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AUGUST 1965

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SOME IMPRESSIONS OF
THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS
ON VIET CONG BEHAVIOR

Leon Goure

PREPARED FOR:
THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE/INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of Rand studies that examine the organization, operations, motivation, and morale of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that fought in South Vietnam.

Between August 1964 and December 1968 The Rand Corporation conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with the activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. Reports of those interviews, totaling some 62,000 pages, were reviewed and released to the public in June 1972. They can be obtained from the National Technical Information Service of the Department of Commerce.

The release of the interviews has made possible the declassification and release of some of the classified Rand reports derived from them. To remain consistent with the policy followed in reviewing the interviews, information that could lead to the identification of individual interviewees was deleted, along with a few specific references to sources that remain classified. In most cases, it was necessary to drop or to change only a word or two, and in some cases, a footnote. The meaning of a sentence or the intent of the author was not altered.

The reports contain information and interpretations relating to issues that are still being debated. It should be pointed out that there was substantive disagreement among the Rand researchers involved in Vietnam research at the time, and contrary points of view with totally different implications for U.S. operations can be found in the reports. This internal debate mirrored the debate that was then current throughout the nation.

A complete list of the Rand reports that have been released to the public is contained in the bibliography that follows.

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For a description of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Project and interviewing process, the reader should first consult W. Phillips Davison, *User's Guide to the Rand Interviews in Vietnam*, R-1024-ARPA, March 1972.

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PREFACE

This Memorandum is an interim report covering one phase of an ongoing project. The observation and conclusions presented herein apply only to the time period specified in the Memorandum itself, and later information may reflect changes in Viet Cong motivation and morale caused by new military situations and by deteriorating training and personnel standards among the Viet Cong themselves.

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SUMMARY

A study of a small preliminary sample of 45 interviews of Viet Cong captives and defectors suggests a number of tentative findings. These still have to be checked against a larger collection of relevant interview data and against captured Viet Cong documents.

In its present stage, the study seems to confirm the value of many current or planned programs and objectives. The currently available interviews indicate that the Viet Cong are rather vulnerable to various harassing actions, especially from the air, which can have a significant adverse effect on them. This tentative conclusion suggests that harassment should be a major objective of air and ground operations in Vietnam.

Specifically, the available interviews indicate that the Viet Cong are especially fearful of detection and attack from the air, and that intensified and continuous air surveillance and harassing activities by day and night are likely to have a major disruptive effect on Viet Cong living conditions, morale, movements, and operations. Changes in target marking and attack patterns and procedures, as well as improvements in illumination techniques, seem likely to result in more Viet Cong casualties and to disrupt their attacks.

Air envelopment operations, because of surprise, have a major effect on Viet Cong morale and inflict heavy losses. The intensification of such operations, therefore, may be of significant value.

Artillery fire is feared by the Viet Cong. Because

of good Viet Cong intelligence, however, there seems to be a need for more ARVN artillery and frequent changes in the location of the pieces and concentrations. Such measures would complicate Viet Cong planning and deliver heavier fire on the Viet Cong.

The available interviews suggest that intensified ground patrolling has a significant disruptive effect on Viet Cong operations, and that protracted ground sweeps should be assessed primarily in terms of their harassing impact rather than according to the casualties they inflict on the Viet Cong.

There are strong indications that the Viet Cong would be vulnerable to an effective psychological warfare program designed to exploit specific weaknesses and to encourage defection. Such an effort, however, would have to be supported by GVN policies and programs that would enhance the credibility of GVN appeals and promises in the eyes of the Viet Cong and of the civilian population.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In April 1964 The RAND Corporation, under the sponsorship of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, initiated a study in Vietnam of the morale and motivation of the Viet Cong. The principal source of data was the record of interrogations of Viet Cong captives and defectors by RAND personnel, assisted by Vietnamese civilian interrogators hired for that purpose.

The impressions described in this Memorandum are derived from a sample of 45 interviews conducted during January of this year. The sample is composed of 19 Viet Cong cadres and 26 rank and file, including 12 regroupees (i.e., former members of the Viet Minh movement who went to North Vietnam in 1954-1955 and subsequently infiltrated back into South Vietnam), 21 defectors, and 3 North Vietnamese. The majority of these were captured or had defected during 1964-1965, and many were interviewed within one to three weeks after their capture. A special effort was made to interview captives and defectors from all over Vietnam, so that answers could be obtained from some who would not normally have been sent to Saigon for interrogation, and so that regional differences would be represented.

The investigators are fully aware of the difficulties of securing reliable data, especially under the conditions now prevailing in Vietnam. They recognize that the answers obtained may contain inaccuracies and distortions. Nevertheless they believe that the internal consistency of the

collected information and the corroborative evidence obtained so far from other intelligence sources indicate the essential validity and usefulness of the data for the purposes of this analysis.

A more detailed report will be prepared on the basis of a much larger interview sample. It will further assess the validity of present findings by checking them against a larger collection of relevant interview data and against Viet Cong documents.

The following remarks represent preliminary impressions, whose validity may or may not be confirmed by the additional interview material now under study and by the ongoing analysis of the entire body of data collected.

II. VIET CONG VULNERABILITIES

Viet Cong captives often state that, while the ARVN (Army of Vietnam) has better weapons and equipment, the Viet Cong have higher morale. The available interviews suggest, however, that this morale is just as much the product of the ways in which the Viet Cong conduct their military operations as of careful indoctrination.

The interviews indicate that Viet Cong units usually fight at a time and place of their choosing. Viet Cong soldiers believe that their operations will be carefully prepared, based on good intelligence, and conducted with superior forces. Unlike ARVN soldiers, who are frequently forced to rush from one operation to another, Viet Cong units spend as much as four months of relative inactivity between operations, during which time they are often free from molestation by the ARVN forces. This allows the cadres time and opportunity to propagandize and train their men, to deal with the adverse effects of losses, defeats, and bad living conditions, and to build up their confidence in the next operation.

Despite these relatively favorable conditions, which allow the Viet Cong to control and manipulate the morale of their soldiers, study of the available interviews indicates that the Viet Cong are vulnerable to various actions, which appear to have major adverse effects on their morale and combat effectiveness:

- (a) Disruption of their moves and operations.
- (b) Surprise attacks, which reduce the soldiers' confidence in the Viet Cong's ability to anticipate ARVN operations.

(c) Losses, especially under conditions of surprise attack or defeat.

(d) Harassment of Viet Cong camp sites, causing unplanned moves that increase hardship and disrupt logistic support.

(e) Disruption of their already limited food supply, and of food preparation.

The interviews indicate that these actions, combined with separation from families, hardships, and general war-weariness, are major factors motivating Viet Cong soldiers and even cadres to defect to the GVN or to desert and return to their villages, even if the latter are under Viet Cong control. Viet Cong units send out men to arrest deserters and bring them back.

Although the interviews indicated that the Viet Cong have relied mostly on volunteers to fill their ranks, interviews with recent recruits give the impression that during the past year the Viet Cong may have had increasing recourse to various forms of duress, ranging from drafting through intimidation to outright kidnapping. Many of the captured newer Viet Cong recruits spoke of having been "taken," "captured," or "arrested" and said they had been satisfied with their economic and social conditions of life prior to being recruited. For example, one Viet Cong defector and former member of the Main Force stated:

When I first joined the Viet Cong ranks, the number of volunteers was higher. But from the end of 1963, and particularly during 1964, nearly all the new recruits have been forced into the army. The youth of the Front-controlled hamlets were forced to "perform their duties."

These new recruits are often resentful and unhappy with the privations and dangers of Viet Cong life. They appear to be uninterested in Viet Cong indoctrination and aims.

Most village youths join the Viet Cong for a variety of personal reasons. These seldom seem inspired by political motives. Speaking of the new recruits, several captured Viet Cong cadres noted that their "political understanding is almost nil."

Most of the recruits become politicized in the course of exposure to Viet Cong indoctrination. Several interviewees noted that a "correct" understanding of Viet Cong aims is not acquired until the recruit has undergone considerable exposure to indoctrination. Some of the younger Viet Cong captives, however, claimed to have received no political indoctrination whatsoever while they were in Viet Cong units.

According to the interviews, the conditions that have adverse effects on Viet Cong morale are counterbalanced to varying degrees by such factors as esprit de corps, commitment to Viet Cong aims, a liking for the equalitarian life in Viet Cong units, the efficiency of Viet Cong control over the individual soldier, fear of punishment and, even more, of reprisals against families by the Viet Cong, and above all, fear of mistreatment at the hands of the GVN (government of Vietnam).

III. EFFECTS OF GVN OPERATIONS ON VIET CONG
MORALE AND ACTIVITIES

According to the interviews, the Viet Cong, being generally accustomed to control the timing and occurrence of combat situations, suffered all the more in morale and effectiveness when the ARVN seized the initiative and took effective offensive action. At present effective ARVN offensive ground operations are less frequent than would probably be necessary to keep the Viet Cong off balance. As already noted, the chances of ARVN success are reduced by Viet Cong intelligence on ARVN plans and operations. The interviewees asserted that the Viet Cong, especially the Main Forces, tend to believe themselves a match for any ARVN ground forces of equal size and are frequently able to avoid ARVN ground sweeps, ambushes, and patrols.

AIR POWER

Air power appears to provide the GVN with one offensive system that the Viet Cong cannot match and, more important, whose operations they cannot anticipate.

The great majority of the interviewees stated that, of all the types of operations and weapon systems confronting the Viet Cong, the most difficult for them to deal with and the most disruptive of their activities were those constituting the air threat. According to the interviews, the Viet Cong are aware that air power threatens them with detection and surprise and can reach them in areas where they believe themselves to be relatively safe from ground attack. They are also very

conscious of the difficulties of defending themselves against air attacks with the weapons at their disposal. Typically, one Viet Cong cadre said: "We are more afraid of the planes than of any other weapon."

The specific reasons given by the interviewees for identifying air as the greatest threat were as follows:

1. When on the move and while deploying for attack, the Viet Cong must guard especially against detection and attacks from the air. The appearance of reconnaissance or strike aircraft forces them to interrupt their march, take cover, and remain immobile as long as aircraft remain in the vicinity. Protracted air activity adversely affects Viet Cong morale. "If we had to hide in the forest too long a time," a young Viet Cong captive said, "my comrades and I felt very discouraged."

During Viet Cong deployment for an attack, air activities may delay the process and thus disrupt the Viet Cong's operational timetable. They may sometimes hold up the arrival of supporting units and reinforcements, resulting on occasion in the postponement of the attacks. These effects have been obtained even if the aircraft merely remained in the vicinity of the target.

Flare drops during the deployment of Viet Cong units, or before the attack could close with the ARVN defenders, were said to have resulted in the abandonment of the attacks. For example, one Viet Cong regrouped said: "If we had to break off our attack before it could succeed because aircraft dropped flares, we considered this a defeat, and the unit fighting spirit was impaired."

Most interviewees, however, asserted that once the

Viet Cong have moved up close to or breached the ARVN defenses, the flares actually help the attackers to see their targets and to identify obstacles, as well as to make a rapid withdrawal. The flares were also said to assist the fire of Viet Cong supporting weapons.

2. The majority of the interviewees were of the opinion that aircraft were more likely than anything else to catch the Viet Cong by surprise. Aircraft, one North Vietnamese captive said, for example, "could get to the target much faster, while we were always informed about GVN ground operations five or six days in advance, or even longer."

Several interviewees reported that their units had suffered considerable losses from surprise air attacks. The maximum of damage and casualties, even against dug-in Viet Cong troops, was reportedly caused by 500 lb. bombs, napalm, and bomb clusters. Napalm was most frequently mentioned as the air weapon most feared by the Viet Cong. Some interviewees, however, said that in many instances bombing was either inaccurate or failed to inflict major casualties.

Viet Cong planners attempt to anticipate the probable time required for air to respond to calls for assistance and, when possible, the Viet Cong try to gain their objective before the arrival of strike aircraft. They base their calculations on the importance of the objective, its distance from the airfields, and the "habits" of the Air Force. Miscalculations have proven costly to the Viet Cong, and consequently it would seem that any increases in the timeliness of the arrival of strike

aircraft would reduce the reliability of Viet Cong calculations and their chances of success. The Viet Cong soldiers' confidence in the plans of their leaders might be correspondingly lessened.

3. According to the interviews, aircraft attacking Viet Cong camp areas, or merely circling over them, force the Viet Cong units not only to take cover, but to move to new sites. This disrupts their logistics and operational plans and lowers their morale. In this respect, long-delay fuse bombs were said to be very effective. For example, a Viet Cong squad leader said: "Whenever we had to move our base because delayed fuse bombs were dropped on it, we were confused, worried, and discouraged, because the establishment of a camp involves a lot of hardship, difficulties, and hard work." The Viet Cong, it was said, also fear delayed fuse bombs because they inflict casualties while troops are on the move or on operations. Some interviewees reported that the Viet Cong try to dismantle the bombs before accepting the need to move.

Enforced movements interfere with the food-growing activities of the units and may take them inconveniently far from their food production areas. They tend to delay the arrival of food and ammunition. According to a North Vietnamese cadre: "The lack of food in many cases resulted from the displacement of the troops from one place to another, when the transport unit was unable to catch up with them." It was also reported that even under "normal" conditions the ammunition resupply took from three

to fifteen days. Additional delays may therefore interfere with Viet Cong plans and operations.

4. The monotony and inadequacy of food rations are frequently reported as a major cause of defections from the Viet Cong. The mere appearance of reconnaissance or strike aircraft forces the Viet Cong to cease their food-growing activities, on which they depend to a great extent, scatters or delays their food-carrying and foraging parties, and forces them to extinguish their cooking fires. Some Viet Cong units have been forced to work their fields at night, and units have gone hungry because of the failure of supply columns to reach them. One older Viet Cong cadre said: "We often had to go without food because of aircraft approaching our base." Consequently, the Viet Cong try to cook their meals at dawn and at dusk (i.e., 4-6 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.) when air activity is at its lowest. One interviewee noted: "The GVN planes are not out at such hours and there is no need to cover the fires." This appears to suggest the desirability of varying the timing and patterns of aerial activities and harassment of Viet Cong camps, and of extending them to the hours of darkness. In a few instances, interviewees reported that their units used a type of underground oven called "the Golden Guitar" to cook their food. These ovens were said to hide the light of the fire and to dissipate the smoke by means of a very long horizontal chimney.

Crop damage and defoliation by aerial spray or other methods, if on a sufficient scale, seriously interfere with Viet Cong efforts to grow food. This activity is of vital importance to the Viet Cong, especially in central

Vietnam where it absorbs over one-third of the manpower and up to 50 per cent of the time of many Viet Cong units. The Viet Cong, according to all the interviewees, fear the chemical spray because they believe it to be dangerous to their health. The destruction of Viet Cong crops was reported by some interviewees to force the units to move, to rely more heavily on food brought in from elsewhere, or to attempt to obtain additional food from the population, in some cases by attacking GVN villages and exposing themselves to casualties.

5. According to the majority of the interviewees in the sample, the greatest anxiety and the worst interference with Viet Cong activities are imposed by light reconnaissance aircraft (L-19), because the Viet Cong know that they are used for detection and for calling air and artillery attacks upon them. According to many interviewees, however, the circling and target-marking activities of the L-19s often give them warning of an impending attack and an opportunity to take cover. Changes in these patterns may therefore make the air strikes more effective. The Viet Cong fear fighter-bombers but appear to be generally aware that these seldom attack without prior target identification and marking by the L-19s. If this is true, it seems that an extensive and intensive aerial surveillance campaign would not only uncover targets for attack but also have a major harassing and disruptive effect on Viet Cong life, activities, and operations.

6. Despite indicating a major Viet Cong vulnerability to harassment, especially from the air, the interview sample suggests that the scale and intensity of such operations were not sufficient so far to maintain continuous

offensive pressure on the Viet Cong. Although all the interviewees reported having seen aircraft, and many claimed to have been harassed or attacked by them at one time or another, some said that these attacks happened only infrequently. A number of our interviewees mentioned Viet Cong units, headquarters, and training camps that had remained undisturbed for long periods. The interviews indicate that the Viet Cong units generally believe themselves to be safe from aerial detection, even on the move, when they are in heavy jungle. Several interviewees reported that their units did not bother to build air-raid shelters or foxholes in terrain of this kind.

In answer to questions concerning the probable effects of increased air activities in Vietnam, especially by L-19s, fighter-bombers, and helicopters, most of the interviewees thought they would greatly complicate Viet Cong life and operations, especially if these activities were extended to nighttime. The interviews thus appear to suggest the desirability of making harassment of the Viet Cong a major objective of air (and when possible, ground) operations in Vietnam.

It was found that the Viet Cong are generally familiar with various types of aircraft and that, for example, they distinguish between the L-19s and transport aircraft. They tend to ignore the latter and often do not bother to disperse or to take cover at their approach. This suggests that transport aircraft may be profitably used in a reconnaissance role. Alternatively, the harassment and disruption of Viet Cong activities may be increased if ways are found to make them fear transport aircraft and

other ostensibly harmless planes as much as they fear fighter-bombers and L-19s at present.

It is noteworthy that there is a widespread belief among the Viet Cong and the population, fostered in part by Viet Cong propaganda, that all aircraft in Vietnam are flown by U.S. personnel.

HELICOPTERS

The interviews also indicated that the Viet Cong are concerned over the speed with which the ARVN can move with the aid of helicopters, and over the surprise that heliborne attacks can achieve. ARVN air envelopment operations were said to have broken up Viet Cong attacks, and to have encircled and severely mauled Viet Cong units on the move. These units had to be withdrawn from combat for periods ranging from one to three months, in order to rebuild their morale. Some interviewees said that combined air strikes and heliborne surprise attacks were most likely to inflict severe defeats on the Viet Cong.

While the interviewees were impressed by the effects of heliborne operations, many of them asserted that armed helicopters inflicted relatively few casualties. Their noise, especially when they fly in a group, was said often to prevent surprise and to give the Viet Cong time to take cover and prepare to fire on them. About one-third of the interviewees in our sample boasted that their units had shot down or damaged helicopters and that this had been a great boost to their morale. A number of interviewees asserted, however, that the Viet Cong fear the helicopters because they are more maneuverable than

fixed-wing aircraft and can fire in any direction. The former can attack the Viet Cong hiding under trees or in trenches, while conventional aircraft, by lining up on their target, sometimes allow the Viet Cong to anticipate where the strike will occur, and are less effective in strafing dug-in Viet Cong troops.

ARTILLERY

Artillery was also cited as one of the GVN weapon systems that the Viet Cong fear. It inflicts losses on the Viet Cong when attacking or moving in the open. Harassing artillery fire on Viet Cong bases has a significant adverse effect on Viet Cong morale by striking unexpectedly and by disrupting Viet Cong rest and activities. Many interviewees, however, claimed that artillery inflicts relatively few casualties because its fire is usually not very heavy and because the Viet Cong are frequently dug in or clear of the target areas.

When possible, the Viet Cong try to camp out of range of the artillery, whose locations and range they usually know. Viet Cong operational plans take into account this information as well as the probable time required for the artillery to respond to fire calls. More artillery pieces and frequent changes in positions and concentrations, therefore, may add to the effectiveness of artillery and also complicate Viet Cong plans.

THE M-113

A number of interviewees, most of whom had been members of Viet Cong regional and guerrilla forces, reported

that they feared the M-113s and that their units had suffered heavy losses in their encounters with them. Viet Cong Main Force units, however, appear to be better equipped with weapons able to deal with ARVN armor, and these are carried along when they expect to encounter it.

GROUND SWEEPS

When the ARVN succeeds in ambushing Viet Cong forces or when they patrol intensively and in depth, Viet Cong activities are disrupted and their morale declines. In this connection, several interviewees reported that, although they had advance warnings of large ARVN ground sweeps and avoided being trapped by them, they remembered the protracted sweeps (i.e., those lasting a week or longer) as one of their worst experiences. During these, their units had continually to remain on the move, were attacked from the air, and frequently had to go hungry. It is evident that the effectiveness of protracted ground sweeps should be assessed not so much in terms of the casualties they inflict on the Viet Cong as in terms of their harassing and disruptive effects on Viet Cong morale, living conditions, plans, and operations.

IV. SOME EFFECTS ON CIVILIANS

We also looked into the question of collateral damage and casualties arising from ARVN air and artillery attacks on villages, to the extent that they occur, in order to find out how the population reacts to them. Our impressions may be subject to some distortions since our sources were captured Viet Cong, and we have not as yet been able to organize an interview program in the villages. Moreover, our present sample is too small to permit any definitive conclusions. It can be noted, however, that none of our interviewees cited civilian damage as an immediate motive for joining the Viet Cong. In answer to direct questions, only one admitted knowing other Viet Cong who said they had joined for this reason. In fact, several of the captive Viet Cong cadres and regroupes denied outright that attacks on villages were a major cause of people joining the Viet Cong. They were said to be a less important factor in motivating villagers to join the Viet Cong than, for example, the desire to avoid the ARVN military draft, resentment over bad local administration, or a search for adventure. The interviewees, however, indicated that the Viet Cong try to exploit the attacks to incite the villagers against the GVN. This probably has some influence on the motivation of persons predisposed to support the Viet Cong.

The villagers' attitude to attacks was compared in several instances by interviewees to that of a "fish on a cutting board." Their reactions to GVN attacks vary,

of course, depending on circumstances and past experiences as well as on the degree to which they believe them to be justified by Viet Cong presence or activities. According to the interviews, they fear attacks, especially when Viet Cong units are in the villages, and build shelters to protect themselves against them. As a result, it was said, civilian casualties are generally low, although property damage may be extreme. Some villagers have openly blamed the Viet Cong for GVN attacks that were obviously provoked by the Viet Cong presence or by such activities as firing at passing aircraft. Others were said to have been angered at what they may have considered unjustifiable GVN attacks. The villagers are reputed to resent crop spraying strongly, especially when it leads to the destruction of orchards, and all the more when the GVN fails to tell them what to do and does not take adequate measures to compensate or care for those whose crops have been damaged.

The extent to which adverse effects on civilian attitudes may become translated into anti-GVN activities is not clear. While many Viet Cong cadres claimed that the villagers blame the attacks on the GVN regardless of circumstances and as a result "work even harder for the Viet Cong," some of the newer recruits, whose villages had been attacked in the previous year, said that the villagers were very upset, frightened, and saddened by the attacks, but that they tended to resign themselves to them as one of the unavoidable horrors of war. When they could afford it, they tried to move to GVN-controlled areas. The Viet Cong, it was said, often prohibit such

moves, and there appears to be no GVN program to convince the villagers they will get good treatment if they take refuge in GVN-controlled areas. Of course the population in Viet Cong-controlled areas, which are most frequently attacked, is already extensively mobilized to support the Viet Cong so that the effects of air or artillery attacks on its behavior are difficult to determine.

The interviewees asserted that the GVN seldom warns the people of possible attacks, explains the reasons for them, or tells them what to do. There appears to be no well-planned and integrated campaign, supported by appropriate economic and psychological warfare programs, to mitigate possible adverse effects of the attacks or to exploit the villagers' fear of them to channel their behavior in desirable directions.

The interviews make it very evident that the attitude of the villagers will be largely determined by the degree of effective local control and security provided by one side or the other, as well as by the treatment they receive at the hands of the local authorities and security forces. This generalization seems to be supported by the following statement from a young Viet Cong captive:

Both sides behave badly. The Viet Cong often threaten the people, but the GVN soldiers passing through my village stole chickens. The villagers think it is wise to take sides with the winning party.

The Viet Cong appear to have an advantage in that, when it comes to punishment for noncompliance with demands or directions, the villagers are more fearful of them than

of the government. They seem to give greater credence to the Viet Cong's ability to execute implied or overt threats. Consequently, the villagers tend to see the government as the "winning party" primarily in those areas where it can fully protect the population against all forms of Viet Cong attacks, threats, and pressures.

V. CONCLUSIONS

One cannot deny that the Viet Cong are a strong and resourceful foe. Much of their strength derives from good organization and discipline and from their ability to integrate effectively a wide variety of activities and techniques and to focus these on the attainment of clearly-defined goals. Although the interviews indicate that certain weapons, tactics, and operations have a significant effect on the Viet Cong, their impact will depend not only on the scale and intensity with which they are brought to bear, but also on the way they are integrated into and supported by a range of political, psychological, economic, and social programs designed to exploit fully their effects on the Viet Cong. For example, Viet Cong morale may significantly decline as a result of intensified aerial surveillance and harassment, but the rate of Viet Cong defections will continue to depend largely on the treatment the GVN accords to its Viet Cong captives and defectors.

Similarly, aerial harassment and attacks may directly lower the scale, intensity, and effectiveness of Viet Cong activities, but in the end only the ground forces can transform the Viet Cong from hunters into hunted, defeat them decisively, and establish complete control and security over the population. It follows that the main purpose of air harassment is to create favorable conditions for more effective GVN ground offensive operations.

If present impressions are borne out by the subsequent findings of our ongoing study, we shall have to

conclude that the Viet Cong are vulnerable in certain specific ways and that major opportunities do exist for an effective harassment campaign which would significantly reduce their morale and inhibit their mobility, initiative, and operations.