"definitely very much worse." In this connection, he described the ARVN as "like the soldiers of the Thirty Years War," serving endlessly, well-armed, low-paid, and often with little to do.[1] Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak recently described ARVN "brigandage" in Cambodia as "extraordinary even in the context of Indochina's bloody history."[2]

U.S. and South Vietnamese officials have considered a number of ways to improve the lot of the ARVN enlisted man. One, which has been partially put in effect, is to recruit units from a single locale and have the unit serve there. The Regional and Popular Forces are based largely on this concept, with the result that there is a much lower desertion rate in the militia. (See section E, below.) By early 1970, South Vietnam's elite First Division had recruited some 55 percent of its men from the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam, where the Division operates.[3] This fact, coupled with a unique commissary system for enlisted men, a once-a-month leave system, and provision for some housing for dependents, has been cited as a major factor in making the First Division South Vietnam's best infantry division.[4]

Local recruiting can cause problems, however, particularly if the unit is ordered out of its locale. This was apparently the reason for the refusal

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1/ New York Times, September 7 and 12, 1971. Kansas City Times, August 19, 1971.
2/ Washington Post, October 10, 1971.
3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam, Policy and Prospects, 1970, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 464.
4/ Ibid. The Christian Science Monitor, December 30, 1969.

of many of the Ninth Division's enlisted men to leave the Mekong Delta for the DMZ front in Quangtri Province.[1] Since North Vietnamese pressure in Military Region I and the U.S. withdrawal from that zone have created a need for increased ARVN strength in northern South Vietnam, the problem must be surmounted if the Saigon forces are to continue to hold on to the area.

Other suggestions to improve ARVN morale include a regular leave system and the limitation of military service to a fixed term with subsequent service in the Regional or Popular Forces or the People's Self-Defense Forces. The purpose of the latter proposal is to give ARVN personnel the hope of resuming normal life in the society for which they have fought, rather than the prospect of indefinite service. The United States apparently favors both ideas, but the Government of Vietnam has not taken action on either.[2]

Some critics of Vietnamization dismiss such proposals and claim, instead, that the ARVN morale problem stems from a deep-seated war weariness among the people of South Vietnam and lack of identification with the government of President Thieu. Thus, in their view, leaves, commissary privileges, increased pay, and service near home will do little to alleviate the situation. These critics call for more fundamental changes and place much of their emphasis on a peace settlement based on a revamped government in Saigon which will command the people's respect.

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1/ New York Times, September 12, 1971.
2/ New York Times, July 12, 1971.

C. The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF)

South Vietnam's air force by the summer of 1971 had 40,000 men and 850 planes and helicopters in 36 squadrons, in contrast to the situation in 1968, when it had 18,500 men and 350 mostly obsolete aircraft in 20 squadrons, only one of them equipped with jets. By 1974, the VNAF is scheduled to have 50,000 men and 50 squadrons with 1,200 aircraft, including jet and propeller-driven transports and fighters and 500 to 600 helicopters. When it reaches that point, the VNAF will rank as the seventh largest air force in the world. It will surpass Hanoi's air force in everything except the important categories of jet fighter-bombers and interceptors.[1/]

Until around the beginning of 1971, the Vietnamization program called for a buildup of the VNAF to 40 squadrons. The new goal of 50 squadrons is expected to be largely completed by the summer of 1973. However, the VNAF is reportedly to get up to three squadrons of F5-E International Fighters in 1974. The F5-E is being developed specifically for the air forces of South Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, and Nationalist China.[2/] The F5-E's are expected to give the VNAF a force capable of handling any move by North Vietnam to introduce its air force into South Vietnam after

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1/ New York Times, May 20, 1971. Washington Post, January 7, 1971.

2/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Fiscal Year 1972 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development, Construction and Real Estate Acquisition for the Safeguard ABM, and Reserve Strength. Part II. Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Office: 1250. Northrop Corporation is producing 325 of the F5-E's. The precise number allotted to South Vietnam is classified.

U.S. forces have withdrawn. North Vietnam has approximately 90 MIG 21's along with over 160 older MIG-17's and 19's.[1] Until the F-5E's are delivered, the United States will reportedly maintain an air capability in the Southeast Asian region in order to deter North Vietnam from sending its MIGs southward.[2]

The VNAF will not be able to perform all the functions, which the U.S. Air Force has carried out. By May 1971 the VNAF was flying over 50 percent of the allied attack sorties in South Vietnam and Cambodia.[3] However, it is unclear whether the increase in the VNAF's percentage of sorties is the result of stepped-up operations or merely a reduction in the number of sorties flown by U.S. planes, which are down by 50 percent in South Vietnam and over one-third for Indochina as a whole.[4] The VNAF currently conducts about 3,500 attack sorties per month,[5] but statistics covering the last three years are classified.

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1/ New York Times, January 26, 1971.
2/ New York Times, January 26 and October 29, 1971.
3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Fiscal Year 1972 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development.... Part II. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971 p. 1245. U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, pp. 2668-2669.
4/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 2668.
5/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 819.

It has already been noted that the VNAF will possess far fewer helicopters than the U.S. Air Force when Vietnamization is completed. Besides reducing air transport and mobility, this will limit the level of direct helicopter fire support provided for South Vietnamese ground troops.

Finally, until at least mid-1971, the U.S. did not plan for a VNAF capability to conduct any bombing of North Vietnamese infiltration routes in Laos or for that matter in North Vietnam itself. The U.S. purposely limited the VNAF to an operational capability within South Vietnam out of a fear that the Government of Vietnam might widen the war if the VNAF had the means to bomb in Laos and North Vietnam.[1/] Thus, for example, the VNAF has received no U.S. F-4 Phantom jets or B-52's.[2/]

This fact, of course, raises the possibility that the United States might continue to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and enemy forces in Cambodia in support of the Cambodian Army even after it has ended all military operations inside South Vietnam. Secretary Laird has stated that such an option would remain open. When asked during Congressional testimony in March 1971 if the United States would continue its bombing support in Indochina from Thailand after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, he stated: "I would certainly anticipate that that option would remain open."[3/]

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1/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Fiscal Year 1972 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development..... Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 243; Part II, p. 1225.
2/ U.S. Congress. House Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 92nd Cong. 1st sess., 1971, pp. 3549, 3668.
3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Fiscal Year 1972 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development.....Part I. 92nd Cong. 1st sess., 1971, p. 245.

When asked about "the presence of U.S. air support in Indochina after these troops are pulled out," Laird asserted at a April 1971 news conference:

> I would envision that the United States presence as far as Asia is concerned, as far as Naval forces are concerned, as far as Air Forces are concerned, that this would be a part of the realistic deterrent which we will maintain in Asia.1/

Other statements reportedly made by U.S. officials suggest, however, that the United States would like to cut back sharply, if not completely curtail, bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail by 1973 or 1974.2/ Moreover, by October 1971 the Nixon Administration was considering providing South Vietnam with light aircraft capable of conducting some interdiction missions in Laos. The Administration reportedly believes that a limited capability of this type plus South Vietnamese ground forays into Laos will compensate in part for any suspension of the U.S. bombing.

The Pentagon announced on October 26 that contracts had been awarded to Fairchild Industries and Helio Aircraft Corporation for construction by each of 15 armed, short-takeoff and -landing aircraft. The planes will reportedly be equipped with three-barrel 20 mm. rapid-fire Gatling guns, 2.75-inch rockets, special night vision devices and some new types of bombs. Initial tests over the trail will reportedly be made in the spring of 1972; successful tests could lead to the purchase of 100 or more of the aircraft by the Pentagon.3/

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1/ News conference of Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, April 13, 1971.
2/ New York Times, October 29, 1971. Washington Star, November 10, 1971.
3/ New York Times, October 29, 1971. Washington Post, November 13, 1971. The Helio version is called the Courier; the Fairchild plane is the Peacemaker.

At his November 12, 1971, news conference, President Nixon stressed the importance of air power in relation to the infiltration routes in Laos and Cambodia and the protection of U.S. troops as they withdraw. Speaking of U.S. air power generally in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, he stated that "we will continue to use it in support of the South Vietnamese until thare is a negotiated settlement or, looking further down the road, until the South Vietnamese have developed the capability to handle the situation themselves."[1/] While the President's remarks were vague, he appeared to be suggesting that American bombing of the infiltration routes was not an indefinite proposition.

The United States conducted five days of heavy air attacks against North Vietnam beginning on December 26, 1971. U.S. planes flew about 1,000 attack sorties against fuel and supply depots, anti-aircraft guns, missile and radar sites, and MIG fighter airfields. U.S. officials offered varying explanations for the bombing, including North Vietnam's violation of the so-called October 1968 bombing halt "understanding," and anti-aircraft and MIG fighter threats to U.S. bombing in Laos. President Nixon and Secretary Laird in public statements stressed the bombing as essential to protect the remaining American forces in South Vietnam.[2/] By tying the bombing--both the limited air attacks against North Vietnam and the continuing campaign in Laos--to the protection of U.S. troops as they withdraw, the Administration may be seeking an option to reduce or halt the bombing as the number of American troops declines further.

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1/ Washington Post, November 13, 1971.
2/ New York Times, December 28, 1971; January 3, 1972

Air power has been a major factor in allied military successes and could be a decisive factor in the success or failure of Vietnamization. Air power, particularly American, has inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and has enabled allied forces to conduct operations in remote areas. General Westmoreland admitted early in 1971 that:

> It is American air power and artillery that are killing the majority of the enemy.1/

General John D. Ryan, chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, stated after the 1971 Laos incursion that it could not have been carried out without American air power.2/ A U.S. Army study done in 1969 estimated that U.S. helicopter gunships and tactical air strikes accounted for 35 percent of the enemy killed in action.3/ The author of the study concluded that air support was "a contributing factor" to even the success of the Regional and Popular Forces.4/ The vital role of U.S. helicopter support in Laos during February and March 1971 has already been cited. The heavy fighting at Krek in eastern Cambodia in September and October 1971 produced the comment by South Vietnam's Lt. General Nguyen Xuan Thinh: "I think the U.S. air support has made the difference" between ARVN victory and defeat. According

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1/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on military posture. Part I, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 2617.
2/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 760. General Ryan expressed the view that the Vietnamization program would allow the United States to reduce "some" of its air power in Southeast Asia.
3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 272.
4/ Ibid., p. 278.

to South Vietnamese field commanders, the VNAF flew about 50 percent of the tactical air strikes, 40 percent of the troop and supply missions, and 25 percent of the helicopter gunship missions during the fighting, which began September 26.[1] This led General Thinh to comment:

> Our air force is still very weak. In two or three years it will become bigger but right now we need very much U.S. air support.[2]

"Informed sources" in Saigon credited the U.S. Air Force with 700 tactical combat strikes plus 100 B-52 strikes during the fighting, while U.S. helicopters flew thousands of sorties ferrying South Vietnamese troops and supplies.[3] A "senior American" at Tayninh was quoted as saying that:

> Our contribution was very significant. I'm not going to say they couldn't have done it without us, but we sure helped a hell of a lot.[4]

Whether South Vietnam can get along without the concentrated U.S. bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and extensive U.S. combat air support is another major "if" of the Vietnamization program. On the plus side, the VNAF is considered highly professional and competent and probably can pick up some of the slack. On the minus side are the limitations as listed above.

Finally, there is the question of enemy capabilities after more than ten years of fighting. Can and will North Vietnam renew the big-battle

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1/ Washington Star, October 8, 1971.
2/ Ibid.
3/ Ibid.
4/ Washington Post, October 10, 1971.

strategy of 1965-68 once American forces are gone, especially in northern South Vietnam near the DMZ? Will Hanoi send its tanks and MIG-21's south after the American withdrawal? 1/ A recent New York Times analysis of the VNAF cited statements by "a high civilian official" in Saigon that the principal assumptions held by the United States concerning the future of the war were that the South Vietnamese could get along without the helicopter and air capabilities of American forces, that enemy activity in South Vietnam would remain at its present low level, that bombing of enemy infiltration routes in Laos and Cambodia would not be necessary by 1974, and that by the mid-1970's the war would be limited to small-scale clean-up operations. 2/ Secretary Rogers expressed a similar view early in 1970: "I believe that the enemy has the capability of continuing the war on a reduced scale for several years." 3/ Secretary Laird updated this assessment on November 8, 1971, by stating upon his return from a trip to Vietnam:

> The Communists will, in a limited way, be able to cause some problems, but the South Vietnamese should be capable of handling these...and the North Vietnamese are not in a position where they can carry on a major countrywide military effort. 4/

If such statements accurately reflect official American opinion, the United States apparently believes that North Vietnam no longer has the

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1/ Ibid., December 2, 1971. Washington Star, December 3, 1971. The importance of this question was pointed up by U.S. disclosures in early December 1971 that Hanoi's MIGs had been operating over Laos for the last two months. This new development caused speculation that North Vietnam may be preparing a direct challenge to U.S. air supremecy in Laos.
2/ New York Times, May 20, 1971.
3/ Wall Street Journal, January 20, 1971.
4/ Washington Post, November 9, 1971.

capability to carry out the "big-battle" strategy of 1965-68 and will have to continue its current emphasis on "protracted war." This will, in turn, lessen the importance of firepower and heighten the importance of pacification and the Regional and Popular Forces. Thus, Vietnamization appears to be geared in large part to this assessment of reduced enemy capabilities for the foreseeable future.

Some critics and observers of Vietnamization are skeptical of this assessment and question whether the United States has given South Vietnam the air power necessary to insure the success of the program. As stated earlier, they point out that the Vietnamese Armed Forces have been trained and developed in the image of the U.S. Armed Forces; thus it will be difficult for the Vietnamese to adjust to reduced firepower capabilities. While the South Vietnamese may overemphasize this point in order to secure as much U.S. equipment and weapons as possible, some Americans have drawn similar conclusions. Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, former U.S. Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command (including Vietnam), wrote in January 1971 that:

> There will still be many tasks that the South Vietnamese cannot perform because they do not have the equipment or the trained personnel.
>
> Let's consider the Army. A number of our helicopter companies will be needed to give the Vietnamese the mobility that is so essential in this type of warfare. I assume we will need to supplement the Vietnamese artillery with U.S. units for they must be short of the total fire power necessary to protect their troops. In the field of logistic support they will have to have our assistance.
>
> ....Air power is an important requirement in Southeast Asia until the North Vietnamese aggression is finally concluded. In South Vietnam close air support of the ground troops will be supplied increasingly by the South Vietnamese Air Force as it grows in capability. The longer range interdiction of the supply lines in Laos and Cambodia will be a task for American aircraft for the foreseeable future, in my opinion. 1/

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1/ New York Times, January 18, 1971.

The South Vietnamese have also criticized some specific types of weaponry given to the VNAF as inadequate for the tasks it is supposed to perform. Vice President Ky has described the A-37 attack bomber, the backbone of the VNAF, as an airplane "for women." Other South Vietnamese airmen, while praising the A-37 for its easy handling and maintenance, point out that it ordinarily carries only six bombs as compared to 14 for the old propeller-driven A-1 bombers; thus, they, say, the VNAF could use some jet bombers with a greater bomb load. 1/

Questions have also been raised about the ability of the F5-E International Fighters to cope with North Vietnam's MIG-21's. Air Force Secretary Seamans disclosed in Congressional testimony that the F5-E had the poorest capability of a number of planes which U.S. aircraft companies had proposed to build. According to Seamans, the Air Force chose the F5-E on the basis of cost. Seamans asserted, however, that the F5-E could outperform the MIG-21 at combat altitudes under conditions of friendly ground control. 2/

U.S. officials answer the critics with two basic points. As stated earlier, they purposely have not given the VNAF the capability to bomb North Vietnam. Secondly, they express doubt about the VNAF's ability to maintain and repair more sophisticated aircraft. According to these officials, both the A-37 and the F5-E are exceptionally easy to maintain in flying condition. 3/

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1/ New York Times, May 20, 1971.

2/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Fiscal Year 1972 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development...Part II. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 1249. Washington Post, June 16, 1971. Columnist Joseph Alsop has charged that the F5-E is not in the "same league" as the MIG-21.

3/ New York Times, May 20, 1971.

D. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN)

The Vietnamese Navy so far has shown greater progress in Vietnamization than the other services. The Navy has two essential tasks to perform: patrolling South Vietnam's 1,000-mile coast to prevent North Vietnamese infiltration by sea, and keeping the rivers of the Mekong Delta open. In December 1970 the Vietnamese Navy took over nearly all of the riverine operations (primarily in the Delta) from the U.S. Navy. Since that time the VNN has also assumed all inner seacoast surveillance from the U.S. Navy. Emphasis is now being placed on turning over maintenance and logistics functions to the VNN. The United States expects that the VNN will achieve self-sufficiency by July 1972.[1/]

The U.S. program, which began in November 1968, has entailed the turning over of more than 600 combat craft to the VNN.[2/] These are mainly smaller craft, geared to the coastal and riverine functions the VNN is supposed to perform. They include LST landing ships, river assault boats, command control boats, and repair and utility craft.

The VNN has experienced many of the same problems as the ARVN. These have been accentuated by the fact that the Army dominates the Vietnamese military establishment; the Navy has been dependent on the Army for funds. As a result, pay increases and promotions have been too few. Since 1965, the Vietnamese sailor's pay has risen only 50 percent while consumer prices have

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1/ Ibid. U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 1032.
2/ San Diego Union, June 3, 1971.

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1/ Ibid. U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 1032.
2/ San Diego Union, June 3, 1971.

gone up 800 percent.[1] The resultant low living standard for Vietnamese sailors has, according to U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, made it "uncertain whether the Vietnamese navy will be able to continue to function as a viable and professional fighting force once massive U.S. support is withdrawn."[2]

A lack of good leadership has also been a problem, particularly among petty officers, who are often in charge of patrol boats. While the Navy has a considerably greater percentage of officers without a high school diploma than does the ARVN, this does not mean the absence of class bias. Advancement up the promotion ladder has all too often gone to the politically astute.

Still, despite these problems, Vietnamization has progressed further in the VNN than in the other two services. Equipment and weapons deficiencies appear to be less in the Navy than in the Army and Air Force. Given a more limited function, the VNN apparently has fewer problems than the other services.

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1/ Ibid.
2/ Ibid.

E. Pacification Security

1. Regional and Popular Forces

Security has long been considered the key to successful pacification in South Vietnam, for it has been shown time after time that the Government's hold over a village or hamlet and the success of its programs there depend, in the first instance, on the village or hamlet's being safe from Communist harassment or attack. From this factor stems the importance of South Vietnam's Regional and Popular Forces, for it is their responsibility to protect villages and hamlets from the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. The Washington Post in June 1971 quoted a senior U.S. pacification official on the importance of security:

> Every time a village is heavily attacked and PF are thrown back, the cause of the GVN /Government of Vietnam/ is set back in that village for a year. The government can hold all the elections under the sun, but the name of the game is security. 1/

A Senate Foreign Relations staff report of December 1969 stated:

> The qualifying or negative aspects of the pacification program apart, it seems to be generally agreed that maintaining progress in the program depends primarily upon the ability of the South Vietnamese Government to assure the security of the countryside. 2/

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1/ Washington Post, June 28, 1971.
2/ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: December 1969. A staff report prepared for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off.: 6.

Following the Communist Tet offensive of 1968, Allied pacification policy shifted toward the principle that in order to control a village or hamlet, there must be a permanent, armed Government presence.[1/] Consequently, the Government of Vietnam gave much greater emphasis to building up and arming the long neglected territorial militia for this task. Between the beginning of 1968 and the beginning of 1970, the size of the Regional and Popular Forces grew from about 300,000 men to a combined total of 475,000 men.[2/] As stated earlier, the RF and PF presently number about 515,000, and all RF and PF units have been given M-16 rifles and some other types of modern equipment. The U.S. Army began assigning advisers to work with and train RF and PF personnel, thus emulating previous efforts by the Marine Corps. Other U.S. personnel were given the job of assuring that the RF and PF were paid on time and adequately supplied.

The upgraded role of the RF and PF has had a considerable effect on Vietnamization and the U.S. troop withdrawal. Before 1968-69, most regular South Vietnamese Army forces spent their time protecting hamlets and villages. American forces bore the brunt of the fighting against North Vietnamese units. The expanded RF and PF have enabled the ARVN to take on a growing share of the front-line fighting and thereby allow the United States gradually to phase down its forces. The process has made the RF and PF the key to the success of the pacification effort.

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1/ Where Peace is Returning in Vietnam: Interview with a Top American Adviser. U.S. News and World Report, May 31, 1971: 30. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 103.

2/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Foreign Relations Committee. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, pp. 28, 37.

As noted earlier in this report, the role of the RF and PF takes on primary importance once allied forces have driven enemy main force units from an area. At that juncture Regional Forces assume security responsibility for the area. At the same time, 35-men PF platoons are recruited from each village and/or hamlet. After 13 weeks of training, a PF platoon returns to its home village or hamlet and assumes the security responsibility for it. Meanwhile, other elements of the pacification program begin, including the rooting out of the Vietcong infrastructure, the holding of elections, and economic development.

Belonging to the RF and PF has offered the advantage to its members of serving near their homes. This arrangement is designed to increase morale and a sense of popular participation in the defense of South Vietnam. On the basis of testimony by U.S. officials, there is evidence that it is having some of the desired effect. William Colby, former head of the U.S. pacification program, stated in February 1970 that desertion became less of a problem as one proceeded from the regular forces through the Regional Forces to the Popular Forces. In other words, as Colby stated: "As they become closer to their localities, the problem becomes less."[1/] Secretary Laird pointed out that many deserters from the regular ARVN joined RF and PF units closer to their homes.[2/]

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1/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 37.
2/ U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1971. Part I. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 437.

There can be little doubt that the upgraded Regional Forces and Popular Forces have contributed substantially to the pacification gains recorded since late in 1968. By July 1971 there were some 1,000 Regional Force companies and 7,000 Popular Force platoons in South Vietnam.[1] Nowhere have they had a greater impact than in the Mekong Delta, South Vietnam's most populous region and until 1968 the Vietcong's strongest redoubt in the country. In July of that year, U.S. pacification statistics recorded 2,000 hamlets in the Delta under Government control while the Vietcong held 2,100 hamlets. Within a year the number of Delta residents under Vietcong control fell from 2 million to just above 500,000. By November 1970 the number of Vietcong-controlled hamlets had dropped to 55. By May 1971, the Government said it controlled more than 4,000 hamlets, with 14 in Vietcong hands. About 570 were regarded as contested.[2] This erosion of Communist strength took place as the U.S. Ninth Division withdrew from the Delta in 1969, leaving some 23,000 American advisory personnel (civilian and military) as the remaining U.S. presence there.[3] Press reports throughout 1969 and 1970 largely confirmed the description portrayed by the statistics; these reports pictured large areas in the Delta free from any serious Vietcong threat and enjoying an economic revival.[4]

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1/ New York Times, July 12, 1971.

2/ Washington Post, December 16, 1970; September 26, 1969. Where Peace is Returning in Vietnam: Interview with a Top American Adviser. U.S. News and World Report, May 31, 1971: 29. The statistics were cited by John Paul Vann, U.S. pacification chief in the Delta, and long considered to be one of the most realistic of U.S. officials in Vietnam.

3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: December 1969. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 7.

4/ Washington Post, September 2, 1971. In one of the latest of these reports, columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak described Vietcong activity as "at its lowest level since 1961 in this most populous and most fertile region of South Vietnam."

The number of Vietcong incidents also dropped off sharply in the Delta, from 150"incidents" a day in 1968 to between 12 and 20 per day in 1971. The current level of incidents, according to American officials, is relatively insignificant, given the potential 20,000 Government targets in the region.[1] One American adviser recently noted that in the past "each of these attacks would mean 30 to 40 mortar rounds; now it's two or three."[2] To an increasing degree, the incidents have been acts of terrorism rather than major attacks.

U.S. pacification officials have attributed much of the pacification successes in the Delta and elsewhere to the RF and PF. William Colby told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1970:

> For example, in the Delta in 1969, we pacified 1,000 additional hamlets in a 12-months period. Coincidentally, we recruited and trained 1,000 additional RF and PF platoons and put them in those hamlets. They are still there. That also, sir, is why, unlike any other pacification program, this one cannot be rolled back by sudden political reversal. This is one in which the enemy, if and when he begins to react to it--I don't really think he can, but if and when he does--can't come in and overrun two or three hamlets and then have the whole provice or whole series of provinces collapse. He is going to have to eat those hamlets up platoon by platoon and this is going to be awfully costly to him.
>
> This is the great difference now. We occupy those hamlets; the government has control there. We are there 24 hours a day. We are staying there and we intend to stay there.[3]

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1/ Where Peace is Returning to Vietnam ...U.S. News and World Report, May 31, 1971: 29.

2/ Washington Post, May 28, 1971.

3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 103.

John Paul Vann, U.S. pacification chief in the Delta until mid-1971 and now pacification chief in Military Region II (Central Highlands), put it more bluntly:

> In the Delta, as I mentioned earlier, the Government now controls 2,000 more hamlets than it controlled in 1968. Why? Because we have 2,000 more Popular Force and Regional Force platoons than we had in 1968.1/

Basic statistical evidence tends to reinforce this view. Delta security is presently maintained by 200,000 RF and PF backed up by another 200,000 lightly-armed People's Self-Defense Forces. Only 65,000 regular army forces are in the Delta.2/ The strong RF/PF numerical advantage over the estimated 35,000 VC in the Delta,3/ coupled with the effects of the Cambodian operations in May-June 1970, has enabled the militia to deal with the Communist threat.

In areas outside the Delta, a general pattern emerged after the 1970 Cambodian incursion whereby the further north one travels the less secure the area becomes. This pattern reflects several factors, including the rougher terrain, population density, and nearness to North Vietnamese infiltration routes. Consequently, a U.S. survey covering May and June 1971 reportedly stated that Military Region III surrounding Saigon showed considerable progress despite some local deterioration. In this area, U.S. officials reported that by early 1970, RF and PF were assuming "the dominant

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1/ Where Peace is Returning in Vietnam...U.S. News and World Report, May 31, 1971: 30. Washington Post, September 26, 1969. Vann has long emphasized the importance of the RF and PF. Columnist Joseph Alsop quoted him as saying in September 1969: "Above all, the people welcome the government bringing them peace. Consequently, an RF outpost, plus the people's self-defense when we get it organized, will generally make the area too hot to hold the VC who used to control it."

2/ New York Times, July 21, 1971.

3/ Ibid.

role in the major population centers," thereby releasing regular army units to combat North Vietnamese forces along the border (and subsequently in Cambodia).[1] Military Region II (Central Highlands) showed a more serious situation, according to the U.S. survey, especially Binhdinh Province along the coast, which the survey described as a "serious control problem."[2] In Military Region II, only 62.4 percent of the population is listed as under secure Government control, with the rest either contested or under Communist control.[3] In the northernmost part of South Vietnam, Military Region I, the U.S. survey found "enemy activity strong in Quangngai, Quangnam, and Quangtri Provinces."[4]

The weakness of the RF and PF apparently accounts for at least some of the pacification weaknesses in the northern provinces. The ratio of RF and PF to population in Military Region I is the lowest in South Vietnam, and the U.S. Command reportedly believes it essential to recruit more of these kinds of units.[5] A major problem for the Government of Vietnam is the fact that anti-government opposition is strongest in the north. The October 1971 demonstrations in Danang by members of the People's Self-Defense Force[6] point up the dilemma for the Government in recruiting from

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1/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 970, p. 6915.
2/ New York Times, July 22, 1971.
3/ New York Times, July 11, 1971.
4/ New York Times, July 22, 1971.
5/ Washington Post, October 14, 1971.
6/ Ibid.

the local population. The American proposal, not yet accepted, to fill RF and PF requirements by nationwide recruiting of volunteers runs against the local character of these units and the beneficial effects of having the militia serve near home.[1]

Despite these problems, the U.S. survey stated that "the national picture reflects gradual internal security improvement."[2] U.S. pacification figures for November 1971 show 81.1 percent of the South Vietnamese people living in hamlets/villages rated A or B: the most secure categories. Another 14.9 percent live in C (relatively secure hamlets), 3.2 percent in D, and 0.5 in E (contested) hamlets. The Communists control 0.1 percent of the hamlets, according to the statistics.[3]

Some observers of the Vietnam War are skeptical of such statistics and consider pacification security to be fragile. They also cite specific criticism of the Regional and Popular Forces. It does seem apparent, as one American adviser pointed out, that the RF and PF cannot maintain security against North Vietnamese regular forces.[4] Even if the RF and PF are built up in this region, the success of pacification rests in the first instance on the ability of the ARVN to prevent North Vietnamese units in Cambodia, along the Laotian border and the DMZ, from moving into South Vietnam.

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1/ Ibid.
2/ Ibid.
3/ Category E represents hamlets with a substantial VC presence and marginal Government presence.
4/ Washington Post, May 14, 1971.

While the Vietcong remains a politically potent force in South Vietnam, it is considered militarily weak at present.[1] The Vietcong is incapable of permanently driving South Vietnamese forces from hamlets under Government control, but it does have the potential to overrun villages and hamlets occasionally, thus disrupting the pacification program and weakening the people's confidence in the Government.

This type of protracted war is the Vietcong's greatest threat to the RF and PF. Vietcong successes to date indicate that the continuing maintenance of discipline may be the biggest problem faced by the RF and PF. In a protracted war of this kind, with long periods of quiet, there is a natural tendency for discipline to break down and complacency to take over. This is particularly true of the RF and PF, who live close to home and its temptations. In March 1970, for example, General Wheeler told the House Armed Services Committee:

> In terms of assigned strengths and lower desertion rates, the Regional and Popular Forces of the II Corps have shown a trend toward improvement. However, the performance of these forces in this corps have shown only limited advances in their operational performance. The enemy has avoided making contact with these forces and, as a result, there has been a loss of capability due to combat inactivity.[2]

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1/ Washington Post, August 1 and December 14, 1971. The Phoenix program, devised by the CIA in 1967 to wipe out the Vietcong political infrastructure in South Vietnam, is presently considered ineffective by senior U.S. officials in Vietnam. Official figures show about 20,000 Vietcong agents "neutralized" (killed, captured, or rallied to the government) each year; but U.S. officials say that most of these were low-level Vietcong and that many agents remain undetected. U.S. advisers cite a number of reasons for the program's lack of success, including apathy among South Vietnam's population, disinterest on the part of Saigon Government, and disorganization and disunity among the various Vietnamese agencies involved (the military, national police, pacification cadre, and the special CIA-trained PRU--provincial reconnaissance units).

2/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 6915.

Since that time, Vietcong successes in attacking villages and hamlets have often been attributed to cases of lax discipline among RF and PF units. Cases of lack of aggressiveness, drunkenness, and of troops falling asleep have resulted in such Vietcong victories.[1] This is true not only of the RF and PF but also of the People's Self-Defense Forces, which is presently taking over some of the security responsibilities handled by the PF. One recent report by columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak summed up the problem in the Delta, where the Vietcong overran some 82 of the 4,000 RF and PF outposts during the first eight months of 1971:

> This and similar mini-disasters are directly attributable to deplorable South Vietnamese management. Despite their huge numerical advantage, too few PF and RF troops are spread too thin over too many outposts. Rather than leave the outpost guarded mainly by untrained militiamen of the People's Self-Defense Forces, the Binhminh district chief should have abandoned it temporarily.
>
> Such poor management stems partly from complacency. Vinhlong province, once a Communist bastion, is now so completely pacified that some leaders--including the Binhminh district chief--have grown unaccustomed to action.[2]

Major James W. Shepherd, a U.S. adviser in the Delta, has been quoted as saying that most of the overrun outposts were lost through connivance of militia members with the enemy or because the defenders fell asleep or failed to post lookouts.[3] A U.S. survey of successful Vietcong assaults on

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1/ For examples of such incidents, see Washington Post, October 30, 1969; March 18, 1970; April 29, 1971; May 14, 1971; June 6, 1971.
2/ Washington Post, September 2, 1971. Evans and Novak argued that such incidents did "not connote a general breakdown of security in the delta."
3/ New York Times, July 21, 1971.

RF and PF outposts reportedly cited the following reasons for the failure to defend them: 21 traitors, 22 entire platoons asleep, seven failures to offer resistance, 30 ambushes, 13 instances of allied ambushes and listening posts withdrawn before the attack, and 20 poorly fortified outposts. The survey reportedly stressed a decline both in patrolling and simple alertness. 1/

John Paul Vann also cited the need for greater RF and PF vigilance and aggressiveness upon his taking over the job of U.S. pacification chief in Military Region II (Central Highlands). Speaking of the need of a "militarily oriented" campaign in the early stages of pacification, Vann said he wanted 50 percent of all RF and PF "to be out ambushing every night." 2/

Leadership is an important factor in maintaining discipline in RF and PF units. Many of the leadership problems that plague the regular ARVN also affect the militia. Evans and Novak, in describing the situation in Binhminh district in the Delta, pictured a PF platoon leader of a vulnerable outpost, unarmed and barefoot, certain that there would be no enemy attack. 3/ Moreover, because the RF and PF live close to home, the troops are more sensitive to the performance of Saigon Government officials. Corrupt and inefficient administrators can easily erode militia morale and performance and weaken the overall pacification effort. In one of his last acts as U.S. pacification chief in the Delta, Vann reportedly wrote General Truong, the South Vietnamese commander of Military Region IV, that security was

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1/ Washington Post, June 6, 1971.
2/ Washington Post, July 11, 1971.
3/ Washington Post, September 2, 1971.

deteriorating and only harsh discipline would arrest it. Vann reportedly recommended that Truong begin to enforce disciplinary measures on his subordinate commanders.[1/]

The problems of discipline and vigilance among the RF and PF do not suggest that the pacification program is in any immediate danger from the Vietcong. In many areas of South Vietnam, particularly in Military Regions III and IV, the Government's position appears to be strengthening. Nevertheless, in those areas where alertness and discipline have broken down, there is a long-run danger of guerrilla resurgence if RF and PF performance does not improve. In short, another major question mark of Vietnamization is the ability of South Vietnam to maintain the discipline and will in its society and armed forces necessary to deal with protracted war over a long period of time.

In addition, given the magnitude of the task of providing security over such vast areas, RF and PF forces may have to be expanded further or supplemented by the People's Self-Defense Forces. The latter organization will have to receive better training to fulfill this task adequately. (See further discussion of this point in 2. People's Self-Defense Forces, below.)

Conditions of service are an important morale factor, and U.S. officials believe the Government of Vietnam could make some improvements. Pay for RF and PF personnel is quite low--less than $20 per month for a private.

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1/ Washington Post, September 2, 1971.

Serving close to home is apparently a positive factor in morale of the RF and PF, but this will be true only as long as their effectiveness improves. RF and PF personnel have consistently suffered 45 to 50 percent of South Vietnam's military casualties.[1] In some cases high casualties plus Vietcong attacks against their families have caused local RF and PF garrisons to reach hands-off accommodations with the enemy.[2] Such problems once again accentuate the need for discipline and leadership.

2. People's Self-Defense Forces

Another related program undertaken in August 1968 was that of creating the People's Self-Defense Forces, which are armed units of citizenry. Saigon's goal is to have the Self-Defense Forces assume an increasingly larger share of the Popular Forces' local security responsibility, thus freeing the RF and PF for operations requiring greater mobility.[3] Being a paramilitary force, it receives less training than the RF and PF. U.S. pacification chief William Colby told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1970 that the People's Self-Defense Force "is still very untrained."[4] Members are supposed to receive a basic course of instruction of 60 hours plus an additional 60 hours of advanced training. Even if this requirement were met adequately, it would still constitute a

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1/ Buckley, op. cit., p. 126.
2/ New York Times, January 26, 1971.
3/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 42.
4/ Ibid., p. 331.

relatively short period of military training. In actual practice, considerable variation in training has existed from locality to locality, often depending on whatever resources were locally available.[1] This unevenness could reflect a low priority or a lack of direction and interest by the Government of Vietnam in comparison with the attention accorded to other aspects of the pacification program.

Given the size of the Self-Defense Forces, it seems safe to assume that serious deficiencies remain today. Moreover, only 400,000 weapons had been issued to the Self-Defense Forces by February 1970,[2] and these consisted largely of obsolete items such as World War II-vintage M-1 rifles and shotguns. In July 1970, President Thieu stated that the People's Self-Defense Forces needed more American weapons, including automatic rifles, grenade launchers, and carbines.[3]

The lack of adequate training and equipment could be seen as a factor in the kill ratio for the People's Self-Defense Forces in early 1970 of only one to one; this was the lowest among all South Vietnamese and compared to a 3.5 to 1 ratio for the Popular Forces.[4]

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1/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. Hearings on Military Posture. Part I. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 7691.
2/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 5.
3/ New York Times, July 31, 1970.
4/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam: Policy and Prospects, 1970. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, p. 315.

Despite these shortcomings, the People's Self-Defense Forces may exercise a growing importance in terms of preserving the pacification gains of the last two years. Whether or not they do so depends primarily on whether the Government is able to upgrade the program and instill a sense of popular participation among the members. This is an avowed aim of the Government.

The People's Self-Defense Forces in Danang have engaged in anti-government demonstrations. Recognition of the possible dangers in allowing the Self-Defense Forces to grow too strong may be a major factor in the apparently low priority given to the program by the Government.

V. Post-Withdrawal U.S. Assistance

The United States considers post-withdrawal aid to be a vital component of Vietnamization. Secretary Rogers stated in Congressional testimony in late 1970 that:

> I think it is quite clear certainly to this committee and to the American people that if the war continues we will have to give assistance of some kind.1/

U.S. military aid to the Vietnamese Armed Forces totaled about $1.5 billion annually for fiscal years 1969, 1970, and 1971, and is expected to be at the same level for fiscal year 1972.2/ U.S. officials in South Vietnam

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1/ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Supplemental Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1971. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations. 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off.: 1618.

2/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Department of Defense. Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972. Part I. 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 498. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Briefing on Vietnam. Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations. 91st Cong., 1st sess., 1969. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off.: 118.

generally estimate that the Government of Vietnam will need about $2 billion in military and economic aid per year (economic assistance is now running about $700 million annually) for the next several years.[1/]

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1/ New York Times, May 26, 1971. Washington Star, June 10, 1971. While in Saigon in May 1971, Senator Jacob Javits described the $2 billion figure as a "generally accepted figure" for aid required annually for about three years after U.S. troops have withdrawn.

Appendix A

U.S. Vietnam Troop Withdrawals Since 1969

Highest authorized U.S. troop level: 549,500

Highest number actually in Vietnam: 543,400 in April 1969

| Announced by President on | Number | New Ceiling | Effective | Rate Per Month |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| June 8, 1969 | 25,000 | 524,500 | Aug. 31, 1969 | 10,000 |
| Sept. 16, 1969 | 40,000 | 484,000 | Dec. 15, 1969 | 11,400 |
| Dec. 15, 1969 | 50,000 | 434,000 | April 15, 1970 | 12,500 |
| April 30, 1970 | 150,000 | 284,000 | May 1, 1971 | 12,500 |
| April 7, 1971 | 100,000 | 184,000 | Dec. 1, 1971 | 14,300 |
| Nov. 12, 1971 | 45,000 | 139,000 | Feb. 1, 1972 | 22,500 |

Appendix B

U.S. Troop Strength in Vietnam, December 1960-December 1971

| Month | Total |
|---|---|
| Dec. 1960 | 900 |
| Dec. 1961 | 3,200 |
| Dec. 1962 | 11,300 |
| Dec. 1963 | 16,300 |
| Dec. 1964 | 23,000 |
| 1965 | |
| January | 23,000 |
| February | 23,000 |
| March | 27,000 |
| April | 29,000 |
| May | 42,000 |
| June | 70,000 |
| July | 80,000 |
| August | 90,000 |
| September | 128,000 |
| October | 148,000 |
| November | 140,000 |
| December | 165,000 |
| 1966 | |
| January | 181,000 |
| February | 201,000 |
| March | 215,000 |
| April | 240,000 |
| May | 255,000 |
| June | 273,000 |
| July | 285,000 |
| August | 303,000 |
| September | 311,000 |
| October | 345,000 |
| November | 361,000 |
| December | 389,000 |

Appendix B Continued

| Month | Total |
|---|---|
| 1967 | |
| January | 403,000 |
| February | 414,000 |
| March | 421,000 |
| April | 436,000 |
| May | 443,000 |
| June | 449,000 |
| July | 458,000 |
| August | 466,000 |
| September | 460,000 |
| October | 467,000 |
| November | 470,000 |
| December | 486,000 |
| 1968 | |
| January | 498,000 |
| February | 506,000 |
| March | 515,000 |
| April | 520,000 |
| May | 536,000 |
| June | 536,000 |
| July | 537,000 |
| August | 538,000 |
| September | 538,000 |
| October | 534,000 |
| November | 538,000 |
| December | 537,000 |
| 1969 | |
| January | 542,000 |
| February | 541,000 |
| March | 538,000 |
| April | 543,000 |
| May | 540,000 |
| June | 539,000 |
| July | 537,000 |
| August | 510,000 |
| September | 510,000 |
| October | 495,000 |
| November | 480,000 |
| December | 474,000 |

Appendix B Continued

| Month | Total |
|---|---|
| 1970 | |
| January | 473,000 |
| February | 467,000 |
| March | 442,000 |
| April | 428,000 |
| May | 428,000 |
| June | 415,000 |
| July | 404,000 |
| August | 400,000 |
| September | 390,000 |
| October | 374,000 |
| November | 355,000 |
| December | 335,000 |
| 1971 | |
| January | 336,000 |
| February | 325,000 |
| March | 302,000 |
| April | 270,000 |
| May | 256,000 |
| June | 239,000 |
| July | 225,000 |
| August | 216,000 |
| September | 213,000 |
| October | 197,000 |
| November | 180,000 |
| December | 158,000 |

Source: Department of Defense

Note: Figures have been rounded off after 1965 for the sake of consistency.