

SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
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OPENING STATEMENT

By

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I am John Paul Vann, the Deputy for CORDS to the Commanding General, Delta Military Assistance Command, a subordinate organization of the Military Assistance Command/Vietnam (MACV), and one with responsibility for the US advisory effort in the IV CTZ.

The IV CTZ, also known as the Delta, encompasses an area of 14,240 square miles extending south and west of Saigon a distance of approximately 180 miles to the Camau Peninsula, and being approximately 185 miles at its widest point on the east-west axis. The 16 provinces are politically subdivided into 96 districts and these districts in turn into 725 villages and 4,205 hamlets. The major industry is farming and the Delta produces about 80 percent of all rice grown in South Vietnam. Additionally, it is the major producer of fresh water fish, exporting over 30,000 tons to Saigon annually, and pork, the principal meat consumed in Vietnam. To a large extent, the 3,000,000 people living in the Saigon/Cholon area are dependent on the Delta for their food.

Although the road network in the Delta is not extensive, it is one that has secure roads to all 16 of the provincial capitals and to the majority of the district capitals. I might add that since July 1969, for the first time since 1961, all provincial capitals can be reached by road with unescorted single vehicle traffic during daylight hours. The principal routes of communication in the Delta, however, are the canals and waterways. There are over 2,400 miles of major waterways in the Delta with the majority being secure during daylight hours. (In addition, there are approximately 23,000 miles of minor waterways.)

An interesting fact about the Delta is that although the GVN has a lower percentage of control of the population than in the other three Corps, most of the civilian population in the Delta lives in peace. I recently had an opportunity to demonstrate this to Senator Javits when he accompanied Ambassador Colby and me on a visit to refugee returnee areas which only six months ago had been under Viet Cong control and devoid of population. For the past four months, there had not been a Viet Cong initiated incident in the several hamlets we visited. When looking at the Delta in its entirety, we have an average of 25 enemy initiated attacks during each 24-hour period against the more than 4,000 hamlets, 3,000 outposts and 5,000 government installations. This means that the average target for VC activity within the Delta will be hit only once in a year and a half. Actually, of course, there are many places which have never been attacked and there are a few which may be attacked four or five times a week. An example of the latter is the Tri Ton District area of Chau Doc Province. With the move into this area last spring of two of the five North Vietnamese regiments which have been deployed south to the Delta, the security has deteriorated in over 30 of the hamlets around the mountains now occupied by these North Vietnamese units. Overall, however, there has been a rather tremendous improvement in security in the Delta during 1969. Well over a million additional people have been brought under government protection during this period with progress being made in all provinces. Of interest, I believe, is the fact that pacification progress continued in Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa and Go Cong Provinces, even after the departure of the US 9th Division in August 1969, although the rate of progress was slower than when the division was present. Of really great significance regarding our operations in the Delta is the fact that all the ground fighting there is now being done by Vietnamese forces and

they have generally proved able to meet and defeat the enemy. It is to be noted, of course, that even after the departure of our ground forces, the Vietnamese forces in the Delta have continued to have US air, naval and advisory support. With that background on the Delta, let me describe to you the CORDS mission in the CTZ level.

It is very similar to that at the MACV level from the standpoint of the functional responsibilities. At the CTZ level, we have personnel providing advisory assistance to the Government of Vietnam in the fields of territorial security forces (RF/PF), People's Self Defense Forces, National Police and National Police Field Forces, the Open Arms or Chieu Hoi program, the PHUNG HOANG (PHOENIX) program, public health, public works, refugees, economic and social development (to include agriculture and education), public administration (to include advising on the training of village and hamlet officials), and RD Cadre.

I directly supervise the 16 Province Senior Advisors and prepare their efficiency reports. Within the IV CTZ, 9 of my 16 province advisory teams are headed up by US Army colonels or lieutenant colonels with civilian Foreign Service Officers assigned as their deputies. In the remaining seven provinces, the Province Senior Advisor is a senior Foreign Service Officer with a colonel or lieutenant colonel serving as his deputy.

At the CTZ level, my counterpart is the Vietnamese Corps Commander when functioning in his role as Chairman of the Corps Pacification and Development Council. As a practical matter, the majority of my advisory responsibilities are involved with advising the Deputy for Territorial Security, a Vietnamese brigadier general who represents the Commanding General, IV CTZ, on all matters involving provincial military forces and who functions as the de facto Chairman of the Corps Pacification and Development Council. This officer, Brigadier

General Nguyen Huu Hanh, and I and our respective staffs meet formally each Monday morning for a three-hour review of the previous week's activities and a projection of the forthcoming week. In attendance at these meetings are approximately 20 Vietnamese military and civilian officials and 10 US military and civilian officials. The officials on the Vietnamese side are the regional representatives of the central ministries in Saigon and the principal staff officers in the IV CTZ military headquarters. The Americans represented are the senior advisors to these officials. The meeting is used as a problem-solving session wherein all of the briefings and most of the discussions are by and among the Vietnamese officials (with simultaneous translation for the US personnel).

Prior to the meeting, US advisors have provided their recommendations as to discussion topics and each advisor, operating under my direction, has recommended to his Vietnamese counterpart the problem areas that should be brought up and solutions that should be proposed. In addition to this formal three-hour session, I meet with General Hanh approximately 10 or 12 times a week and also correspond with him frequently, often reducing to writing the subjects that we have discussed orally. We frequently travel together to areas where there are problems to be solved and we usually see each other at one or two social functions a week. These social functions usually involve a dinner in honor of a departing advisor or a visitor to the Corps, either Vietnamese or American. Although General Hanh is fluent in the English language, most of my correspondence to him is prepared in both English and Vietnamese so as to insure the maximum comprehension.

I have noticed that most visitors in Vietnam are surprised to learn that CORDS has military as well as civilian advisory responsibilities. Actually,

CORDS has a considerable military advisory responsibility. For example, in the Delta Military Assistance Command, IV CTZ, the regular MACV military advisory organization numbers less than 1,000 and has advisory responsibility for 78,000 ARVN soldiers. The IV CTZ MACCORDS organization (with 234 civilian and 2,123 military advisors) has advisory responsibility for 184,000 members of the Regional and Popular Forces, 19,000 National and Combat Police, and 16,000 armed RD Cadre. In addition to advising these full-time military and paramilitary personnel, CORDS has advisory responsibility for a People's Self Defense Force armed with 104,000 rifles. Thus, you can see that the total rifle strength advised by CORDS in IV CTZ is well over 300,000 compared to the regular force strength of 78,000. The significance of this, of course, is the overwhelming importance of providing security to the population. Without security, it is doubtful that the remaining pacification objectives can be achieved.

As I indicated earlier, we have been making progress in security, and also in our other objective areas. In 1969, over 1,260,000 of the 6,000,000 population were added to the secure category (leaving less than 800,000 in a contested or VC-controlled status). The GVN held elections in 275 villages and in 1,700 hamlets, thus resulting in about 90 percent of all population centers having elected governments. Approximately 30,000 people came over to the government side under the Chieu Hoi program, nearly three times as many as the previous record year. We reduced the number of people in refugee status from over 220,000 to less than 35,000. Significantly, not only for the Delta but for all Vietnam, the production of rice went up nearly 25 percent, from 3.2 million metric tons to 4.0 million. Finally, the GVN increased the armed strength of the People's Self Defense Force from 23,000 to 105,000.

I'd like to describe the pacification process now followed by the GVN in the Delta. Determination is made approximately six months in advance as to

the location and extent that pacification efforts will be made. This is normally done on the basis of population density, lines of communications, economic attractiveness, availability of friendly resources and size and strength of the enemy forces. Initially, the regular forces of ARVN operate in the area, breaking up the main forces of the enemy and scattering them. Next, still under a regular force shield, an RF Company will come in and build a platoon-size outpost; in a really tough, long-held area it might be a company-sized outpost. Eventually the regular force departs, usually a company at a time. Meanwhile, operating under an appointed hamlet or village government, attempts are made to recruit and send for 13 weeks of training a 35-man PF platoon. Concurrently, National Police Field Forces are brought in and efforts are made to neutralize the infrastructure -- the so-called hidden government of the enemy. I'd like to emphasize here that we stress neutralization of the enemy infrastructure through capture or inducement to rally under the Chieu Hoi program. A live VCI is of infinitely greater value than a dead one, since his capture or defection imperils the entire enemy organization in the area.

When adequate security exists, an election is held. This may or may not be before the recruited PF have returned. Some elections are quite good, some quite bad. Even a bad one (i.e., not enough candidates to make it a contest) is worth-while, since it is a learning process and usually assures that the next one will be more valid (and that the "elected" official will be more responsive to the "voters").

All during this time -- depending both on the resources available and the real security -- efforts are being made to encourage economic progress through group endeavors -- with some GVN assistance. Part of the organization effort is also diverted toward security, with significant numbers of the population

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becoming members of the People's Self Defense Forces. This program, as you know, is not entirely voluntary, but a real attempt is made to make it popular through demonstration of the fact that improved security is nearly always followed by economic improvement.

Eventually, as these various objectives are achieved at the village or hamlet level, and as adjacent areas are brought under government control, law and order becomes a function of uniformed police with assistance from the PSDF. Some areas, such as those having a contiguous boundary with Cambodia, cannot improve their security to this extent since enemy forces lurk nearby in the safe haven afforded, and always pose a threat. This process I have just described occurred in over a thousand hamlets in the Delta in 1969. Most hamlets targeted achieved their minimum objectives, some surpassed them, others are still trying.

Gentlemen, I will attempt to answer any questions you may have that deal with my area of responsibility.

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