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Project CHECO was established in 1962 to document and analyze air operations in Southeast Asia. Over the years the meaning of the acronym changed several times to reflect the escalation of operations: Current Historical Evaluation of Counterinsurgency Operations, Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations and Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations. Project CHECO and other U. S. Air Force Historical study programs provided the Air Force with timely and lasting corporate insights into operational, conceptual and doctrinal lessons from the war in SEA.

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PROJECT CHECO

Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations

REPORT

USAF Civic Action IN REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

1 APRIL 1968

HQ PACAF

Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division

Prepared by: LEE BONETTI
Project CHECO
7th AF, DOAC

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS PACIFIC AIR FORCES
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96553

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FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Edward C. Burtenshaw

EDWARD C. BURTENSHAW, Col, USAF
Chief, CHECO Division
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INTRODUCTION

Divided into two periods, the Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program in South Vietnam in the initial phase was limited largely to informal, voluntary humanitarian activities, medical aid, and some construction projects. In the second phase, during May 1966, Civic Action became an official part of the Air Force mission. Its meaning and scope were defined, and an organizational structure was established to carry out the mission which, in importance, was considered second only to combat operations. The Air Force resources committed to Civic Action were limited, however, and the program needed greater professionalism, which would have allowed a more meaningful contribution to the GVN Revolutionary Development Program.

Air Force Civic Action was only a small part of the overall U.S. effort to help the Revolutionary Development Program. This program of "nation-building" was confronted with formidable problems of armed aggression, poverty, corruption and apathy. It was being carried out in a country of 66,000 square miles and 16 million people whose race, culture, and language were dramatically different from those of the United States. While the majority of the population was ethnic Vietnamese, there were also substantial minority groups of Chinese and Cambodians, plus some 800,000 primitive mountain tribesmen known as "Montagnards." A history of mutual antipathy existed between the Vietnamese and Montagnards, and the latter had not yet been absorbed into the mainstream of Vietnamese life. More than 75 percent of the population was Buddhist, approximately 10 percent Roman Catholic, and the remainder belonged to various exotic sects. Religious animosity had been a contributing factor

in the political turmoil disrupting the nation for years. 1/

The Vietnamese peasant lived in a small world limited by the bamboo hedge around his village. There was a proverb to the effect that "government ends at the village gate." The peasants' loyalties were to their families, their land, and their spiritual world. They had little feeling of identification with the central government. One of the aims of the Revolutionary Development Program was to forge a link between these peasants in the village and the central government. Villages, normally consisting of four - six hamlets, had been historically the most important organization for local government. Above the village level was the district--similar to counties in the United States. The next higher government subdivisions were the 44 provinces. 2/

A knowledge of the historical, political, and cultural facts of life in Vietnam was essential to Civic Action personnel. It was also necessary to anyone who wanted to understand the GVN Revolutionary Development Program and the role played by the Air Force in support of the "other war."

CHAPTER I

POLICIES

"Too few Americans - and too few officials in developing nations really comprehend what military civic action means. Essentially it means using indigenous military forces for non-traditional military projects -- projects that are useful to the local population in fields such as education, public works, health, sanitation, agriculture-- indeed, anything connected with economic and social progress."

Robert S. McNamara

The 7AF Civic Action Program was transformed during 1966, from a voluntary, humanitarian effort to an official program. The impetus for change came from President Lyndon B. Johnson, who stated in his February 1966 Foreign Aid message to Congress, the five-year authorization for military assistance would provide greater emphasis on Civic Action programs, in which local military personnel would play a more constructive role in their society and establish better relations with the civilian population. Further motivation for the Civic Action Program came during the February Honolulu Conference, when the President committed all agencies of the government-- including the military-- to actively participate and stimulate the Government of Vietnam (GVN) in its revolutionary development efforts. 1/

The Civic Action Program received high-level support, and the USAF Chief of Staff stated:

"Second to combat operations our efforts in the area of civic action are the most valuable contribution we can make to the defeat of communist insurgency, the establishment of solid and progressive governments, and lasting peace in SEA."

The Commander, 7AF, told his staff the "capabilities and energies of the USAF would be used to implement a positive Civic Action Program at each base in South Vietnam." These programs were to be integrated into the overall 7AF Civic Action Program which would be geared to the GVN Revolutionary Development Program. 2/

Official involvement of the Air Force in an essentially non-military role was understandable when viewed in context with U.S. military strategy for Vietnam. This strategy involved three interdependent undertakings, which together formed an integrated concept for the conduct of operations. The three elements of the overall strategy were: 3/

* Take the war to the enemy in the North by unremitting but selective application of U.S. air and naval power.

* Expand offensive military operations in South Vietnam to seek out and destroy communist forces and infrastructures.

* Extend the secure areas of South Vietnam by civil-military operations and provide assistance to the GVN in building an independent, viable, noncommunist society.

The "second war"--that is, the war for the hearts and minds of the people of South Vietnam--was initially a civilian operation under the direction of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). During that period, the Military Civic Action Program received its guidance from the Civic Action Division of the MACV Psychological Operations Directorate. Then, in May 1967, MACV was given the responsibility for single manager direction of all U.S. civil/military activities in support of Revolutionary Development in

Vietnam. COMUSMACV was assisted in discharging his responsibilities by the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (CORDS), Mr. Robert W. Komer, who carried the personal rank of Ambassador. 4/

The role played by PACAF in the Military Civic Action Program in Vietnam was limited largely to manning, funding, and in securing transportation for the Base Civic Action Officers. In July 1967, PACAF forwarded broad policy guidance on the Civic Action programs for Korea (5AF), Thailand (13AF), the Republic of the Philippines (13AF) and the Republic of Vietnam (7AF). The directive discussed the objectives of the program, priorities of action, manning, and funding. 5/

Under operational control of MACV, the 7AF developed a Civic Action Program comprising three phases: 6/

MILITARY CIVIC ACTION: Use of preponderantly local national military forces on projects of value to the local populace, at all levels;

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Programs to enhance mutual respect and confidence between military forces and the civilian population surrounding the military installations through committees or councils;

HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES: Actions by individuals or groups which involve direct donations of money, food, clothing, etc., for needy Vietnamese institutions.

Objectives of the 7AF Civic Action Program were:

1. Initiate, develop, and implement high impact Civic Action projects which:

   a. Complement and stimulate revolutionary development efforts of the GVN;

b. Improve the socio-economic status of the local populace;

c. Gain support of the local populace for the GVN;

d. Improve the image of the RVNAF in the eyes of the local populace.

2. Stimulate and develop within the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF):

a. An understanding of the necessity for participation in civic action projects;

b. A capability to initiate and implement Civic Action projects;

3. Enhance the prestige of the USAF and U.S. and improve the understanding of the U.S. role in Vietnam.

4. Assist in emergency relief of suffering of the local populace.

To eliminate any misconceptions that the 7AF Civic Action effort was simply a "giveaway program," the philosophy of the program was made known to all personnel. Participants were repeatedly reminded that whenever possible Civic Action projects should be carried out together with Vietnamese forces or governmental agencies. This would contribute to the ultimate objective of establishing a political and emotional link between the Vietnamese people and the central government. This article, appearing in the August 1967 issue of the 7AF Civic Action Newsletter, emphasized the point: [8]

> *"Viet Cong propaganda to the effect that the GVN is unable to care adequately for the needs of its people and therefore must rely heavily on ever increasing assistance from the U.S. is being effectively countered in our Civic Action program by our policy of remaining in the background as much as possible and letting the Vietnamese direct and be credited with the entire effort. Our efforts should continue in this direction and we must be ever careful not to take an action that tends to validate the Viet Cong argument.*

"A Civic Action Program that is motivated only by humanitarian or altruistic principles and ignores the true purpose of Civic Action in assisting and strengthening the host government has little or no value. A Civic Action program or project that is conducted independent of existing government facilities or agencies is likely to alienate the people even more against their government. It is only natural to expect the people to question the efficiency and concern of their own government when foreigners are able to offer services their government cannot. Therefore we must constantly impress on our people that our primary mission is to assist the GVN in extending its services and not merely to relieve the pain and suffering of the people or to improve their socio-economic conditions."

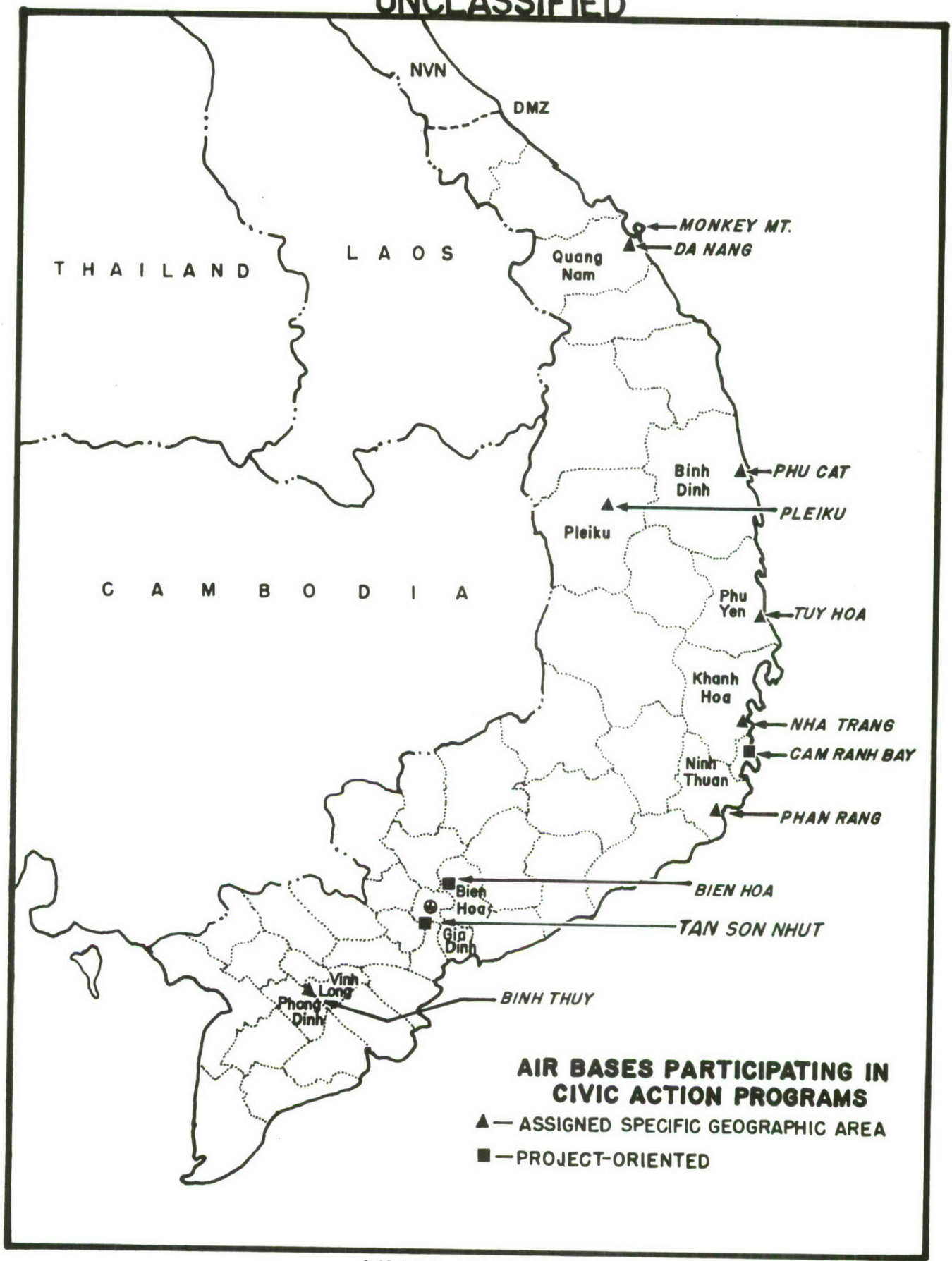
CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL

Seventh Air Force Civic Action policies and guidance gradually evolved during the months following official recognition of the program. Prior to 1966, the USAF Civic Action Program had been carried out on a person-to-person or unit-action basis with no formal reporting system. Some of the projects were well-documented, but frequently, official records were non-existent. In May 1966, the Political Warfare Directorate of the Air Force Advisory Group (AFAG) was tasked to formalize the Seventh Air Force Civic Action efforts into a coordinated, comprehensive program. 1/

In August 1966, the Air Force Advisory Group prepared a staff study which stated that the 7AF Civic Action Program could not be effectively implemented and monitored with current resources. According to this study, primary responsibility for the program had been delegated to the Political Warfare Directorate, AFAG, as an additional duty. The Directorate manning was adequate only to perform its advisory function to the Vietnamese Air Force Political Warfare Directorate. Recommendations of the study were: (1) 7AF should create a separate staff office for Civic Action and assign Civic Action officers to all combat support groups; or (2) Increase manning and resources of the Political Warfare Directorate, AFAG, to perform the Civic Action function. In the latter case, the Directorate would be required to function in a dual capacity; i.e., as VNAF advisors and as a 7AF staff agency. This would require supervision and liaison with 7AF bases where no VNAF units were assigned and, therefore, responsibility for bases and units

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Figure 1

for which the AFAG was not usually concerned. As recommended by the study, the first option was adopted by 7AF. 2/

In September 1966, the newly-created Civic Action Division in the Directorate of Plans became the office of primary responsibility for 7AF Civic Action in South Vietnam. Initially, the headquarters staff consisted of one officer, joined shortly by an enlisted man. Thirteen officers and 13 airmen were requested to man the Civic Action Program; these spaces were approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). By the end of 1966, PACAF had authorized six officers and six airmen: two each at headquarters and one each at Da Nang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, and Tan Son Nhut. The other bases were authorized an additional duty Base Civic Action Officer (BCAO). In April 1967, these bases were also authorized a full-time BCAO. Manning was completed by mid-1967. Also, overhire authorization was received for a Civic Action Liaison Officer (Interpreter-Translator, VGS-11) for each base, pending formal manning increase approval. Utilization of these spaces was expected to eliminate many of the problems involved in direct contact with the local population. At the end of 1967, ten liaison officers had been authorized but only six were on duty. 3/

The initiation, development, and implementation of the 7AF Civic Action Program was to be an across-the-board staff effort, with each staff agency playing a major role in providing the program with 7AF assets. The Civic Action Division, DCS/Plans, would not carry the entire Civic Action workload, but would provide the focal point in 7AF Headquarters to continuously monitor the program and insure that any problems arising would be brought before the

Civic Action Council for resolution. Civic Action Councils at Headquarters and at all bases in South Vietnam were established in March 1967, to serve as coordinating agencies for the Civic Action Program. The 7AF Civic Action Council included the Chief of Staff, who served as Chairman, and representatives from Operations, Plans, Personnel, Intelligence, Materiel, Chaplain, Comptroller, Surgeon, Civil Engineer, Information, 600th Photo Squadron, Judge Advocate, Air Force Advisory Group, and the 834th Air Division. Councils at base level included in their membership, representatives of the parent Air Force tactical air wing, Air Force Advisory Team, if present, and at least these base staff agencies: Plans, Operations, Information, Comptroller, Intelligence, Civil Engineer, Surgeon, Chaplain, and Judge Advocate. 4/

In their enthusiasm for the program, some Wing Commanders recommended placing the Civic Action function at Wing level to insure greater support for its activities. USAF/PACAF, in a standard deviation to AFM 26-2 applicable to RVN, had approved placement of the Civic Action function as a division in the Combat Support Group. Since most Civic Action activities and projects required efforts of the entire Air Force base, rather than those of a specific unit, 7AF Civic Action Division believed this function properly belonged on the staff of the Support Group Commander. Furthermore, the majority of organizations with which Civic Action projects were coordinated were in the Combat Support Group (Chaplain, Civil Engineer, etc.). 5/

When the Director, Manpower and Organization, 7AF requested the viewpoint of Wing Commanders, the majority stated the function rightfully belonged

to the Combat Support Group. They felt placement of Civic Action activities on the Wing staff would complicate the chain of command and lines of coordination, as well as derogating the Wing Commander's concentration on his primary mission. Consequently, the Civic Action mission remained assigned to the Combat Support Group at all bases except at Da Nang, where it was formally assigned to Wing level, and at Nha Trang, where it was informally assigned to Wing level, at the request of the respective Wing Commanders. 6/

At Headquarters level, there was considerable discussion about combining psychological operations and Civic Action to attain more effective results for the Civic Action Program. Although Psychological Operations did not always end in a Civic Action-related activity, Civic Action always had a psychological result. Therefore, by defining certain psychological objectives and desired results, Civic Action could result in dynamic opportunities to obtain cooperation and intelligence from the people. Since current Air Force manning did not provide for a Psychological Operations Officer to give advice in this area, coordination and combined planning were effected through the local CORDS representative. This method had not proved entirely satisfactory, but improvement was anticipated in the future. As far as combining Civic Action and Psychological Operations at Headquarters 7AF, however, this seemed unlikely. 7/

The Civic Action Division took the position that Community Relations was not a function of a Military Civic Action Program and properly belonged in the Directorate of Information. Civic Action was designed to support the GVN Revolutionary Development Program, as differentiated from activities which were intended to promote the USAF image. The true goal of Military Civic Action could be pursued more effectively, if humanitarian and other

Community Relations activities were divorced from the program.[8]

Of the four officers, who had been assigned to the Civic Action Division since its formation, the first two had an Administrative AFSC 7016, and no specialized training in the Civic Action field. The two subsequent officers were assigned against a Special Air Warfare AFSC 0316, although their primary Air Force Specialty Codes were 7516 and 7316. One of them had attended the six-week Psychological Operations Orientation Course conducted by the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the other had attended a two-week Counter-insurgency Course conducted at Eglin Aux Field #9, Florida (Hurlburt Field).[9]

The Unit Manning Document authorized the BCAO as a Captain, AFSC 7024. This was considered an assignment of convenience, since the position more properly called for a Special Air Warfare Officer, AFSC 0316. Efforts were being made to upgrade the authorization to field grade, as the BCAO needed sufficient rank to deal effectively with high-level VNAF, GVN, and U.S. officials. Also, a mature individual could more easily gain the respect of the Vietnamese, since they held age in high esteem. At the end of 1967, Civic Action field staffing consisted of three majors, five captains, one 1st Lieutenant, and one Chief Warrant Officer. The Base Civic Action NCO slot was upgraded on the UMD from E-4 to E-5; at the end of the year, the staffing consisted of five E-4s, four E-5s, and one E-7.[10]

None of these officers and NCOs had any Civic Action training prior to their arrival in Vietnam. Some of the BCAOs had subsequently attended the one-week MACV/CORDS Advisors Orientation Course on the Revolutionary Development Program and the function of CORDS, which was conducted by the Joint

U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO). Headquarters 7AF requested PACAF to arrange for future BCAOs destined for Vietnam duty to attend the two-week Psychological Operations and Civic Action Course conducted at Hurlburt Field which had begun operations on a regular schedule in November 1967. This was to be followed by attendance at the local MACV/CORDS course during the BCAOs second month in-country. This training represented minimum requirements, but to be truly effective, a BCAO required an extensive background in Vietnamese history and culture, as well as a Vietnamese language capability. Attendance at the Defense Language Institute was considered highly desirable to improve communication between the BCAO and the Vietnamese with whom he was in almost daily contact. In addition to his professional qualifications, the position of BCAO called for a well-adjusted, highly motivated, flexible individual who possessed the necessary empathy for working with the Vietnamese. The departing BCAO was the logical choice to introduce the new BCAO to appropriate local contacts and brief him on peculiarities of his area of responsibility. For this reason, an overlap of two weeks was provided whenever possible. 11/

An urgent need also existed for an orientation program to provide greater understanding of Vietnamese culture and history among 7AF personnel. A program of this type was of particular value to Civic Action volunteers and Civic Action Unit Coordinators, who were assigned this responsibility as an additional duty. 12/

Besides the problem of training, rapid expansion of Civic Action activities made it virtually impossible for the two-man office to do little more

than coordinate projects, and tell volunteer workers to go out and assist the people and the GVN. The lack of technical assistance and guidance prevented development of a professional type program.

At the PACAF Civic Action Conference to be held early in 1968, 7AF intended to propose formation of a trained team capable of conducting/or directing Civic Action activities at each installation. One suggested proposal for composition of the team was as follows: 13/

GRADE	TITLE	SPECIALTY AREA	AFSC
Major	Director of Civic Affairs	International Politico-Military Affairs	0216
1st Lt-Capt	Political & Psychological Warfare Advisor	Special Air Warfare	0316
MSgt/SSgt	NCOIC of Civic Actions	Pavement Superintendent	55191
TSgt	Team Leader	Medical Service Technician	90270
SSgt	Team Leader	Structural Technician	55270
SSgt	Team Leader	Structural Technician	55270
SSgt	Team Leader	Physical Condition Specialist	74150
SSgt	Administrative		70250/ 70270
VGS-11	Vietnamese Civic Action Liaison Officer		

With such a team established at each base, the Director of Civic Affairs would concentrate on working with intelligence and security personnel and GVN/CORDS representatives. He would help identify specific areas of need and

formulate plans for a constructive and comprehensive approach to them. In addition to actual accomplishment of a project, there were important psychological benefits to be obtained by influencing the thoughts, beliefs, and practices of the Vietnamese people--an area currently being neglected. The Political and Psychological Warfare Advisor would concentrate on this area by developing and advising on propaganda programs aimed at pacification of hostile elements and areas; counteracting enemy propaganda aimed at U.S. forces; and favorably presenting and following up Civic Action activities, so that the greatest possible benefits and publicity could be obtained. The NCO would be responsible for project accomplishment, team direction, coordinating all volunteer activity, and securing and dispensing supplies. To assist in this job, he would have four team leaders, who would function as in-the-field directors of Air Force unit volunteers. 14/

CHAPTER III

RESOURCES

In addition to several official and unofficial fund sources, materials and supply resources were available to 7AF for the Civic Action Program, from numerous government and private agencies, as well as reclaimable items from the base scrap area. Serious shortages of building materials, especially lumber, however, existed in this war-devastated country. In addition to helping the peasant identify with the central government, Civic Action was designed to make the hamlets self-sufficient. This goal would be defeated by a "hand-out" policy, which fostered dependence on the continued U.S. presence. Consequently, the 7AF Civic Action Division stressed the importance of utilizing indigenous materials whenever possible, and the necessity of improvising, adapting, substituting, and simplifying methods and operations. For example, the severe lumber shortage could have hampered construction of refugee housing at Cam Ranh Bay and Tuy Hoa Air Bases. However, a plentiful supply of sand was locally available and a simple brick-manufacturing project was initiated. The Vietnamese quickly learned to make these bricks and the problem of construction material was solved. 1/

There were several funds available in every province to finance high-impact projects. USAID had a regional fund (Corps area) and a sector fund (Province) that could be used to supplement finances for one-time-only type projects. The CORDS Senior Advisor had a fund available for joint projects with the GVN, and the Province Chief had a GVN Civic Action fund. Each of the funds available at the province level was usually limited to about

50,000$VN per month. Virtually all financing of Air Force Civic Action projects, however, was expected to come from the MACV Imprest Fund, appropriated funds, and the Civic Welfare Funds described in these paragraphs:[2/]

In March 1967, MACV established a revolving cash fund for US/FWMAF to finance, in coordination with local MACV advisors, high impact military Civic Action and psywar projects that required rapid accomplishment and for which other funds were not available. The initial grant would be in the amount of 200,000$VN per division and 100,000$VN per separate brigade or similar-sized unit. A unit's yearly expenditures ordinarily would not exceed the basic authorization times the number of months it was deployed in Vietnam for that year. A 40,800,000$VN force-wide limitation was imposed on the 1967 calendar year ceiling for disbursements from this Imprest Fund.[3/]

By August 1967, the Air Force had been provided the following funds:

Location	Amount ($VN)	
Hq 7AF	200,000	(for disbursement to Pleiku, Phan Rang, Binh Thuy, Tuy Hoa, and Phu Cat)
Tan Son Nhut AB	200,000	
Bien Hoa AB	100,000	
Cam Ranh Bay	100,000	
Nha Trang	100,000	
Da Nang	100,000	

Since the increase in Civic Action activity brought with it a commensurate increase in manhours required to disburse the Hq 7AF fund, MACV approved establishment of separate funds at the five bases serviced by its headquarters. In August 1967, Pleiku, Phan Rang, Binh Thuy, Tuy Hoa, and Phu Cat were authorized their own Imprest Fund account and could correspond

directly with the MACV Comptroller. This authorization extended only through 31 December 1967. Availability of CY 68 funds would determine if present authorizations would continue next year. 4/

In addition to this piaster fund, BCAOs also had access to 7AF appropriated funds. In September 1967, $100,000 (P456) had been transferred from the Air Force Advisory Group to 7AF Civic Action. In December, this amount was increased to $426,000 by PACAF, however, no withdrawals were made from this fund in 1967. To avoid duplication, it was considered advisable to hold up disbursement until after the calendar year 1968 GVN Budget and Revolutionary Development project list had been prepared. 5/ Accordingly, the first revision to the FY 1968 Financial Plan contained a request for $1,230,400 to support the Civic Action Program.

These funds were to be used as a last resort after all other funds, material, and supply resources had been carefully examined, and other assistance was not available. They would be used to begin pilot programs in agriculture, animal husbandry, water-well development, and in other areas that would assist the Vietnamese economy. Training programs of local indigenous personnel would be started which might require special schooling in Vietnam or other countries. High impact projects in construction, irrigation, and education, along with improvements in health and medical training, would be supported by these funds. Programs that expanded more than was planned, or into related areas, were to be transferred to USAID or other appropriate agencies upon reaching $3,000 to limit Air Force fund investment and participation going beyond its capability. However, there could be instances where

higher participation might be considered advisable. Funds would be controlled by the 7AF Civic Action Council, Civic Action Division, and Directorate of Programs. 6/

In addition to funds officially provided for Civic Action activities, the generosity of the American public and base personnel made possible another source of funds. Air Force personnel or units frequently received funds and supplies from private individuals or organizations in the U.S. To insure an equitable distribution of funds where they could achieve maximum impact, it was recommended that a Civic Welfare Fund be established, where applicable, at each base. The fund was to be administered by a council consisting of the Chaplain (Chairman), the BCAO (custodian), and one other voting member appointed by the Base Commander. Any withdrawal of money was to be approved by the Base Civic Action Council. All projects or causes desired by units or individuals would be honored by the Base Civic Action Council, within the purview of the Civic Action concept and according to priorities. If donors did not express use of their donations for a specific activity, the Base Civic Action Council would be the final authority in this matter, and would inform donors how their contributions were being used. Although MACV had issued a directive prohibiting requests for donations by individuals or units, there were no prohibitions against answering inquiries from organizations or individuals on how they could help. There was also a MACV Chaplain fund--not designated for specific projects--that was formed as a depository for donations received from the U.S. 7/

At the beginning of the Civic Action Program, the unfavorable legal rate

of exchange of U.S. dollars for piasters applicable to charity projects constituted a real problem. The legal rate, 80 piasters for $1.00, represented a loss of 33 percent on each dollar. CONUS donators balked at this lower rate and in some instances refused to send monetary contributions. However, in March 1967, the GVN approved conversion of U.S. dollar instruments and Military Payment Certificates at 118 Vietnamese dollars to the U.S. $1.00 rate for support of charitable and Civic Action programs. 8/

Supplies for Civic Action projects were available from numerous sources, in addition to those purchased with aforementioned funds. The Air Force bases offered excellent possibilities for reclaimable material, such as scrap lumber, pipe, used clothing and furniture, steel drums, and roofing. U.S. government contractors were another source of salvageable material; USAID/GVN warehouses were located in almost every province. In addition to some foodstuffs, USAID was a primary supplier of construction material, such as reinforcing bar, roofing, and cement. Additional sources of supplies were the International Voluntary Agencies (IVA), which included the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE, the Lutheran World Relief, Dooley Foundation, American Friends Service Committee, and many others. The Catholic Relief Services was an independent international voluntary agency, which provided the majority of foodstuffs distributed to the Vietnamese. CARE was a volunteer agency supported by private donations, which distributed self-help kits, including midwifery, blacksmith, woodworking, and sewing kits. These voluntary agencies had expressed interest in accomplishing their objectives through U.S. advisory and Civic Action personnel. Supply assistance was considered excellent, within

limiting policies of supplying agencies. Advance planning of requirements and close coordination had alleviated much of the difficulty in properly supplying projects. 9/

Transportation of Civic Action supplies constituted a continuing problem. Due to insecurity of road transport, the major means of moving materials within the country was by air. Because of the large volume of operational materials requiring transport, Civic Action supplies frequently were delayed in shipment. Within operational limitations, bases were authorized to use base support aircraft for transporting Civic Action supplies. To alleviate the transportation problem for BCAOs, vehicles were authorized for their use at all bases. 10/

CHAPTER IV

MILITARY CIVIC ACTION

Introduction

Military Civic Action was one of the component programs of Civic Action, which also included Community Relations and Humanitarian activities. MACV defined it as "participation in or support of economic and sociological programs useful to the local population at all levels." In South Vietnam, Civic Action had two interrelated objectives: (1) improve living conditions of the people, so as to remove one of the underlying causes of insurgency; and (2) gain and maintain support of the people for GVN. Programs included short term but high impact projects in the field of education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and other areas which contributed to the general welfare. MACV pointed out that winning and maintaining the friendship and active cooperation of Vietnamese civilians within an operational area were essential steps toward reducing Viet Cong effectiveness, which was ultimately dependent in part upon civilian support. Good civil-military relations were dependent upon two factors: (1) the military individual's attitude in his dealings with local civilians; and (2) planned Military Civic Action programs. 1/

Base Civic Action Plan

By the end of April 1967, each base had formulated a Civic Action Plan which listed all projects considered desirable and recommended by the Base Civic Action Council. The plan was then submitted to the Provincial Committee which approved those projects deemed relevant to the overall Revolutionary

Development Plan. This procedure permitted advance planning of manpower and material needs. Later in the year, coordination procedures for construction projects were refined even further, as discussed under "Project Cycle." 2/

Projects planned by the Phu Cat Air Base typified current base planning: 3/

- Improve existing educational institutions by repairing and reopening damaged schools.
- Establish educational scholarships for qualified students to pursue their education beyond elementary school level.
- Improve agricultural potential of surrounding hamlets and villages.
- Construct and operate a dispensary for Vietnamese people outside the main gate at Phu Cat AB.
- Create and maintain a Civic Action disaster response kit.
- Support Chieu Hoi Program.
- Improve the District's transportation complex.
- Establish a district, village, and hamlet athletic recreational program.
- Improve hamlet living conditions.
- MEDCAP.
- Collect and distribute soap and used clothing.

Base Civic Action Contingency Plans

Each 7AF base was also requested to prepare a Contingency Civic Action Plan to be implemented in the event of a cease-fire or a standdown in combat operations exceeding five days. By the end of 1967, five bases had published plans, and the remaining bases were coordinating their drafts. It was difficult to forecast with any degree of accuracy the materials, men, and

machinery which would be available for Civic Action work in a standdown period. These specifics were intimately related to the progress of base construction efforts, and the orders and mission changes of base units during the standdown periods. Also, Vietnamese officials could not accurately forecast projects which should be accomplished during such a period, as this depended upon past accomplishments and current needs of the people. Despite these difficulties, there were advantages to planning in terms of manpower and material resources for an expanded Civic Action Program. Plans prepared by various bases were characterized by increased emphasis upon Civic Action projects currently underway and expansion of the Civic Action Program into areas of greater scope and longer range implications, such as low-cost transportation and communications. 4/

Project Cycle

With so many US/GVN agencies involved in the Revolutionary Development Program, cycling of assignment of responsibility for a Civic Action construction project to a specific Air Force squadron or unit required refinement and standardization. Projects normally originated with Hamlet, District, or Province Chiefs, or the CORDS District representative. If a Hamlet Chief submitted a request for a specific project; i.e., a two-room schoolhouse, it would be forwarded to the District Chief for approval. Next, it would be transmitted to the provincial level where the Director of Education would very likely review the request, and determine whether a school was actually needed, with teachers available to staff it. If it were approved by the Director of Education, it would then be reviewed by the Provincial Committee

(Before May 1967, it consisted of the Province Chief, Senior MACV, Advisor, and Office of Civil Operations representative), which consisted of the Province Chief and the CORDS Senior Advisor. Committee approval meant that the project had become part of the GVN Revolutionary program--one of many thousands of projects. As a usual procedure, it would then be entered on a master list prepared by the Joint Civic Action Coordinating Committee. This Coordinating Committee included representation from all US/FWMAF, RVNAF, volunteer assistance agencies and GVN agencies. It had been formed to avoid wasted effort because of incomplete coordination of projects, and it also had responsibility for assigning all projects within a local area. Projects considered appropriate for military Civic Action were assigned to one of the US/FWMAF units. If a Joint Coordinating Committee was not in existence, the base was contacted by the CORDS Senior Advisor for project assignment. 5/

If assigned to an Air Force base, the project was approved (or disapproved) by the Base Civic Action Council. At bases where there was a VNAF organization, coordination was also effected with the Air Force Advisory Team (AFAT) for joint Civic Action projects. The BCAO then contacted civilian assistance organizations such as USAID, CARE, CRS, or others for supplies and material or used the appropriate base fund to purchase supplemental supplies. He also contacted the JUSPAO representative to determine which, if any, psychological operations should be applied in conjunction with the project. The BCAO then presented the packaged project to the base unit selected by the Base Civic Action Council to carry it out. The Unit Civic Action Coordinator would forward a monthly report of a project to the BCAO, as well as one upon its

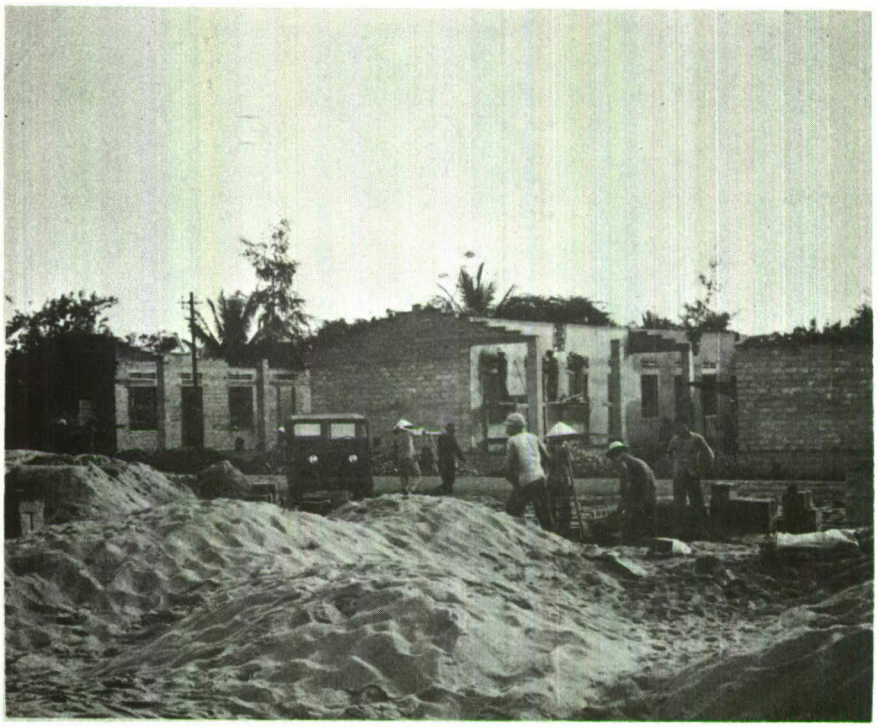
completion.[6]

This cycle was applicable only to projects involving construction or renovation of buildings, drainage systems, roads, etc. It did not apply to such humanitarian efforts as commodity distribution. However, in such cases, coordination was effected with the CORDS Advisor, and an effort was made to keep Air Force aid in the context of the overall Revolutionary Development Plan.[7]

Self-Help and Self-Improvement

By the end of 1967, the 7AF Civic Action Program was operating at ten air bases in areas of influence encompassing nine of the 44 provinces and one specialized zone with a total population of 3,945,563. The program was increasingly oriented away from Commodity Distribution and strongly toward self-help and self-improvement efforts. The Air Force role was one of technical, financial, and material assistance designed to teach the Vietnamese to help themselves. Construction and repair of roads, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and war-destroyed churches and pagodas received major emphasis, as did efforts directed toward initiating or improving cottage industries and agricultural projects.[8]

Self-improvement efforts were focused chiefly upon skill development and education. The "Dollars for Scholars" Program initiated at Bien Hoa AB was an outstanding example of a long-range Civic Action project. English language instruction was very popular among the Vietnamese and more than 3,600 students were enrolled in classes. At most 7AF bases, on-duty training





Self-Help Construction Projec
Figure 2

for indigenous civilian employees was conducted regularly in such diverse skills as food handling, typewriting, automotive mechanics, and carpentry. 9/

The Youth Sports Program might also be considered in the self-improvement category, although it was an important factor in Community Relations. To give the GVN a sound political hold upon South Vietnam's future, it had to gain the loyalty of its youth. Default of GVN activity in this area had left the field to VC and Buddhist student groups. Many recent political riots and demonstrations had been instigated and supported largely by students. Sports were considered one of the least expensive and most effective bridges between the GVN and the country's youth. The Vietnamese Boy Scouts and Girl Guides received first priority for support, because of the large number of military personnel with scouting experience. Youth programs also included the construction and repair of athletic and physical education facilities. One of the most effective Air Force youth programs was carried on at Phan Rang AB, where a large, modern stadium had been constructed by the Vietnamese with technical assistance of Air Force Civic Action personnel. 10/

Base Perimeter Program

The 7AF Civic Action Program placed emphasis on Joint USAF/VNAF projects in the air base environs of Da Nang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, and Binh Thuy, and the joint USAF/GVN projects in the vicinity of Pleiku, Phu Cat, Tuy Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay, and Phan Rang. Seven of the ten bases had been assigned a specific geographic area, usually a district or several villages on the base perimeter. However, Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, and Cam Ranh Bay remained project-oriented. The problem inherent in this latter approach was

that Air Force personnel were working in the same area with Army, Navy, ROK, and other groups which greatly complicated the task of coordination. 11/

While the underlying philosophy of the Base Perimeter Program remained one of self-help and self-improvement, certain situations frequently called for humanitarian activities involving help to needy institutions and emergency disaster relief. Hamlets on the perimeter of these bases needed assistance to improve living conditions, and to break the hold which the Viet Cong had on the people. The VNAF was the visible arm of the GVN in this program, and the lowly status of its airmen degraded their image in the eyes of the local populace. VNAF personnel could not be expected to cooperate wholeheartedly in the Civic Action Program, as long as their own airmen were living under conditions as deplorable as those of the people they were trying to help. The VNAF command was concerned about this problem, but lacked resources to improve conditions. It was decided at Hq 7AF, the first step toward stimulating VNAF into participating more actively in Civic Actions, and at the same time enhancing their role in the eyes of the people, was to help raise living standards of VNAF personnel jointly occupying bases with USAF. 12/

Tan Son Nhut Air Base

Tan Son Nhut Air Base, with a population of about 13,000 Air Force personnel, was the headquarters for all Air Force activities in Vietnam. Because of its strategic location on the outskirts of Saigon, in a densely populated area, this perimeter program presented unique problems. In October 1965, responsibility for each of the 12 hamlets surrounding the base in the so-called "sensitive area" was assigned by the GVN to the 33d VNAF Wing.

The economic status of the hamlets was definitely substandard, with numerous destitute families residing in them. In general, the sanitation, health, and living conditions were deplorable. These hamlets also were relatively secure havens for many Viet Cong and from five to seventy percent of the inhabitants were listed as members of Viet Cong families or Viet Cong sympathizers. The VNAF established cultural, sanitation, medical, and construction teams to help hamlet inhabitants toward a better life; they also distributed foodstuffs, clothing, and toys. These efforts, however, were minimal, because of limited resources available to them, their lack of training in Civic Action efforts, and the limited number of USAF advisors to assist them. In February 1966, the VNAF Wing appealed to the USAF Advisory Team at Tan Son Nhut for financial and technical assistance in their 12-hamlet project. 13/

A Civic Action Coordinating Group was established at Tan Son Nhut in July 1966. One of the first tasks they undertook was coordination of the perimeter hamlet project with local provincial officials. They also sought integration of proposed projects of USAF and VNAF in the 12 hamlets into the GVN Province Revolutionary Development Plan for CY 67. The VNAF personnel at TSN worked closely with the Province Revolutionary Development teams to initiate a detailed census of each hamlet, designating each family as to religious affiliation, political aspiration, and economic status. Arrangements were made to secure building materials from GVN/USAID resources, with USAF/VNAF providing equipment, transportation of materials and commodities, technical supervision, and supplemental building materials, if needed.

Individual 7AF and VNAF units at Tan Son Nhut were assigned to specific hamlets, with the responsibility for developing and implementing the individual hamlet rehabilitation plans under higher level guidance. Planned projects included construction or repair of schools, dispensaries, first aid stations, roads, and culvert and drainage systems.[14/]

Plans also called for regularly scheduled visits to hamlets built around MEDCAP teams, which were to give medical and dental treatment, and public health and personal hygiene instruction. Needy families jointly selected by hamlet chiefs and VNAF Civic Action teams were to receive food and other commodities. VNAF teams would conduct cultural shows and psychological operations to explain to the local populace the presence of VNAF/USAF personnel in the hamlet.[15/]

This ambitious program, however, never really got off the ground. By the spring of 1967, relations between the 377th Combat Support Group at TSN and the 33d VNAF Wing were severely strained and a "disengagement" seemed advisable. The deteriorated relationship could be attributed to several factors. The 377th Combat Support Group Civic Action Officer may have been overzealous in pushing the projects, and thus caused the VNAF to "lose face" because they could not keep up their part of the program. And, as previously pointed out, VNAF personnel could scarcely be expected to cooperate wholeheartedly in a program of helping their neighbors, when many of them were in similar straitened circumstances. The food "giveaway" also came in for its share of criticism. Due to poor selection by the cadre team, those receiving



Vocational Training
Figure 3

assistance were not always the poorest. This created a sense of injustice among the population. Much of the food given to the people was sold on the black market, an indication that either it was unpalatable or that it was not really needed--or both. The distribution system also opened the way to graft on the part of those choosing the recipients.[16/]

The effort to do "too much, too fast" actually set the program back several months and forced a retrenchment. Orientation of the Air Force program was changed from a 12-perimeter hamlet basis toward specific projects located in two districts of Gia Dinh Province. The 33d VNAF Wing unilaterally continued its activities in the 12 hamlets; however, in some instances, the 377th Combat Support Group continued specific projects in some of the same hamlets. Many of the projects undertaken by the 377th Combat Support Group in the summer and fall of 1967 were of the social service type, such as distribution of commodities, scrap lumber, and toys to needy institutions. Other projects included English language instruction, renovation, and furnishing of a dispensary, and the rebuilding of three homes burned as a result of an air crash.[17/]

Bien Hoa Air Base

The Bien Hoa tactical fighter base was located 19 miles northeast of Saigon and had an Air Force strength of about 5,500. Its perimeter program involved three hamlets, a village, and a refugee camp in the base environs. The hamlets and village were not all on the perimeter of the base, because of the proximity of the U.S. Army units to Bien Hoa, and their responsibility for civic action projects in several of the perimeter hamlets. The communities

assigned to USAF/VNAF were those closest to the base that needed assistance and rehabilitation and were not already assigned to another organization. 18/

Hamlet visits were arranged around a MEDCAP team, VNAF social and cultural teams, as well as food supplement distribution to poorer families in the hamlets. Some VNAF members of the teams, dressed in native black pajamas, with only a VNAF Wing insignia to show their affiliation, wandered through the hamlet talking to the people and explaining the purpose of their visit. They also distributed leaflets describing the GVN's concern for the people and identifying the teams with the government. 19/

On one occasion in November 1966, local RVN militia requested assistance of USAF medical teams to accompany them in a "clear and hold" operation in the Nhon Trach Sector in Bien Hoa Province, which had been under VC control for many years. The local military would clear hamlets of VC militia, hold and secure them, as other military forces escorted the USAF medical team into a hamlet where a clinic was set up in a local home. In most cases, the local people had not seen a doctor in several years, or a dentist in their entire lifetime. The impact on the hamlets was impressive, with hamlet chiefs making the doctors promise they would return again to help their people. When news of the "painless" dentist spread through the sector being cleared, people from distant hamlets infiltrated through Viet Cong-held areas to be treated. 20/

In addition to a program of outpatient medical service and commodity distribution, the base was responsible for improving facilities at orphanages, constructing a new school, and furnishing and renovating classrooms. Its



Food Distribution
Figure 4

Dollars for Scholars Program was initiated on 20 July, as a means of providing tuition assistance to needy and deserving Vietnamese students. The project was closely coordinated with CORDS officials to complement and support the province plan. This program was supported by donations from CONUS and base personnel and had become a most popular means of providing educational assistance. Except for publicity, collection, and fund management, the program was conducted by the Vietnamese. Normally the school principal and his teachers assisted by local officials, determined eligibility, and selected the students. According to one school principal, the program had hampered VC efforts to recruit teen-agers, since these youths had reportedly told the VC they had a scholarship for the entire year and wanted to study. The immediate success of this program resulted in establishment of similar programs at other bases, so that by the end of 1967, more than 700 students were being helped.[21/]

Cam Ranh Bay

Cam Ranh Bay Air Base had an Air Force strength of approximately 8,000 personnel and was located about 175 miles northeast of Saigon. Since there were no VNAF personnel stationed there, its location on an isolated peninsula made a perimeter hamlet project difficult to implement. Through the development of good relations with interested officials, however, a joint USAF, U.S. Army, and local government effort was initiated in three hamlets in the environs of the city, and in a local refugee settlement of 30 hamlets.[22/]

The base got off to a good start through utilization of a strong MEDCAP team of USAF doctors who conducted medical and dental clinics, and also inspected hamlet food preparation and water supply facilities. The

construction of the Ba'Ngoi school illustrates another type of project undertaken by the Base. Although no VNAF or indigenous personnel were involved in actual construction of the school, it was built on land donated by the city of Cam Ranh Bay to an American missionary who would operate the school. The bulk of materials was supplied by his U.S. sponsors, but the Air Force purchased an electric generator from base funds for the school. 23/

Many of the projects undertaken at Cam Ranh Bay and the other bases did not run smoothly. For example, sites were selected at Cam Ranh Bay for a series of excavation-type latrines, but it was subsequently discovered these locations were unsuitable because the water level in the subsurface was too high. The Air Force unit assigned to this project, therefore, volunteered to renovate a First Aid station instead, but this also proved a frustrating experience. Each time the building was repaired, the local Vietnamese tore off windows and doors. Apparently the lumber was more valuable to them for their own purposes than as shutters and doors for the aid station. 24/

Other projects undertaken by this base included assistance in building a road, drilling a deep water well in a refugee camp, furnishing scrap lumber to needy institutions, supervising construction of a school built with Vietnamese help, and providing candy and toys for Vietnamese Children's Day on 18 September. 25/

Binh Thuy Air Base

Binh Thuy Air Base, 75 miles southwest of Saigon, was the only one located in the Mekong Delta. It had an Air Force personnel strength of

approximately 1,300. The base began its Perimeter Hamlet Program through a joint USAF/VNAF effort, which involved construction or repair of community washhouses and latrines, schools, and clinics, weekly MEDCAP visits, and distribution of clothing and food supplements. A typical project was the self-help construction of a new school building in Phong Diem, which was to be used by refugee children. The cornerstone was laid in April 1967, with VNAF personnel actively participating, and USAID furnishing the material. Three classrooms and an auditorium were finished by August, and additional classrooms were scheduled for completion.[26/]

In one instance, the VC moved into one of the perimeter hamlets in preparation for a mortar attack against the air base planned for 12 October 1966. At great risk to their own lives, several residents of the hamlet reported the attack plans to VNAF and USAF security police at the base. With sufficient warning, the security police moved into the hamlet a couple of days before the planned attack and captured mortars and ammunition, thus preventing an assault. The security police attributed this "save" to the excellent rapport established with the local populace, and the newly won support of the local people to the GVN. The vigorous Civic Action Program was given credit. In December, however, the base was hit by a mortar attack, but damage was light. The mortar positions were set up seven kilometers from the base, well beyond the perimeter hamlets. Local intelligence reporting had progressively improved on all VC activities in the base environs.[27/]

Phu Cat Air Base

This newly activated tactical fighter base was located about 270 miles northeast of Saigon, and had a strength of about 3,500 Air Force personnel.

It was situated in two districts (An Nhon and Phu Cat), which had approximately 200 hamlets and a population of 212,361. Civic Action projects started even before base activation. During the last quarter of 1966, 26,000 refugees were displaced from the Phu Cat mountains into a refugee resettlement village near the base. The needs of these people were immediate and numerous. For many days the Air Force was the only source available for a potable water supply, and the base also provided food supplements three times a day from mess hall leftovers. Civil Engineers helped to plan construction of the village, and provided truckloads of scrap lumber to enable refugees to build their own homes. 28/

Phu Cat instituted a varied, far-reaching program, which included English language instruction, repair of schools, pagodas and churches, the formation of a Little League Softball Team, insecticide spray operations, public health lectures, and support of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The base constructed a 20-bed dispensary just outside the main gate, which also contained a dental treatment room. After the Vietnamese personnel were properly trained in emergency dental care and the techniques of oral prophylaxis, the building and its equipment were to be turned over to the Vietnamese. 29/

The Chieu Hoi Program was designed to bring back under GVN control, those former Viet Cong, NVA personnel, and supporters, who had become disenchanted with the insurgency movement. It was a vitally important program aimed at making useful and loyal citizens out of former enemies. The Phu Cat Civic Action Program contributed toward this goal by its support of the Chieu Hoi Center in An Nhon District, Binh Dinh Province. The BCAO organized



Furniture-building Project
Figure 5

and escorted the first Air Force MEDCAP team into the Chieu Hoi Center. The team treated 400 to 900 inhabitants and scheduled weekly visits. In addition, material was secured from a private U.S. contractor to repair messing facilities for the Center; it was also supplied with kitchen utensils and equipment, beds, mattresses, and firewood. A Carpentry Training Program and an Automotive Mechanics Course were started at the Center, so that Viet Cong defectors might obtain critical skills which would greatly increase their employment potential. Based on comments from Center officials and students, these training programs had been remarkably successful and had exceeded original expectations. 30/

Pleiku Air Base

This base was located 235 miles north-northeast of Saigon and only 27 miles from the Cambodian Border. It had a USAF strength of about 2,500 and housed a VNAF Air Base Group. The majority of base projects were directed toward helping Montagnards, the indigenous mountain tribesmen, who were culturally and racially different from the dominant Vietnamese population. USAF personnel found the Montagnards in this locality eager and quick to learn new methods to help themselves; they proved to be strong, energetic workers. These qualities helped expedite the work, and permitted Civic Action personnel to function in their true role as instructors and supervisors. 31/

Projects undertaken at several Montagnard hamlets in the Pleiku Air Base environs included construction of dams, spillways, irrigation systems, wells, farm buildings, and a 30-bed hospital. The Civic Action personnel also furnished seeds and taught primitive Montagnards improved planting and

plowing methods. Construction of rice bins or silos greatly increased the quantity of rice available to them. Previously, the rice had been stored in the open, or on the ground, and at least one-quarter to one-half of the rice was lost to spoilage or rodents. 32/

The base also had an active MEDCAP Program, which included daily sick calls conducted by Montagnard medical technicians under supervision of MEDCAP personnel. These medics had been trained by the Special Forces Hospital for three months at a cost of 4,000$VN ($33.90) per student per month. Efforts were being made to have them accredited by the GVN, so that they could be paid from government funds. Plans were made to have some of them visit the Base Dispensary and Dental Clinic twice a week for additional on-the-job training. These Montagnard technicians would be the sole source of medical attention in the area after U.S. forces departed. 33/

The project to encourage Montagnard Cottage Industries turned out to be a lucrative source of funds for the local people. Under Civic Action guidance, the tribesmen were making crossbows, which found a ready market as souvenirs among U.S. personnel. More than 1,000 crossbows were sold, providing the villagers with nearly $10,000, and such goods as soap, clothes, medical supplies, and tools. Their stock was being enlarged to include baskets, pipes, textiles, shields, and other items which could be sold through BX outlets, Officers Clubs, etc. 34/

In 1967, the 633d Combat Support Group (PACAF) was awarded the Silver Anvil Award for outstanding performance during 1966 in International Public



Distributing School Supplies
Figure 6

Relations (Government). 35/

Phan Rang Air Base

This huge tactical fighter base was located 175 miles east-northeast of Saigon and had a USAF strength of about 4,000. Since there was no VNAF Wing on base, its Civic Action Program was carried out in coordination with local CORDS/GVN officials. Activities were focused on developing the youth of Ninh Thuan Province through education and sports. Off-duty Air Force volunteers gave English language instruction to a total of 1,134 students. One unique feature of this program was the classes held for provincial officials and National Police. Most base projects were of a social service or community relations type: for example, beach parties, movies, distribution of candy and toys, baseball instruction, and a Boy Scout Camporee. Although the Youth Program was expected to continue, there would be greater emphasis in the future on self-help construction projects. 36/

The base's most outstanding construction project was the province athletic stadium built with materials provided by USAID. This self-help project, which lasted 6 - 8 months, resulted in a stadium 200 meters long by 175 meters wide, surrounded by a 12-foot wall, with bleachers for 5,000 people. It had a quarter-mile track, soccer field, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts (two)--all of which could be used simultaneously. 37/

Da Nang Air Base

This base had a USAF personnel strength of approximately 7,000, and was located about 457 miles north-northeast of Saigon. The base, located within

Da Nang city boundaries, was completely surrounded by a perimeter guard of U.S. Marines. The Marines had a Civic Action battalion responsible for air base perimeter hamlet rehabilitation. Because of their heavy commitments in I Corps, however, they were unable to take care of all the perimeter hamlets. After several discussions with appropriate officials, the local USAF and VNAF Wings were given responsibility for the rehabilitation of one hamlet with 2,500 people. Particularly strategic, it was the site of many VC mortar attacks on the base. Subsequently, Da Nang was also given responsibility for Than Khe village, which had a population of some 92,000 and was composed of ten large hamlets as well as two large refugee camps. 38/

Da Nang engaged in renovation of on-base VNAF schools, construction of a water well, and a medical aid station, and conducted First Aid, and English language training. When a Flying Tiger aircraft crashed into a village on 24 December, an USAF MEDCAP Team rushed to the scene. Its three doctors and 30 medical technicians treated 21 individuals--with only one fatality. Fire fighters also came to the rescue within minutes and the 3d Aerospace Rescue Group evacuated 13 of the 21 injured persons to various medical centers around Da Nang. 39/

Da Nang AB was also headquarters of the 620th Tactical Control Squadron stationed at Monkey Mountain, which in 1967 received the Silver Anvil Award for Outstanding Community Relations (Government). 40/

Nha Trang Air Base

Approximately 4,000 U.S. Air Force personnel were located at Nha Trang AB,

which was 200 miles northeast of Saigon. The initial Civic Action project was a joint VNAF/USAF effort in the perimeter village of Vo Cong. It was built around visits by a MEDCAP team and a VNAF Social Welfare Team, which gave medical treatment and instruction in personal hygiene, and insect and rodent control techniques. 41/

In the beginning, there was a tendency among the Vietnamese to let USAF personnel do the construction work. However, it was made clear to them that rehabilitation of the village would be a self-help project, with USAF support in the form of required materials and technical supervision. Once the village officials understood that projects would not be undertaken any other way, they agreed to enlist their own people to rebuild the hamlet. 42/

Insufficient trained VNAF Civic Action personnel was another problem encountered in the initial phases of the base program. There were no officers attached to the VNAF Wing's Political Warfare Directorate, who understood how to plan or initiate projects for village rehabilitation. The USAF advisors were forced to plan the projects, and train their VNAF counterparts in the role expected of them. The initial tendency on the part of USAF personnel was to do the job themselves, but gradually they began concentrating on training and stimulating VNAF to participate more actively. 43/

The program included construction of a three-story school, renovation of orphanages, commodity distribution, and sponsorship of parties for children. The work done on the Nha Trang City Refuse Dump was one example of a long-range project. The area located on Highway 1, north of Nha Trang, was

extremely unsightly and represented a serious health hazard, due to various Allied forces and Vietnamese dumping trash in a random fashion. Civic Action personnel cleaned up the area, and constructed a sanitary fill that was projected to serve the city for 20 years. 44/

Tuy Hoa Air Base

This base, located on the South China Sea, about 230 miles northeast of Saigon, had approximately 3,200 USAF personnel. The Self-Help Program supported by the base at the Dong Tac Refugee Center was unusually successful. A large number of cottages housing 3,700 people had been finished. A self-help road constructed from steel pallets (used for shipping cement) was nearing completion and would provide heavy vehicles access to the Center. Agricultural plots for the people were being established, and the Center was also opening a new dispensary, school, furniture factory, barber shop, coffin factory, and many other activities to help make refugees self-sufficient. The success of this project was due to refugees contributing more than 90 percent of all labor. This made them proud of their village and gave them a sense of belonging that would not otherwise have been possible. 45/

In November 1967, a presentation ceremony was held at the base to award scholarships to 16 students (3 at college level, 9 at junior high school level, and 4 at primary level). Various squadrons, who had sponsored the students, took them on a tour of the base. In addition to the Scholarship Program, the base also had a comprehensive Vocational Training Program, which had 516 base employees (many of whom were refugees) enrolled in a wide range of skill development classes. 46/

CHAPTER V

HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Humanitarian activities, consisting of help to needy institutions and emergency disaster relief, were an important part of the Military Civic Action Program. In an underdeveloped country, ravaged by war, it was imperative that humanitarian efforts fulfill a dominant role in the Civic Action Program. Even before the program became an official part of the Air Force mission, individuals and units had donated money, food, clothing, and other commodities to orphanages, schools, hospitals, and hamlets. There was a tendency, however, to offer too much help to orphanages, rather than too little, at most 7AF bases. In a briefing to Civic Action officers on 10 April 1967, the Minister of Social Welfare stated that too much assistance from non-Vietnamese sources was potentially undercutting the GVN policy "to promote participation of the people in social welfare projects" as part of Community Civic Action. 1/

During April - September 1967, the Air Force assisted a total of 45 orphanages, with individual base participation as follows: 2/

Air Base	Orphanages
Tan Son Nhut	12
Nha Trang	7
Bien Hoa	5
Da Nang	4
Binh Thuy	4
Phan Rang	2
Pleiku	4
Tuy Hoa	3
Phu Cat	2
Cam Ranh Bay	2

The total Seventh Air Force assistance for April - September 1967 was: 3/

TYPE	AMOUNT
Food	32,650 pounds
Clothing	21,000 pounds
Toys	83 cartons and playground equipment for three orphanages
Orphanages repaired	28
New construction/additions	9
Bedding/cots	3,000 plus
Soap	2,365 pounds
MEDCAP visits	5,000 approximate patients, medical supplies and hygiene instruction
Airlift	312 orhpans and nuns evacuated; 200,000 pounds cargo
U.S. dollars donated	$ 34,897.00
Vietnamese piasters donated	1,408,033

In October 1967, the Commander, 7AF, was interested in having each base provide support to orphanages in its area of influence. This support was intended to complement major, self-help projects in hamlets and villages. Consequently, training and educational assistance, and self-sustaining projects were to be part of the planned support. MEDCAP teams were to provide medical treatment, and training in hygiene and sanitation, to the greatest degree possible. Assistance was also to be coordinated with appropriate officials, and closely controlled to insure a reasonable balance of help to all ethnic and religious groups in the area. In this way, an over-abundance of Commodity Distribution would be prevented, and orphanages would not become dependent upon USAF for basic and continuing needs. 4/

The very nature of aid to orphanages, which sprang from a sincere and generous desire to help needy children, made it difficult to control and



Aid to Orphanage
Figure 7

coordinate. There was no desire to discourage well-meaning individuals, but there was a need for more orientation of personnel on the concept and overall goals of the Military Civic Action Program. Thus, they could learn that even the best-intentioned gestures could sometimes "backfire". For example, some of the Vietnamese "orphanages" were not really orphanages in the American definition of the term. Some of them had a large number of "day students" from well-to-do families who were not in need of help. It was also a mistake to accustom orphanages to a standard of living which could not be maintained after withdrawal of U.S. forces. A majority of the aid was channeled to Christian institutions, although Buddhists were the predominant religious group in the country. Consequently, the imbalanced program of Commodity Distribution could further embitter the already strained Catholic/Buddhist relations. While assistance to orphanages tended to be oversubscribed, mental hospitals, and homes for the aged were sometimes neglected. Another problem related to Commodity Distribution was the difficulty of identifying this activity with the GVN. As a result, it fell more in the realm of Community Relations than true Military Civic Action. Some of the bases had moved beyond the phase of monetary and commodity donations to projects of longer lasting value. Other bases, however, were still oriented largely to humanitarian efforts. 5/

The destructive effects of war and natural disasters made numerous demands upon the Air Force to contribute toward emergency relief of hunger and suffering. Most of the bases had developed emergency disaster kits for immediate use when the need existed. Timely, effective assistance (particularly

when carried out in cooperation with the GVN), during an emergency could sometimes negate propaganda efforts of the Viet Cong.[6/]

The following examples are given to illustrate support during these emergencies. In October 1966, the VNAF 33d Wing at Tan Son Nhut offered its assistance to the GVN in the relief project for Delta flood victims. The Wing was given the responsibility for 3,000 homeless families in Kien Giang Province on the Gulf of Siam. In a joint USAF/VNAF effort, 70 tons of clothing, foodstuffs, tents, and tools were packaged in family bundles and airlifted to Kien Giang. Because the province was principally under VC control, close coordination was necessary with provincial military forces to secure the airfield on the outskirts of Rach Gia, the truck route to distribution points and surrounding hamlets. With 15 VNAF C-47s shuttling between Saigon and the Delta locale, supplies were airlifted in a few hours to the main airfield. Then they were moved by armed truck convoy to a distribution point some 40 kilometers from the airfield, and given to heads of the 3,000 families. This was primarily a VNAF effort, stimulated and guided by USAF personnel. A highly successful undertaking, it was indicative of service that could be accomplished by indigenous military, if their efforts were properly channeled and supervised.[7/]

On 1 July 1966, an inadvertent bombing by a 3d Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) of Tan Uyen (about ten miles north of Bien Hoa) resulted in eight Vietnamese killed and 40 injured, with substantial damage to village structures. Working through VNAF personnel at Bien Hoa AB, the sector U.S. Army advisors, and province officials, the 3d TFW medical teams were rushed

to the village immediately after the accident to assist the injured. Within 24 hours, volunteer groups from the Wing started to repair damaged structures in the village. Emergency supplies were distributed through province officials, and with assistance of U.S. Army advisors and province officials, the 3d TFW legal officer compiled a list of injured and deceased for solatium payments. Within two weeks, ten marketplace stalls were built to replace those destroyed, two corrugated roofs were repaired, two houses had been completely rebuilt, and the village marketplace roof was repaired. 8/

The accident precipitated an extremely difficult situation. Open hostility was shown to the first Americans to appear on the scene and one U.S. officer received small arms fire. The VC attempted to use this incident against the GVN and the U.S., but immediate and persevering efforts of the 3d TFW successfully offset the VC propaganda attempt. The Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, through the Vietnamese Information Service, reached village inhabitants, as well as Vietnamese elsewhere. They responded very well to the sincere US/GVN efforts to rebuild the damaged village, make reparations to the injured, and to families of the deceased. 9/

It was extremely important for U.S. personnel to work directly with district and province officials to insure that all of the injured received appropriate compensation without taking advantage of the situation. It was also imperative that damage to a conspicuous village structure, such as a market place, be repaired immediately, as was done in this case. (Repairs made as a result of indemnification payments might have been delayed several

months.) Another important lesson learned in cases of serious accidents, was that people should be permitted a brief "cooling off" period after medical assistance had been rendered. A 24-hour delay might alleviate the initial hostility; also, the first visit by U.S. personnel should be made only in the presence of a district or province official trusted by the local populace. 10/

On 14 April 1967, a fire occurred at Bien Hoa AB, in one of the VNAF dependent housing areas. Thirty families (approximately 200 persons) were left homeless by this fire. Quick relief measures were taken by a combined force consisting of the 3d TFW, 173d Airborne Brigade, AF Advisory Teams, VNAF Political Warfare Directorate, and ARVN Social Welfare workers. They rehoused the families and provided them with emergency supplies of food, clothing, and money. The gratifying aspects of this tragedy were the quick response, cooperative attitude, and actions of the various agencies involved in the relief effort. 11/

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In January 1967, MACV issued guidance for development of a Community Relations Program which would "enhance mutual respect and confidence between U.S. forces in Vietnam, third-country contingents, armed forces of the RVN, and the Vietnamese civilian population." Community Relations Committees were to be established in Saigon, Vung Tau, Cam Ranh Bay, Dalat, Bien Hoa, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Pleiku, Kontum, and Hue, with each major U.S. military element in the area represented. A primary mission of the committee was establishment of a Friendship Council, which would include senior representatives from principal U.S., RVN, third country units, and civilian members representing government, police, business, labor, and civic leaders, clergy, news media, doctors, and other individuals who could assist in promoting harmonious relations. 1/

MACV suggested that Friendship Councils concern themselves with curfews, off limits areas, pass restrictions, uniforms, joint patrols, real estate acquisition, recreational facilities, and related matters to insure mutual understanding, cooperation, and uniformity. An excellent means to improve mutual understanding and to stimulate public interest in U.S. forces was through active participation in civic activities. Some of these suggested activities were open house, troop participation in local ceremonies, exhibits at markets or during festivals, and individual participation in such projects as vocational training, or English language instruction. 2/

There was some overlap among Community Relations, Military Civic Action, and Humanitarian projects. The 7AF Civic Action Division took the position that Community Relations should be separated from Civic Action activities, since it was designed to accomplish different objectives. Military Civic Action, in addition to improving the socio-economic conditions of the Vietnamese people, had the goal of promoting the image of a strong, effective Government of Vietnam. On the other hand, the objective of the Community Relations Program was to promote the USAF image, and other U.S. military services. Many activities, such as Christmas parties for orphans, were designed to influence the attitude of the Vietnamese people toward the USAF rather than the GVN. Consequently, the 7AF Civic Action Division believed that Community Relations properly belonged in the Directorate of Information. The Information Directorate viewed its role strictly as one of reporting the war, whereas Community Relations in 7AF was an extension of the Civic Action mission. 3/

While Civic Action and Community Relations activities had different objectives, these goals were nevertheless complementary. Because of the US/GVN "partnership," a good image of the GVN was contingent, to a certain extent, upon a favorable image of the U.S. military establishment and vice versa. The impact of the U.S. military presence in a country traditionally aloof from foreigners had already led to expressions of anti-Americanism. If these sentiments were allowed to increase in scope and intensity, they could seriously jeopardize the U.S. role in Vietnam. The importance of good US/Vietnamese relations required an early resolution of placement of

the 7AF Community Relations Program. This would allow the Air Force to give proper emphasis to this program, and contribute its share toward improved relations with the host country.

CHAPTER VII

VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE CIVIC ACTION

In the Vietnamese Air Force, Civic Action activities were included in the mission of the Directorate of Political Warfare. This office also had responsibility for such varied functions as political indoctrination, athletics, cultural teams, information services, psychological warfare, social welfare, commissary/BX, and religious activities. Although the Political Warfare Directorate was established in VNAF in October 1964 (the VNAF was established in 1951 and separated from the French AF on 1 Jul 55), the Civic Action phase was not activated until the spring of 1966. Also, at that time, the Political Warfare Directorate, Air Force Advisory Group (AFGP), began to function in an advisory capacity to the Political Warfare Directorate, VNAF. 1/

At VNAF Headquarters, the DCS/Political Warfare was directly responsible to the Chief of Staff. The position was occupied by a Colonel with a staff of approximately 40. At Wing level, the Political Warfare Officer (Captain) responded directly to the Wing Commander. His staff varied in size from 18 - 25. The Air Force Advisory Group, Political Warfare Directorate had two officers assigned (Lt. Colonel and Major) at Headquarters level and six Political Warfare Advisors assigned to the seven Air Force Advisory Teams (AFATs), located at bases jointly occupied by USAF/VNAF as follows: 2/

BASE	VNAF WING	AFAT (Nr)	
Tan Son Nhut	33d	1	
Bien Hoa	23d	2	
Bien Hoa	Air Logistics & Tech Wing	3	
Nha Trang	Air Training Center	4	
Da Nang	41st	5	
Nha Trang	62d	6	(This AFAT Politi--cal Advisor was also assigned to the Nha Trang ATC)
Binh Tuy	74th	7	

Since less than 10 percent of the VNAF Political Warfare personnel had any formal training, the AFGP Political Warfare Director concentrated his efforts in this direction. Three officers had been scheduled to attend the newly established ten-week basic Political Warfare Course at Dalat and a continuing input was planned. Four officers had attended the Psychological Operations Course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the Civic Action Course at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Noncommissioned officers were being enrolled in the four-week Political Warfare Course in Saigon. With the exception of the 74th Wing (Binh Thuy), all chiefs of Political Warfare offices at the Wing level were full time and considered competent. 3/

All AFGP Political Warfare personnel were assigned against a Special Air Warfare AFSC 0316, although for the first year the AFAT Political Warfare Advisors were assigned against an entry level Special Air Warfare AFSC 0311. The AFAT Advisors were all Majors, the authorized grade, with the exception of one Captain. Their training consisted of three months' Vietnamese language training; four weeks at the Military Advisory Institute, Arlington, Virginia; and a 6-10 week Psychological Operations Course conducted

at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The AFGP Political Warfare Director stated that the present language training gave advisors a vocabulary of about 800 words, consisting mostly of Army-oriented terminology. At least a year's language training was required to give advisors the language capability considered necessary for their assignment. He also strongly emphasized the need for courses of instruction in Vietnamese history and culture to help advisors function more effectively in their dealings with the Vietnamese. 4/

In addition to advising his VNAF counterpart on Civic Action and Psychological Operations, the AFGP Political Warfare Advisor was a member of the Base Civic Action Council. At the end of each month, the advisor submitted a report to the BCAO just like any other assigned unit or tenant. 5/

While the concept of joint VNAF/USAF participation was unquestionably a desirable one, in actual practice it had not worked out very satisfactorily. One reason was that the VNAF was a small organization (16,000) and had limited resources. The horizons and loyalties of VNAF personnel, just as in the case of peasants, were limited to the family unit. Also, the substandard living conditions of lower ranking VNAF personnel precluded their enthusiastic support of the program. While VNAF participation was an important element in a successful Perimeter Hamlet Program, it was considered inadvisable to push this effort too aggressively for fear that it would be counter-productive. 6/

With relatively few resources, the VNAF Civic Action Program tried to help as many people as possible, rather than giving a great deal of support to a small group. Its activities consisted of hamlet programs, self-help,

and social services. All VNAF Wings included MEDCAP, commodity support, and propaganda in their hamlet Civic Action Program, and some bases also included entertainment and construction projects. With one exception (62d Wing, Nha Trang), all VNAF Wings had Civic Action Programs, and were supporting a total of 37 hamlets. 7/

"Self-help" had been a relatively slow-moving program, but there were some noticeable exceptions. For example, the 33d Wing at Tan Son Nhut had constructed airman barracks, a commissary, and school buildings, in addition to renovating some dependent housing and a school. The 23d Wing had installed a tailor shop and barber shop as well as renovating a school building. The Air Logistics Wing was in the process of converting two buildings to house a tailor shop, barber shop, library, and snack bar. The 74th Wing had completed an NCO Club and converted buildings into family housing units. The 41st Wing constructed an addition to their school building and renovated a building for use as a cooperative commissary. The 62d Wing installed electric pumps and plumbing in a dependent housing area. The Air Training Center improved some family housing units, converted one building into a chapel, and another into facilities for conferences and training. 8/

Some of the problems encountered in rehabilitating dependent housing have been discussed previously. The magnitude of the problem and lack of resources had resulted in apathy on the part of some Wing Commanders. Construction materials for this program could not be obtained from USAID resources, since foreign economic assistance funds could not be used for "military purposes." However, the AFGP Political Warfare Director was

attempting to stimulate interest in the program and had publicized other sources of supplies. In addition to sources already listed, AFATs were allocated P-456 Free World Forces Support funds, which could be used to requisition common construction materials. Also, materials for maintenance, repair, and minor construction could be drawn from Raymond-Morrison-Knudsen-BRJ contractor depots at Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay, and Da Nang. This method of securing supplies, however, was established on a one-time basis and would cease to exist when the deposited $900,000 was expended or withdrawn; $340,000 of the fund remained available. 9/

Social services provided VNAF personnel included libraries, a sports program, and commissaries. Libraries were operating at Headquarters and a few of the Wings, but lack of interest or nonavailability of a building hindered support of this program. The RVN Armed Forces sports program was designed to improve morale, develop a competitive spirit, and promote physical conditioning. MACV had encouraged all BCAOs to assist in this program. All VNAF bases had a good Intramural Sports Program, with equipment support available to them through the MACV Imprest Fund. 10/

In addition to government commissaries available to VNAF personnel, all Wings (except ATC and the 74th) were operating cooperative commissaries. The limited selection of items sold at low cost in the government commissaries had been supplemented by U.S. assistance in the form of "B" rations and a variety of canned foodstuffs. In the cooperative commissaries, members pooled their funds to take advantage of lower prices available through bulk purchases. 11/

These self-help construction projects and social services were steps toward the goal of improved socio-economic conditions for VNAF personnel. Their objective should lead to an expanded program of VNAF assistance to perimeter hamlets.

CHAPTER VIII

ASSESSMENT

Since the USAF only assumed the Civic Action mission officially in 1966, many of the problems encountered could be considered normal "growing pains" which would disappear with maturity. Other problems were deep-rooted in the Vietnamese culture, or stemmed from economic factors that could only be resolved slowly over decades. These factors hindered successful application of the Military Civic Action concept; i.e., U.S. forces helping indigenous military personnel to improve the people's socio-economic level. As presently conceived, the Air Force Civic Action Program also had certain built-in limitations. The program had to be subordinated to military operations, except in the event of a standdown. Furthermore, it had only untrained, voluntary help for many of its activities, and there were also special problems encountered in the Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP).

As previously discussed, manning of MEDCAP presented several problems. By the time the three-man teams were in place, the scope of the program had already outstripped their capability to handle it effectively. Unless properly trained personnel in sufficient numbers were made available, the Air Force would have difficulty maintaining a high level of professionalism in the Civic Action Program. An urgent need also existed for an orientation program which would acquaint all Air Force personnel with Vietnamese history and culture as well as Civic Action objectives.

In some instances, the Base Perimeter Hamlet Program had suffered from

inadequate direction and lack of insight into the Vietnamese value system. Although VNAF participation in joint projects had not met USAF expectations, the "soft sell" approach had replaced aggressive leadership and was expected to pay bigger dividends. Also, recognition of the economic needs of lower ranking VNAF personnel, and initiation of projects to meet them, were essential steps in motivating greater VNAF participation in Civic Action activities. Although some of the bases were vigorously pursuing self-help and self-improvement projects, others were still essentially oriented toward Commodity Distribution. Difficulties also had been experienced in providing commodity assistance on the basis of actual need among the different kinds of institutions and various ethnic and religious groups.

There was still a tendency among some Air Force personnel to believe that any program as well-intentioned as Civic Action would do some good, even if results were not always those anticipated. There was a growing realization, however, that the wrong kind of help, no matter how altruistic, could prove harmful. For example, unless foodstuffs and other commodities were carefully distributed on the basis of need, the program could leave in its wake, feelings of anger and resentment among those slighted. Similarly, the issuance of drugs, unless strictly controlled, could ultimately benefit the Viet Cong, rather than the sick Vietnamese peasants.

A project to improve the appearance of a VNAF housing area was a worthwhile effort, but it could have unfortunate consequences. In one instance, the VNAF Base Commander outlawed home laundries and ordered unsightly clotheslines and shacks removed. This ban on home laundries deprived the people of

an additional source of income and the destruction of shacks left them without any substitute facilities. Consequently, the appearance of the housing area was temporarily improved but at the price of lower morale among VNAF dependents. These are just a few illustrations to show the need for a well-planned program supervised by mature, experienced, and well-trained Base Civic Action Officers.

Two basic problems greatly complicated the task of evaluating the Air Force Civic Action Program. Air Force activities were only one element, and a relatively minor one, in the GVN Revolutionary Development Program. Therefore, an overall evaluation of the Revolutionary Development Program would not necessarily apply to the Air Force portion of the program. Also, the official Air Force Civic Action Program had not been in existence long enough to have any measurable impact on hamlets in the base environs. 1/

There were currently no established criteria against which the 7AF Civic Action Program could be evaluated. The 7AF Civic Action Division recognized the need for such an objective yardstick, and anticipated this need would be filled as the program matured. The monthly base reports gave some indication of progress, as did the periodic staff visits (usually once every three months), or more often if the program were lagging. The ranking of base programs as first, second, and third in competition for the Quarterly Base Civic Action Award also involved an evaluative procedure. All these attempts to assess the program were subjective, however, despite efforts to maintain as much objectivity as possible. In the first attempts to select the winning base, the 7AF Civic Action Council tended to place too

much emphasis on the number of USAF volunteer manhours expended in relationship to the base population. This was found to be an invalid yardstick, since a large number of USAF manhours could indicate that self-help was not being given sufficient emphasis. In subsequent efforts to nominate bases for the quarterly award, greater value was placed on the percentage of manhours expended by the Vietnamese.

Summarization of progress achieved in meeting goals of the 7AF Civic Action Program follows:

1. Initiate, develop and implement high impact civic action projects which:

a. Complement and stimulate the Revolutionary Development efforts of the GVN:

Formalization of the Air Force Civic Action Program provided better coordination of projects with GVN/US officials. This permitted integration of USAF Civic Action activities into the overall Revolutionary Development Provincial Plan and helped eliminate duplication and overlapping, while providing more effective utilization of supplies.

b. Improve the socio-economic status of the local populace:

The base perimeter program was designed to accomplish this purpose, and initial steps toward this goal had been taken. Some bases were emphasizing self-help construction projects, cottage industries, agricultural improvements, and educational and vocational training. MEDCAP team visits and instruction in personal hygiene and sanitation were contributing toward a healthier environment. However, the ignorance, disease, filth, poverty,

and apathy of centuries could not be eliminated in a matter of months or years. Furthermore, any modest gains achieved through these efforts were sometimes wiped out by destructive effects of war or natural disasters.

c. Gain support of the local populace for the GVN:

In this long-range program involving the changing of peasant attitudes, there was some evidence that Civic Action activities were resulting in increased intelligence. At several bases, the local OSI was working with intelligence sources contacted through Civic Action activity and was receiving information regularly. Hamlets that were formerly unfriendly were now friendly and tried to protect USAF personnel by warning of approaching Viet Cong. At two bases (Tan Son Nhut and Pleiku), the Civic Action Program was an integral part of the Perimeter Military Defenses System and Civic Action personnel participated in all meetings to discuss defenses of the base. In a letter dated 8 August 1967, the 7AF Inspector General requested Commanders at all bases to consider the Civic Action Program as an integral part of their plans for defense of their area. 2/

A captured enemy document had these comments about the Civic Action Program: 3/

> *"The enemy (Americans) behaved kindly to the people to win their heart. They carried the people's children in their arms, washed and changed their clothes. They seemed to pay attention to the people's lives. Those who were wounded were given thorough medical treatment. In addition, they assigned medics to be on duty day and night to treat the sick when it was necessary... Although the people knew the enemy was dishonest, they seemed to appreciate the treatment and compared them with those performed by our civil health teams. The people also realized that our civil health teams did not serve them as well as the Americans."*

d. Improve the image of the RVNAF in the eyes of the local populace.

Progress in advancing this goal was slow.

2. Stimulate and develop within the VNAF:

a. An understanding of the necessity for their participation in civic action projects;

b. A capability to initiate and implement civic action projects.

With several objectives closely related to those already identified, progress in stimulating VNAF participation in Civic Action activities had been far slower than considered desirable by Hq 7AF, and no dramatic improvement was expected. In addition to problems concerning leadership and substandard VNAF living conditions previously discussed, the program was handicapped by limited VNAF manpower and other resources. They showed reluctance to engage in manual labor; apathy prevailed, and loyalty identification was limited to family and clan, rather than to broader entities, such as the Air Force or government. 4/

3. Enhance the prestige of the USAF and U.S. and improve understanding of the U.S. role in Vietnam:

Many of the humanitarian activities of the Civic Action Program contributed to this goal as did the Community Relations Program. 5/

4. Assist in emergency relief of suffering of the local populace:

Since their arrival in-country, USAF personnel conducted a significant role in relieving hunger and suffering, and in repairing the damage caused by war and natural disasters. Formalization of Civic Action

activities permitted a better coordinated, speedier, and more effective response to emergency needs. 6/

CHAPTER IX

MEDICAL CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM

MEDCAP, a vitally important part of the overall Civic Action Program conducted by military forces in Vietnam, was designed to supplement the extensive CORDS/USAID Medical Program, which included preventive medicine, environmental health, maternal child care, health education, and the renovation and construction of provincial hospitals. MEDCAP had two related goals: 1/

- To establish a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation among the civilian population, GVN civilian officials, and the RVNAF.
- To support Revolutionary Development by improving the health environment of RVN civilians through commitment of military medical resources to the extent permitted by operational requirements.

To achieve these goals, the program had three objectives: continuity, participation, and improvement of the health environment. MEDCAP projects were to be conducted at a level of commitment permitting regularly scheduled participation and a level of professional capability that could be reasonably sustained by local GVN health resources upon eventual withdrawal of the military elements concerned. Medical Civic Action projects must have support of local government representatives and active participation of local residents. Projects were to include training of local medical personnel, and the instruction of civilians in basic sanitation and other preventive health measures. The introduction of sophisticated medical care and treatment was to be avoided, unless these standards

could be maintained by the GVN. [2]

Air Force participation in the GVN Revolutionary Development Medical Program consisted of: MEDCAP I, MEDCAP II, the Military Provincial Health Program, and air evacuation of civilian war casualties. MEDCAP I was the care and treatment of Republic of Vietnam civilians by medical personnel of the RVNAF with U.S. military personnel providing professional advice and instruction. This guidance covered areas of rodent and rabies control, sanitation, medical equipment maintenance, immunizations, public hygiene, and joint food facilities inspection. [3]

MEDCAP II was the care and treatment of RVN civilians by U.S. medical personnel. This effort was to be limited only by the primary mission, which was to provide medical and dental support necessary to maintain the highest possible degree of combat readiness and effectiveness. [4]

Under overall control of the Surgeon, MACV, the program was administered by Hq 7AF, with operational control delegated to each Director of Base Medical Services. The Chief, Dental Services, in the Surgeon's Office, Hq 7AF, was assigned additional duty as Civic Action Coordinator and served on the Hq 7AF Civic Action Council. Participation in MEDCAP II was encouraged on a strictly voluntary basis, and was conducted within current manpower ceilings. The decision to participate was between the individual and his unit commander. [5]

Military medical units performing MEDCAP II used organic medical equipment and expendable medical items supplied through supporting military logistics systems. In the case of the Air Force, the 12th USAF Hospital,



MEDCAP Visit
Figure 8

Cam Ranh Bay, would distribute medical supplies to Air Force units throughout the Republic of Vietnam and, as required to FWMAF collocated with 7AF units in RVN. Funding in the amount of $75,000 was requested for MEDCAP II expendable supplies for FY 69. In the event a MEDCAP-assisted Vietnamese facility needed nonexpendable medical items, the local USAID representative was to be contacted to arrange for issue of such items from the GVN Ministry of Health Depot. 6/

Medical Civic Action took many forms; some of these activities have been discussed under the Base Perimeter Program. The role of MEDCAP II in containing epidemic outbreaks was particularly significant. In November 1967, a case of bubonic plague was reported in the area immediately north and adjacent to Phu Cat village. It resulted in two deaths with four other individuals becoming ill with the disease before it was brought under control. A second outbreak of a more serious nature occurred in Nghiem Hoa Number 1 in An Nhon District. There were five deaths in a population of approximately 800. Eight patients were evacuated to the Provincial Hospital in Qui Nhon, and 32 other confirmed or suspected cases were treated in their homes. 7/

To check and control these outbreaks, a vigorous Immunization, Screening, and Insect Control Program was instituted by personnel of the 37th USAF Dispensary and the 37th Civil Engineering Squadron. Working closely with the Vietnamese district medical personnel and accompanied by medical representatives from the Phu Cat and An Nhon MACV subsectors, daily visits were made to the affected hamlets for 15 consecutive days.

No further deaths were reported after initiation of treatment and vaccination with live, attenuated vaccine furnished by the Vietnamese health service. 8/

The Surgeon's Office, 7AF, considered the concept of MEDCAP II basically sound, and that benefits from the program accrued for USAF and the Vietnamese people. At some bases, however, it reflected too wide a spectrum of activity, and insufficient understanding of MEDCAP goals. One base reported that despite curtailments by the local advisor, it still had medical personnel deployed on 29 field trips during a two-month period. This facility reported an enormous number of MEDCAP treatments and procedures by USAF medical personnel, including utilization of the USAF dispensary and dental facilities for this purpose. They also had the longest waiting time, however, for USAF personnel receiving dental treatment of any base in the country. Other bases had more balanced programs, which showed better planning and goal orientation. Pleiku seemed to have an especially resourceful program, which stressed teaching of health practices to local national health workers. 9/

For MEDCAP II to offer a meaningful contribution to the Welfare of the Vietnamese people, the Surgeon's Office recognized appropriate consideration had to be given to long-range goals. Sometimes it appeared that USAF medical personnel selected a hamlet, orphanage, or other institution and simply began a series of "treatments" of all types without regard to goals, priority of need, continuity, or other resources nearby. Moreover, any long-range benefits were predicated on development

of the local capability. Ambitious diagnostic and treatment activities performed by USAF personnel were less likely to have an impact on the health of the nation, than initially more modest activities in which the aim was to share skills with those who could continue to use them. Accordingly, MEDCAP II operations at all bases were reviewed with special emphasis placed on USAF medical personnel understanding program objectives. 10/

The Surgeon's Office believed that significant gains were achieved in the Medical Civic Action Program at many of the bases during July - December 1967. Practical and useful training programs for local nationals had been developed to allow them active participation. In many cases, these newly trained personnel had been able to provide medical care, develop preventive medicine standards, and serve as emissaries among the local people, the medicine chief, and visiting MEDCAP II teams. As in the rest of the Military Civic Action Program, emphasis was on "self-help" with USAF assistance. Under this concept, the various programs would eventually become self-sustaining. 11/

During the latter half of 1967, better coordination had been achieved with local authorities, CORDS, and other U.S. agencies. This fostered continuing programs for certain designated hamlets, orphanages, and other institutions. 12/

At bases having VNAF personnel, joint Civic Action Programs were developed. Whenever possible, it was desirable to work through the Vietnamese physician, with USAF personnel assisting him, as this resulted

in more effective programs through better communication. It also fostered reliance of the local citizenry on their Vietnamese doctors. [13]

Although these improvements were gratifying, the conduct of a voluntary program presented several problems. Medical personnel in Vietnam frequently worked long hours under less than optimum conditions. Under these circumstances, the high level of participation in MEDCAP activities affirmed motivation of Air Force medical personnel. During July - December 1967, monthly medical treatments averaged 10,296; dental treatments 1,893; and immunizations, 4,279; MEDCAP II personnel contributed a total of 114.5 man months. [14]

Despite these efforts, medical needs of the people in the base environs remained beyond capabilities of a limited voluntary program. Operational requirements forced MEDCAP II activities to be conducted on an irregular schedule, which made continuity and follow-up of patients difficult. Training of Vietnamese medical workers also suffered from an irregular schedule. Transportation of MEDCAP II personnel was frequently given a low priority, which resulted in wasted manhours and a breakdown in the planned schedule. [15]

These conditions pointed to the need for a full-time, primary duty Medical Civic Action Team at each base. This concept was discussed in April 1967, by personnel of the Surgeon's Office and the Civic Action Division, Directorate of Plans. It was envisioned that this team would replace the present voluntary aspects of MEDCAP and materially expand the

program to include: medical, veterinarian, and dental training; personal and dental hygiene instruction; and various aspects of sanitation and public health activities.

The composition of the proposed Civic Action Team would be as follows:[16/]

Number	AFSC	Grade	Title
1	9326	03	General Medical Officer
1	9826	03	General Dental Officer
1	90650	E-5	Medical Administration Specialist
1	90250	E-4	Medical Service Specialist
1	90270	E-7	Medical Service Technician and NCOIC
1	98150	E-5	Dental Technician
1	90750	E-5	Military Public Health Technician
1	20330	Civilian- LN	Language Specialist

This proposal was discussed with the MACV Command Surgeon, who believed there were sufficient medical teams working throughout Vietnam to care for the people's needs. He did not look favorably upon the idea of a full-time primary duty AF MEDCAP Team. However, after a personnel change in MACV, certain complications were removed and 7AF reviewed the matter further. In October 1967, the Commander, 7AF approved the concept, but because of force structure limitations, the timing seemed wrong, and the proposal was to be held in abeyance until early 1968.[17/]

In support of the proposal for primary duty full-time MEDCAP Teams, the Surgeon's Office noted that the U.S. Army had three Civic Affairs companies, each with an authorized strength of 42 officers and 96 enlisted men. Each company had a Public Health Team consisting of one medical officer and two enlisted men. The Navy had a number of Village Action

Teams (VATs) with some enlisted medical personnel who lived and worked in villages and performed all types of Civic Action activities. The 606th Air Commando Squadron of the 56th Air Commando Wing in Thailand had a primary duty of Civic Action. This squadron had 96 personnel authorized, including five physicians and one dentist. Both the U.S. and Thai governments had affirmed the value of this unit in nation-building. 18/

The following figures for the month of November 1967, give a comparison of the number of treatments given by various military services:

	Medical	Dental
U.S. Army	149,444	6,228
USAF	12,456	2,054
U.S. Navy	36,686	3,428
ROK	117,456	377
Philippines	10,074	1,352
Australians	7,000	--

It was anticipated that 80 full-time MEDCAP workers would be able to provide the following services each month: medical patients treated - 78,160; dental treatment procedures - 14,880; immunizations given - 31,010; instructional hours - 2,080. 19/

The Surgeon's Office pointed out that the proposal for primary duty full-time medical teams was not motivated solely by altruistic reasons. The MEDCAP Team was a vital part of Military Civic Action, designed to secure allegiance of local people to the central government, as well as improving their socio-economic level. This in turn should result in higher

intelligence and improved base security. Also, the Air Force had experienced certain domestic and international criticism due to bombing injuries of civilians. Prompt alleviation of suffering caused by war-inflicted injuries or disease would do much to improve the USAF image. Furthermore, improvement of the general health level in the base environs would inhibit epidemic outbreaks and the spread of other infectious diseases, which could pose a threat to the health of Air Force personnel. 20/

The proposed team concept would not in any way duplicate functions of the Military Provincial Health Program. This program, under operational control of MACV, was administered and supplied by USAID. It consisted of 57 medical teams which acted as advisors at provincial hospitals. The Air Force, Army, and Navy each had eight teams serving in this capacity; these teams consisted of 16 men. In addition to the military teams, there were 22 U.S. civilian teams and 11 teams sponsored by other Free World Forces involved in this program. 21/

The Air Force also participated in the War-Related Injury Program through its aero-medical evacuation role. Under certain emergency conditions, a limited number of Vietnamese civilians had received treatment in U.S. military facilities. This new program, however, was designed to expand the number of U.S. hospital beds available for civilian war casualties, which were estimated to be at least 50,000 per year. Approximately one-half of these casualties were in excess of existing GVN capability. The GVN medical system had no inter-province and insignificant intra-province patient evacuation capability. While the GVN did not

concur in evacuating civilian war casualties out of country, it did concur in the establishment of a temporary U.S. treatment system in-country to be parallel, but entirely separate from the existing government system. The Army was tasked to build, equip, and staff hospitals at Da Nang, Can Tho, and Chu Lai. To obtain maximum use of in-country hospital beds, the 7AF would support aeromedical evacuation of patients with existing in-country, fixed-wing aircraft, while the Army had responsibility for other evacuations. The existing system for arranging in-country aeromedical evacuation between the 44th Medical Brigade and the 903d Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron could provide essential support. 22/

During calendar year 1967, 616 civilian patients were aeroevacuated. No additional personnel or aircraft had been requested by 7AF to support the War-Related Injury Program, since the small workload generated was within present capabilities. The Vietnamese attachment to their ancestral homes and their reluctance to be separated from their families were believed to account for the small number of cases. 23/

FOOTNOTES

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GLOSSARY

AFAT	Air Force Advisory Team
AFGP	Air Force Advisory Group
BCAO	Base Civic Action Officer
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development
FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Forces
GVN	Government of Vietnam
IVA	International Voluntary Agency
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JUSPAO	Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MEDCAP	Medical Civic Action Program
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
TSN	Tan Son Nhut
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAT	Village Action Team
VC	Viet Cong
VNAF	Vietnamese Air Force