U.S. Army Aviation Activity continued to increase the number of psychological warfare missions performed during the month.\textsuperscript{287} It was as a part of this that the first American PSYOP casualty occurred in Vietnam. Captain Alan Harriman of the 14\textsuperscript{th} PSYOP Battalion was killed 15 August 1964 in a helicopter crash. He had been on temporary duty in Vietnam supporting Special Forces PSYOP missions.\textsuperscript{288}

MACV reported that the new Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces printing plant was finally delivered in August. To assist this, a Mobile Training Team based in Japan arrived on 24 August 1964. This team assisted in installation of the new equipment and provided limited training to operators. It was hoped that this would help alleviate the printing

\textsuperscript{284} Viet Cong Morale and Vulnerabilities, 27 January 1965, 8. Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 03 - Insurgency Warfare, Folder 06, Box 13, TTVA.
\textsuperscript{285} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 20-26 September 1964, 43.
\textsuperscript{286} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 22 Aug-28 Aug 1964, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{288} “Capt Alan Bates Harriman,” www.VirtualWall.org/dh/HarrimanAB01a.htm (accessed 27 March 2010)
bottleneck, which would only grow worse as psychological operations continued to expand.\textsuperscript{289}

In September 1964, Bundy sent NSAM 314 to the Secretaries of State and Defense in which President Johnson approved the resumption of operations in Gulf of Tonkin outside the twelve-mile limit and with air cover. Covert operations were to begin after a first DESOTO patrol, but air drop and leaflet operations were to be “secondary in importance.”\textsuperscript{290} Meanwhile, training resumed with PSYWAR/Civic Action courses at the PSYWAR Training Center on 15 October 1964. The plan was for Regional Forces to include one Sergeant from each sector in this course. “Political Warfare courses for company and battalion Political Warfare Officers are scheduled to start on 18 Jan 65,” states an October weekly report.\textsuperscript{291}

Following Operation Lam Son 129 in October, the supporting PSYWAR team in Quang Tri Province transported nearby villagers to the battlefield. Supplemented with radio coverage and newsreels, the goal was to show them the dead VC and captured weapons as proof that the South was defeating the Viet Cong and that support of the VC was futile.\textsuperscript{292} This inevitability of defeat theme was commonly used by both sides to encourage the populace to reject the other. Conversely, the government initiative to show its concern for the people of South Vietnam extended beyond the effects of the war. In September PSYWAR teams distributed blankets, cloth, mosquito nets, roofing material, milk, and foodstuff to victims of Typhoon Violet.\textsuperscript{293}

\textsuperscript{289} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 8 August to 15 August 1964, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{290} National Security Action Memorandum No 314, 10 September 1964, 1. LBJL.
\textsuperscript{291} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 26 September to 3 October 1964, 29.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{293} MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 20-26 September 1964, 42.
An additional example of the PSYWAR and advisory effort to react to changing circumstances was the response to the Montagnard rebellion in the Ban Me Thuot area. In this incident, tribal soldiers killed seventy ARVN and took a number of U.S. hostages. To coordinate the reaction, psychological operations were handled by a PSYWAR committee consisting of representatives of the II Corps G-5, 23rd Division G-5, ARVN PSYWAR Directorate, DARLAC Sector S-5, and U.S. Information Service personnel. This committee reported “effectively coordinated psychological operations in support of the successful effort to quell the rebellion.”

Meanwhile, the instability in Vietnamese PSYWAR leadership continued throughout September. One bright spot was the return of Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Huyen, who held a doctorate in literature from Hanoi University, as the new director. Colonel Huyen had previously been the PSYWAR Director and later Deputy Minister of Information. Regardless, with the revolving door leadership, it was difficult to conduct long-term PSYWAR planning. This turmoil was exacerbated by continued instability at the national level that month with an attempted coup against General Nguyen Khanh, leader of the Military Revolutionary Council that ruled the nation. Post-coup unrest led to public sector strikes and eventually Khanh threatened to crush the labor protests. Except for routine activities, most PSYWAR/Civic Action units suspended operations during the turmoil. MACV reported that “the prevailing attitude of Vietnamese PSYWAR personnel was to wait and see what happens to the government. PSYWAR units and equipment were used throughout the country to publicize the successive announcements of the Military

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295 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 26 September to 3 October 1964, 30.
Revolutionary Council." Once again, psychological operations were undercut by the inability to maintain consistent messaging.

While this played out, the RVNAF Printing and Publication Center became operational at the beginning of October. The MTT calibrated the equipment and trained personnel. However, there was still a reported shortage of printing supplies to run the plant. To overcome this temporarily, these consumables were filled on an emergency basis from MACV stocks.

On 26 June, Prime Minister Khanh had indicated his intent to form a political warfare organization to the U.S. Ambassador and General Westmoreland. The first Republic of China Advisory Group arrived in Saigon on 8 October 1964. This fourteen-man group, led by Lieutenant General Teng Ting Uyan, conducted a ten-day series of briefings and orientations before assuming an advisory role. Their purpose was to develop a Political Warfare Department built on the Republic of China model. This included preparation of a Political Warfare course for the coming year at the PSYWAR Training Center. Although the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense had not yet approved the change to a POLWAR structure, this was an indicator the decision was imminent. The General Political Warfare Department was established by Prime Ministerial Decree on 24 October 1964.

That same week the first elements of the Republic of Korea Military Assistance Group arrived, and eventually fielded its own PSYOP forces in support of the war.

297 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 26 September to 3 October 1964, 32-33.
298 Ibid.
299 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 3 to 10 October 1964, 36.
300 MACV, Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964, 75.
effort. U.S. PSYWAR/Civic Action advisory force expanded as well when a new group of sector S-5 advisors arrived in Vietnam by the end of October. This placed PSYWAR/Civic Action advisors at all levels, and greatly expanded their influence.  

The life of a U.S. PSYOP sector advisor is illustrated by an interview with Marine Captain Joseph B. Knotts, PSYOP/Civic Action Advisor from September 1964 to May of 1965 near Da Nang. Shortly after his return from Vietnam, Knotts stated that he “was responsible for coordination through USOM [U.S. Operations Mission], USIS, and other agencies that we had there such as teams of American Sea Bees who were doing civic action work.” He noted that the MEDCAPS were very popular in the villages. The medical teams were comprised of Vietnamese medical personnel, American medical personnel, or a combination of both. Knotts stated that “we used to send PSYWAR teams with the MEDCAP teams and the MEDCAP would attract the civilian populace and the PSYWAR teams could then talk to them either through the drama teams or they had certain give away programs.” Knotts also worked with provincial radio stations and distributed small transistor radios so people could listen to the provincial broadcast. On the effectiveness of this program, he remarked that “there were a few instances where the Viet Cong conducted raids … to get the radios so that they could not listen to the government broadcast.”

One of the major projects in Knotts’ sector was moving people from land needed for the Marine base at Chu Lai in May 1965. This sensitive subject had to be handled

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302 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 17 to 24 October 1964, 35.
303 Joseph B. Knotts, Interview with Allen B. Richardson, United States Marine Corps History and Museums Division Oral History Project, n.d., 1. TTVA. This interview appears to have been conducted shortly after Knotts returned from his tour while he was at a Marine Corps school in the United States.
304 Knotts, United States Marine Corps History and Museums Division Oral History Project, 3.
305 ibid.
306 ibid.
properly to avoid alienating the families forced to move. Knotts stated, “We received prior notification to the landing at Chu Lai and that there was a certain area of real estate that they wanted for Marine Corps uses down there. My part in this was that of advice. We thought that this should be a totally Vietnamese operation.” This was important, according to Knotts, in maintaining government legitimacy.

At this point radio was the main form of mass communication in South Vietnam. In October, longstanding discussions concluded on developing a nationwide television system. U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and the Agency for International Development (USAID) were the primary agencies involved with the Ministry of Information. A subcommittee of the U.S. Mission Council concluded that “TV could advance US objectives, rural pacification, urban stability, national unity, Free World support, the US presence in Vietnam, and allow the Vietnamese government to better project its image and that of the US to more of the people.”

In the chaos and rapid government changes after the overthrow of Diem, the military situation on the ground deteriorated considerably. This was despite progress in PSYOP training, innovation and execution. Increased infiltration from the North was shifting the balance of power in this vacuum. Hamlets were steadily lost and the number of Chieu Hoi ralliers diminished. With that, intelligence intake was negatively affected. Additionally, ARVN military desertion had increased. To counter that, PSYWAR took the lead on a National Recruitment drive from 23 October to 3 November 1964. More than 170,000 posters and over seven million leaflets were produced in support of this program.

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307 Knotts, United States Marine Corps History and Museums Division Oral History Project, 5.
308 Ibid.
309 MACV, Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964, 176.
Initially focused on providing information about the drive, the second phase presented the “punitive results for the youth who fail to register during the call-up phase.” Simultaneously, the government used propaganda to exploit the one year anniversary of the Diem coup d’état as a national holiday. Military parades and celebrations were held and supplemented by PSYOP product. This was an attempt to build support for a badly shaken government by attacking its predecessor.

Highlighting another side of PSYOP, units once again provided assistance to areas devastated when two more typhoons struck in November 1964. Immediately, PSYOP focus shifted to assisting in humanitarian operations, supporting refugees, and providing relief assistance. The floods and high winds caused by typhoons Iris and Joan ravaged the coast between Quang Nan and Khanh Hoa provinces. USOM field representatives and MACV advisors assisted to ensure that ARVN effectively responded. USIS helped the PSYWAR directorate prepare leaflets to keep victims informed. Due to the isolation of the villages affected, the Vietnamese Navy PSYWAR section became involved in delivering tons of supplies by sea. The response to this disaster dominated PSYWAR activities for the remainder of the year. MACV reported that overall, “the GVN both in Saigon and at the local level is doing an excellent job of psychologically exploiting the situation, the government’s actions, and the VC interference.” Simultaneously, the PSYWAR Training Center began a specialized PSYWAR Techniques course for NCOs. Half of the seventy-four soldiers were from Regional Forces units, which functioned like a

311 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 17 to 24 October 1964, 35.
312 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 31 October to 7 November 1964, 30.
313 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 8 November to 14 November 1964, 37.
territorial militia. Also, a two-month basic PSYWAR course began for enlisted soldiers.\footnote{MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 15 to 21 November 1964, 37-38.} Training such as this helped ensure a basic understanding of psychological operations among a cross-section of the South Vietnamese military.

As the year drew to a close, heliborne loudspeaker use had been fully integrated with ARVN operations. They were used to encourage surrender, remove civilians from the battle area, help refugees, and spread news about the Chieu Hoi program. An innovative use of loudspeaker support for combat operations was developed by the ARVN 7\textsuperscript{th} Division in November. During Operation Thang Long 27, aerial loudspeakers and leaflets warned of a false target area of an upcoming operation. Civilians were told to evacuate along specific routes “where they would be safe and medical assistance would be available.”\footnote{Ibid.} The actual target area received similar appeals, but once the attack began “loudspeaker helicopter shifted to making surrender appeals.”\footnote{MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 21 to 28 November 1964, 35.} This led to fifty-four prisoners being taken by the surprise change of location for the attack.

Throughout 1964, PSYOP MTT's assisted the Vietnamese in developing capabilities in radio management, Viet Cong propaganda research, printing management and production, PSYOP instruction, and motion picture production management. Additionally, during 1964, the US Army Broadcasting & Visual Activity Pacific organized a detachment in Vietnam in 1964, which “contributed immeasurably to the PSYOPs effort in the RVN by filling in the technical advisory void that had existed” in many functions.\footnote{MACV, Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964, 72.} This detachment acted as the headquarters for teams of five personnel deployed on 90 day rotations. MACV noted “distinct progress was discernible in all technical fields” and that
this was a significant improvement in RVNAF PSYWAR capability.\textsuperscript{319} Additionally, the first Tri-Lambretta scooters arrived in December and were distributed in early 1965.\textsuperscript{320} Besides the Chinese and U.S. PSYWAR advisors, sixteen Filipino army officers arrived to provide advice on PSYWAR/Civic Action. They were assigned to RVNAF PSYWAR companies.\textsuperscript{321}

The Chieu Hoi program was specifically looked at as a program of value to merit expansion. One problem was that, regardless of how skillful the Chieu Hoi appeal was, desertion depended on other factors. Viet Cong were unlikely to rally to a government perceived as losing. The precipitous drop in ralliers between 1963 and 1964 bear this out. MACV also considered expanding a bounty program that paid for killing VC. This was discussed at various staff levels, but no decision had been made by the end of the year. This presaged the \textit{Phoenix Program} that later targeted the Viet Cong infrastructure.

Additionally, delays in expanding the psychological operations program were experienced. In part, this could be traced to the ongoing instability. By the end of the year much of the money budgeted for PSYOP was not spent by the GVN. MACV also credited delays to a lack of school-trained advisors. It also noted the entire civic action program of RVNAF needed to be revitalized.\textsuperscript{322}

The first annual MACV history report closed with a cautionary note for 1964. It found that the Vietnamese concentrated too heavily on "gadgetry such as leaflets and loudspeakers while neglecting the advantages of the potentially more productive efforts of Chieu Hoi and the bounty program. This appeared to reflect a preference for the cheap,
material gadget over the more difficult and demanding face-to-face approach with the people themselves. As a result, MACV reported that regardless of the tremendous potential, PSYOP achieved a fraction of its potential during the year. This was blamed on a lack of PSYOP emphasis by the South Vietnamese.

The enemy’s strength in South Vietnam had grown steadily throughout 1964 because of greater infiltration from the North and accelerated recruitment in the South. Communist main forces numbered about 23,000 in January and about 33,000 in December—an increase of almost 50 percent. As their numbers grew, their will to take action increased. As a result government casualties rose from 1,900 in January 1964 to 3,000 in December. “As the year ended, the Viet Cong took the offensive by launching an attack on government forces” across the country.

On 26 January 1965, Barry Zorthian, Chief of USIS in Saigon, presented his plan for USIS activities in the coming year. Themes included National Unity and Create Confidence in the GVN. Zorthian also stated USIS would “determine the aspirations and wants of the people through surveying of hamlets.” The objective of the theme Create Dissension in the Viet Cong Ranks and induce defection, was to drive a “wedge between the hardcore and non-hard core elements.” Among the programs foreseen to support this was “a chain letter designed to cause confusion in the VC ranks, and to spur the letters onward by means of periodic rewards along its chain…make liberal use of horoscopes with subtle messages worked in…or carried on the back of leaflets to create

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323 MACV, Command History, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1964, 78.
324 MACV Records, reel 3, Military Report, 15 to 21 November 1964, 123.
326 Message from USIS to USIA-Field Services Center: Plans and Special Projects for 1965 in Psychological Operations Field, 26 January 1965, 1. Larry Berman Collection (Presidential Archives Research), Folder 15, Box 01, TTVA.
327 Ibid., 3.
interest.” Zorthian also announced the formation of smaller cultural/drama teams. These three to five-person teams, rather than the normal twelve to sixteen-person teams, were easier to transport. In addition to employing several astrologers to write horoscopes and almanacs for PSYOP use, Zorthian also stated, “several magicians are now being interviewed for possible roving assignments countrywide, with a specific message worked into their performances.” In suggesting these, Zorthian was attempting to work within the South Vietnamese cultural framework.

In response to an attack on the U.S. barracks and the airfield at Pleiku on 7 February, President Johnson authorized the air attacks on North Vietnam that became known as Operation Rolling Thunder. Pressure increased on the administration a few days later when another attack killed twenty-three Americans. The uncoordinated nature of the developing MACV, USIS, and CIA psychological operations programs clearly demonstrated the need for an organization to provide overall direction and to avoid both competition and duplication of effort. Additionally, Rowan expressed his belief at the time “that the South Vietnam government’s psychological efforts were floundering” From the American perspective, a drastic change was required.

As discussions over the need to escalate the war continued during the winter of 1965, the role of PSYOP began to assume a higher precedence. With that, the question over how to manage the information program in an expanding war arose. Furthermore, the need for USIS to explain the presence and improve America’s image in Vietnam became vital. In a larger sense, the entire escalation was seen as a PSYACT by

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328 Message from USIS to USIA-Field Services Center, 26 January 1965, 8.
329 Ibid., 4.
330 Carland, Stemming the Tide, 14.
331 U.S. Information Agency, USIA Administrative History, 5-53, USIA Box 1, folder 1, LBJL.
President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara—using military pressure in hopes of creating just the right amount of stress to encourage the North to back down. This failed to take into account the psychological tendency known as the ‘boiled frog’ reaction. Raising the heat slowly, by degrees, gave the North the ability to adapt physically and psychologically to the pressure. This gradual response was based on academic theory rather than real human reactions.

President Johnson on 9 April ordered the deployment of eighteen to twenty-thousand men to support logistics needs, two more Marine battalions, and one air squadron. Significantly, he also ordered minimum publicity of all troop movements to downplay the significance of these increases.\(^{332}\) Despite Zorthian’s professed policy of \textit{maximum candor}, this secrecy in a matter that was clearly visible to all Vietnam-based reporters continued to undermine public information credibility.

Johnson expressed his desire that “leaflet operations should be expanded to obtain maximum practicable psychological effect on the North Vietnamese population.”\(^{333}\) He further authorized an expansion of USIA activities in Vietnam on 4 April 1965. To fund this expansion the president ordered that USIA “re-program funds” and “directed all agencies and departments to provide available funds and resources to the Director of USIA.”\(^{334}\)

Johnson designated the U.S. Information Agency to “coordinate these expanded and intensified activities in keeping with the USIA’s official responsibilities abroad, subject to political guidance from the Secretary of State.”\(^{335}\) Furthermore, Johnson assigned Carl Rowan as advisor to the president on all PSYOP matters in Vietnam as well as foreign

\(^{332}\) National Security Action Memorandum No 328, Bundy to Sec Def/State and Dir CI, 4 April 1965, 2. LBJL.

\(^{333}\) Ibid.

\(^{334}\) National Security Action Memorandum No 330, From Bundy to Sec State/Def Dir USIA/CI, Administrator USAID, 9 April 1965, 1. LBJL.

\(^{335}\) Ibid., 1.
public opinion and gave him direct access to the president. This memo reaffirmed the “responsibility of the Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs-Saigon, for all psychological and informational programs in South Vietnam under the direction of the U.S. Ambassador,” which put Zorthian in charge of the entire information program.  

On 5 May 1965, an expansion of the advisory effort in support of RVNAF was announced. MACV created the Political Warfare Advisory Directorate “to advise and support the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD) of the RVNAF, [and] to advise COMUSMAC [Commander U.S. Military Assistance Command].” The following week, the president approved the formation of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) to oversee and coordinate all American psychological and information activities in Vietnam. The mission of JUSPAO was to support all of these activities as well as oversee the development of the South Vietnamese government’s programs. This included approximately fifty million leaflets per month targeting North Vietnam, five hundred million leaflets per month that the MACV leaflet operations targeted against the enemy in South Vietnam, and nearly fifty million towards friendly targets in the South. Through the USIS, four cultural centers and a book translation program were operating. Meanwhile, the black program continued with marginal results.

This was the background into which the U.S. military began the most concentrated use of PSYOP in its history. Although it had developed doctrine and trained personnel, the situation rapidly exceeded those capabilities. This meant, as is frequently the case in war, solutions had to be improvised and doctrine adjusted to the realities on the ground.

336 National Security Action Memorandum No 330, From Bundy to Sec State/Def Dir USIA/CI, 2.
338 Ibid.
339 USIA Administrative History, 1.
In the period after the overthrow of Diem, development continued on the PSYOP program, yet the general military situation deteriorated rapidly. This necessitated the increased military response that began after the attack on Pleiku.

Map 1: Map of South Vietnam
Figure 2: Simplified U.S. PSYOP Advisory Chart, 1965
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

By the end of 1965 the U.S. was poised to conduct the most intense PSYOP campaign of its history. The administration’s decision to create Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office was novel, but not an unprecedented in organization. It contained many similarities with the Office of War Information structure from World War II, but with greater integration and message discipline at all levels. Civil control and guidance over semi-independent military PSYOP organizations was a hallmark of the American system. Perhaps the most controversial aspect was the level of coordination between public affairs and psychological operations. This system created the perception on the part of some that it was spreading propaganda into the news cycle in the United States and led to calling these briefings the ‘Five o’clock Follies’. Yet, it must be remembered that USIS had been in control of the news output from the embassy for some time and that the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Office of Information- Public Information Division remained independent. There was coordination. However, any perception was in the eyes of the beholder and driven more by the lack of candor from the Lyndon Johnson administration.

As an example of how to provide advice and assistance to a host nation fighting a counterinsurgency, the period 1960 to 1965 in Vietnam offers many useful lessons and an object lesson in the limitations of that relationship. The innovative use of aerial loudspeakers is one positive example. These were used to assist stranded refugees,

340 U.S. Information Agency, USIA Administrative History, 1-19, USIA Box 1, folder 1, LBJL.
341 Five o’clock Follies was the contemptuous nickname for the nightly briefing to reporters.
assist in humanitarian actions, encourage surrender, spread national-level messages, and harass the enemy. Printed matter was ubiquitous. Millions of leaflets, magazines, posters, and other products were disseminated. Most important, however, was the development of the Vietnamese psychological operations capability. Training was widespread, from short classes for Montagnard tribesmen to months-long training for RVNAF officers at schools in the United States. It included development of the all important face-to-face component, denying the Viet Cong a monopoly in this task.

By 1965, the American advisory system was conducting surveys and propaganda analysis, had formed the VIS, placed advisors at all levels, established printing plants, and an active Chieu Hoi program was in place. The U.S. was working in conjunction with the Vietnamese to expand media facilities. A system of centralized control of U.S. messaging and corps level combined PSYOP coordination centers was established. This organization brought together U.S. Operations Mission, Vietnamese Information Service, Civil Affairs teams, PSYWAR teams and sector S-5s and their advisors to coordinate activities and aid in planning. These tasks were accomplished as an adaptation and expansion to a meager doctrine for providing PSYOP support to counterinsurgency operations. Very few in the military had conducted these operations and none on this scale. As a consequence, innovation ruled.

The military advisory effort, while imperfect, had the benefit of depth. Advisors worked at all levels, assessing operations, developing innovative uses for PSYOP, and providing critical support to the South Vietnamese forces. The key in all this was

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maintaining South Vietnamese primacy in these operations. No matter how frustrated an
American advisor might become with his South Vietnamese counterpart, in the final
analysis, this was not his country. The counterpart knew the people, culture, and
language better than any American ever could, especially given the six-month and one-
year tours many served. One effect of this was that frequently the advisor spent half his
tour just trying to understand the situation enough to make appropriate decisions. Unless
this soldier was extremely adept at understanding other cultures, all actions and decisions
by the counterpart would be viewed, subconsciously, through a prism of American
culture. In such a situation, advice on specific actions is less important than advice on
general principals of psychological operations. This may have led to a perception by
some Americans that the ARVN was reluctant to use PSYOP for not accepting specific
advice.

Despite American displeasure with Diem, he was able to hold the country together in
a way his immediate successors were not. This control allowed the pacification campaign
to move forward, however haltingly, and allowed the persuasive effect of PSYOP to
transform words into actions. Looking at the trend of Chieu Hoi ralliers during the period is
instructive to understanding the effect of the coup. Between Tet 1963 and the end of the
year, roughly 11,200 people took advantage of the program. In the entire year 1964, less
than half that number rallied.343 Despite tremendous success in building South
Vietnamese psychological operations capability throughout 1964, it could not overcome
the inherent instability of the nation after November 1963. Without the coup, it is
questionable whether the situation would have degraded so quickly. Contrary to standard

image, VIS and PSYWAR units were operating well in an extensive number of areas during this period. They may not have been perfect, but those lapses were more than made up by their intimate knowledge of the language and culture.

One other lesson is clear, the difficulty of conducting black psychological operations. Even as agent operations continued in the North, the inherent flaw of running these missions in the sealed North meant that most teams were unsuccessful. It is likely that most of the captured teams informed the North Vietnamese of at least the outlines of the SSPL program, thereby demolishing the credibility of the fictional movement.

As Stables lamented, “We always were operating with our hands tied behind our backs simply because of our democratic process.” This exhibits the tremendous difficulty of conducting successful black PSYOP and the contradictions of an open society attempting them. In fact, successful black programs were conducted later in the war. However, “good ideas” may sound effective in a briefing, but are nearly impossible to execute under wartime conditions. This is especially true in a situation where a lack of language and culture training can lead to seemingly insignificant mistakes discrediting an entire program. That is not to argue they should not be considered, but policy makers must understand the inherent limitations. It is clear in this case they did not.

With these caveats, the psychological program was large and functioning when the decisive changes were made to the American level of involvement in 1965. This eventually led that small team from the 246th PSYOP Company to collaborate with AVRN PSYWAR elements in the dusty farming village of Chanh Luu and ultimately to the most

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344 Fred Stables, Interview in Oral History Interviews with Military & CIA Officers who served in MACVSOG OP 39 Covert Psychological Operations Against North Vietnam, by Richard H. Shultz, unpublished manuscript, July 1997, 75. TTVA.
intensive use of PSYOP in American history.

Illustration 1: 1st LT James Paris of USAB&VAPAC conducts helicopter leaflet drop over Binh Duong Province, 28 September 1965. source: NARA.
Illustration 2: Unidentified soldiers of USAB&VAPAC pack leaflet boxes, Vietnam, date unknown. **source:** NARA.

Illustration 3: ARVN 403rd POLWAR Company Cultural Drama Group performs near My Tho, Vietnam, 9 July 1968. **source:** NARA.
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LBJL—Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, www.lbjlib.utexas.edu
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