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Combat Support in Wars of National Liberation

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Despite the popular notion that the United States will never again become actively involved in wars similar to the Vietnamese conflict, U.S. military forces almost certainly will be called upon to assist allied governments in dealing with future insurgency problems. The American experience in Vietnam can prove to be useful in the long run, but only if all aspects of the military and political program there are reviewed critically and past deficiencies in planning and execution are remedied. On the military side, the fundamental principles of logistics, long known but tragically disregarded in Vietnam, must be reexamined and put into operation if America is to retain her Armed Forces as a viable tool in support of foreign policy aims in the future.

COMBAT SUPPORT IN WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

An article

by

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> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.[1]

Introduction. For two decades political and military leaders have been debating the various aspects of intervention by external powers in wars of "national liberation" in underdeveloped nations. Ex-colonial powers, such as France and Britain, have been successful only in delaying nationalist revolutions in their former colonies. Moscow and Peking are ever vigilant, hoping to realize political gain from such conflicts. The United States has participated to varying degrees in a number of these struggles during the past 50 years (e.g., China, Cuba, Congo, and Vietnam), but with little apparent success. Perhaps a rich nation, attempting to resolve a so-called war of national liberation in an underdeveloped country, has the same degree of difficulty as the proverbial rich man attempting to enter God's kingdom. The rich nation, like the rich man, is detracted from basic mission essentials by its dependence upon material wealth and the trappings of affluent living. This dependence on material luxury appears to degrade the efficiency of American military power and, as Mao Tse-tung points out, separates the affluent American from the poverty-stricken masses of the developing nations.[2]

The American operation in Vietnam produced many controversial questions in the fields of political and military

strategy. The basic political decision which committed the United States to preventing South Vietnam from falling into Communist hands, however, is not at issue here. Rather we shall concentrate on determining the effects of the relatively high U.S. logistics support level upon U.S. combat effectiveness as well as on the economic, sociological, and political stability of South Vietnam.

Once the decision was made by the Government to apply force in Vietnam, the military's task was to optimize its contribution to the attainment of overall U.S. strategic objectives. While the primary concern of the military planner, commander, and soldier is to accomplish the assigned mission, a secondary, yet integral, concern remains—that of achieving the greatest results for the lowest possible expenditure of national resources.

The problem of the logistics snowball is as old as mankind. The snowball's epidemic growth in Vietnam, however, dictates that it be controlled if the United States is to remain as an effective force in world affairs. Although current American political attitudes seem fixed on avoiding future Vietnam-type conflicts, U.S. commitments abroad and the inclination of nations throughout the world to resort to violence when confronted by seemingly insoluble problems will inevitably act to drag U.S. military forces into future limited war situations. This, if for no other reason, is sufficient cause justifying continued study of all aspects of the American involvement in Vietnam.

History is replete with the failures of armies that neglected the principle of economy. The critical nature of timing on the battlefield favors the army that can and will carry the fight with a minimum of nonessentials. Logistics has been defined as military economics, and, in fact, the fundamental principle of logistics is economy. Resources, which create military power, are always limited. Thus, from the logistician's perspective, the key to the effective employment of military force is the efficient utilization of resources. The need to apply this principle of economy to combat support operations is especially critical because of the inherent tendency of logistic and rear area activities to snowball out of control.

> . . . all logistic activities naturally tend to grow to inordinate size, and unless positive control is maintained this growth continues until, like a ball of wet snow, a huge accumulation of slush obscures the hard core of essential combat support and the mass becomes unmanageable. This snowball effect permeates the entire structure of military organization and effort. It applies both to personnel and to material, . . . [3]

The inordinate growth of combat support activities is caused by forces internal and external to the logistical support system. The first of these forces is the lack of complete and detailed planning for the logistics resources required to support combat operations. Priority for planning is quite naturally directed toward the primary combat mission, and residual planning resources are usually not adequate to fully research and develop coordinated logistics support plans. Once the tactical battlefield plans are considered workable in detail, it is assumed that the logistics system—backed by America's wealth and industrial power—is capable of the required support. Therefore, *precise* estimates of logistical requirements to support tactical and strategic plans often receive insufficient attention.

The next consideration is the twin force of *inertia* and *momentum* that operates directly upon the physical logistics system. The logistics pipeline extending from the civilian production sector in the United States through the various levels of military logistics to the G.I. in the field is difficult to establish, prime into action, and often even more

difficult to regulate. The inertia inherent at the onset of new military logistical operations detracts from initial operational scheduling and performance of combat forces, thereby tending to create artificial requirements as the consumer at the end of the pipeline seeks to overcome the seemingly unresponsive logistical system. If this response lag, resulting from inadequate planning and inertia, continues for more than a few months, confidence in the system is destroyed and requirements are further exaggerated.

As the inertia and planning voids are overcome, the overstimulated system satisfies actual requirements plus the exaggerated demands placed upon it by the frustrated consumer. Not only are supplies for the combat forces in excess, but the support facilities and personnel usually snowball significantly beyond mission essentials, thereby placing undue strain on both the logistical system and combat operations. Such was the case in the European theater during World War II.

> The theater piled up stuff until operations were impeded by the surplus. In the end the tonnage became so high that the handling of it from factory to front line must have cost the U.S. many combat divisions. And for what result? Depots and dumps grew steadily larger and more unwieldly. They were so continuously swamped from the rush of stuff arriving that they didn't know what they had, or if they did they couldn't even find it. The consequence was that special missions would fly back to the United States to plead for more ammunition or more QM supplies. So the depots became still larger and still more unmanageable as still more stuff was shipped, only to be lost again amid the accumulation.[4]

Logistics Snowball in Vietnam (1965-1970). Despite the fundamental and enduring principle of economy in logistics, the military logistician's goal in Vietnam was to satisfy the requirements of the combat forces facing the enemy, regardless of cost.

> The following statistics indicate the scope and magnitude of logistic support operations in Vietnam during the period 1 January 1965 to 1 January 1970: . . . Free World Military Assistance Forces supported in Vietnam totaled over 1 million men, including more than 550,000 U.S. forces . . . Over 17 million short tons of dry cargo were shipped by sea and over 750 thousand short tons by air . . . 163 millions of barrels of POL products were consumed in Vietnam . . . A massive $4 billion construction program was accomplished.[5]

The total cost for these 5 years is difficult to calculate, but it has been estimated at $120 billion.[6] In comparison, estimates of the dollar cost of the Korean war appear to be substantially smaller. "On the basis of data prepared in the Statistical Analysis Section, Supply Planning Branch of G-4, Office of the Comptroller of the Army estimated the total cost to the Army of operations in Korea for the period 27 June 1950 to 30 June 1953 to be about $17,200,672,000."[7] Generally the support concept for Vietnam was to satisfy the stated requirements of the field commanders. It appears that initially there was little planning guidance or follow-on command pressure to restrict the introduction of nonessential functions, personnel, or material into the combat zone. This proliferation of nonessentials in the Vietnamese war was addressed by A.H. Katz in a recent article when he observed that:

> Our ability to deliver large amounts of materiel and men over large distances at low costs causes

> us to do just that. No one can beat us at our game . . . at the period of maximum U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, we were shipping about ten times as much to the post exchange system as the upper estimate (a hundred tons per day) required by the VC/NVA forces to fight the war! We are better at a game that the other guy isn't playing.[8]

This analysis by Katz is substantiated by published figures on the quantities of selected materials moving into Vietnam during the peak war years as compiled by the Joint Logistics Review Board.

Figure 1 shows a relatively sharp increase in the tonnage of Class VI-Personal Demand (post exchange) items shipped to Vietnam as compared with other selected classes of supply. The growth in these class VI items expanded in 2 years from 640 to 1,300 tons per day and approximates the 1,000 tons per day figure referred to by Katz.

As has so often been the case in earlier wars, the logistic pipeline to Vietnam in the first stages of the massive American buildup resulted in serious bottlenecks which restricted the flow of essential supplies to combat units in the field. The record of support operations in the Central Highlands was typical of this early inertia. The support for the four Highland provinces flowed through the seaport of Qui Nhon and then over a highway network to An Khe, Pleiku, Kontum, Phu Cat, and

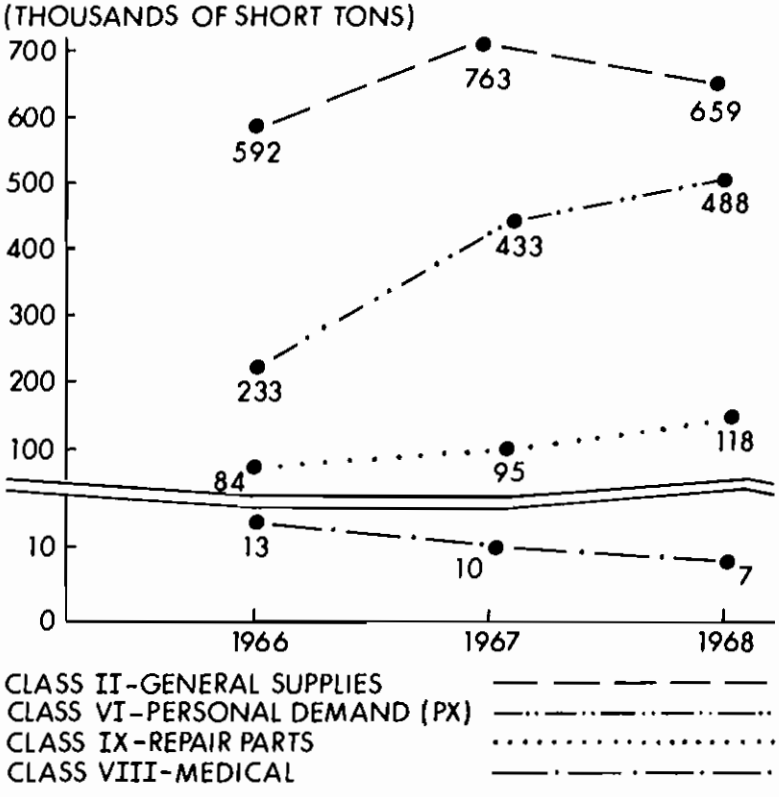

Fig. 1—CONUS-to-RVN Dry Cargo Sealift Movements (1966-1968)

Source: Joint Logistics Review Board, *Logistics Support in the Vietnam Era: Transportation and Movement Control,* Monograph 18 (Washington: 1970), p. A-32.

Bong Son. A logistics support command was activated in CONUS and phased into Qui Nhon during 1966 to support four U.S. divisions in the Highlands. The tonnage requirement through Qui Nhon to support this operation approximated 4,000 short tons per day, but the initial capacity of Qui Nhon's "over the beach" operation was less than 1,500 short tons per day. By September 1966 over 30 ships (115,000 short tons) were backed up and awaiting discharge while additional ships destined for Qui Nhon were being held in the Philippines and Okinawa. Although engineers and construction personnel assigned to upgrade the region's highway network were already ashore in Qui Nhon, their equipment continued to be stacked up in waiting ships. Thus, in addition to the expected inertia plaguing the logistics pipeline into the Central Highlands, the flow of supplies reaching the troops was further restricted at the beachhead as a result of faulty planning. Qui Nhon's new deep-draft DeLong piers were finally completed in 1967, increasing the port's offloading capacity to 6,000 tons per day, but by this time the bulk of the buildup had already been completed. Consequently, much of this additional, permanent capacity would never be fully utilized. The early response lag in the logistics system forced the consumers at the end of the pipeline to pad their requirement estimates in an effort to insure adequate ready stockpiles of essential material. No positive system of control existed to effectively limit this artificial elevation of requirements.

The artificial expansion of requisitioned material was especially applicable in the case of ammunition where the in-country stockage snowballed from 4,000 tons in 1965 to nearly 300,000 tons in 1967.[9] This huge stockpile of ammunition was scattered throughout the country in overcrowded and largely uncovered storage areas. A single incident at the Da Nang storage site resulted in the loss of 39,000 tons of ammunition, valued at nearly $100 million.[10] Numerous similar incidents—caused by accidents and enemy action—between 1966 and 1970 resulted in substantial U.S. tonnage and dollar losses throughout South Vietnam. In 1969 this excess stockage situation was finally recognized, and in-country ammunition stocks were reduced by nearly 50 percent while effectively supporting the same level of combat operations.[11]

The construction program was also plagued by poor planning with nearly a billion dollars a year being invested in permanent U.S. facilities during the first 5 years of the Vietnam buildup. Among those items built during the first 5 years of the war there were:

> 7 deep-water ports with 27 berths . . . 12 runways at eight major airbases with 200 small airfields and 200 heliports . . . 11 million square feet of covered storage . . . 1.8 million cubic feet of reefer storage . . . 8,250 hospital beds . . . [plus] major tactical bases, communication sites, roads, bridges, POL storage and pipelines, administrative facilities, etc.[12]

Besides this construction effort, supporting facilities such as post exchanges, officer and enlisted clubs, swimming pools, television stations, and many other nonessential facilities (usually with air conditioning) were injected into the construction requirements and completed.

Although it took about 2 years to meet needed storage facility requirements, construction did not cease once they were met. An excess capacity (with the marked exception of covered ammunition storage) was quickly achieved. The momentum of facility construction was so strong that even though the port of Qui Nhon was operating at only a fraction of its capacity and scheduled for substantially lower requirements after Vietnamization, two additional

LST ramps of permanent design were pushed to completion in 1970. Since initial planning generally did not include any extensive consideration of their possible usefulness after the war, the location and design of many of these permanent facilities may tragically doom them to ornamental status and ultimate decay in a nation starved for public capital.

The American fighting man in Vietnam was fed better than any combat soldier in the history of warfare. Every effort was made to provide food and facilities equal to those back home. Traditional field canned rations were quickly replaced with fresh foods (e.g., milk, ice cream, fruits, vegetables, and bread). The million dollar cold storage facilities constructed throughout South Vietnam are monuments to the elaborate U.S. subsistence system. The extent to which these operations were carried is illustrated by the commander of an Army infantry brigade, operating in the vicinity of Duc Pho, who stated that his only significant logistics problem was that the ice cream being lifted by helicopter to his field combat units was too soft by the time it was consumed by the troops. This situation was quickly remedied by the undaunted supporting logistics task force which employed dry ice portable freeze containers to keep the ice cream hard while in transit from the field ice cream plant to the troops. Dry ice was supplied each day via air or sealift from the new U.S. dry ice plant in Qui Nhon. Since the Vietnamese will probably retain their present system of live meat and local procurement of food, these cold storage facilities left behind in the U.S. withdrawal should be of little lasting value to the nation.

A new philosophy of human motivation which has come to pervade the United States during the past two decades suggests that children and young adults can be pacified and motivated most effectively by providing them with a substantial mix of material consumption and entertainment. This approach when applied in Vietnam held that morale, motivation, and thus performance would be the products of the right mix of post exchange items, air-conditioned facilities, special services activities, and club entertainment. The permanent Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator Ribicoff, in concluding its 3-year "PX Investigation" stated that the military services had apparently accepted:

> . . . the notion that American soldiers in combat zones should be offered such luxury items as diamonds, precious stones and furs in their exchanges . . .. Vietnam was a war zone subject to all the problems American armies have faced in previous wars, but the lessons of the past were lost on post exchange planners as tons and tons of luxury items were brought into the country.[13]

If no other lesson is learned from Vietnam, certainly the folly that a high-level personal consumption creates high motivation and morale will be challenged. The tragedy of this, however, is that we did not need the Vietnam war to illustrate this point. A reexamination of similar evidence in the Korean war moved one observer to write:

> Two concepts of morale are almost continually in opposition . . . The concept of soda fountain morale is that high military morale is created or at least greatly stimulated by luxuries, privileges, and fringe benefits . . .. The concept of weapon morale is that high military morale is developed primarily by rigorous discipline, hard training, confidence in one's leaders, one's weapons, one's ability to use them, and above all by pride in one's ability to accept great risk and hardship . . .. Weapon morale is unpopular and difficult to attain,

> but it stands the test of fire. For example: In the retreat from the north border of Korea in late 1950, some units with soda fountain morale abandoned not only their weapons but also their wounded. At the same time other units with weapon morale brought back their weapons, their wounded, *and their dead.*[14]

There were many cases in Vietnam which indicated that morale, esprit de corps, and performance were significantly improved when a unit was moved away from a soft support area to the field. For example, in 1967 a battalion-size logistics task force composed of units and men from the rear was landed on the beach at Duc Pho to support combat brigades operating in the area. There were no post exchanges or clubs on that beach—only sand and the bare essentials of life. In addition, each man worked 12 to 16 hours every day of the week in high tropical temperatures and humidity, yet the morale and performance of these men were significantly higher in this field environment than they had been in the rear areas. In the unanimous opinion of the officers of these units, the challenges of the mission and the austere environment had provided the uplifting forces leading to improved morale and motivation.

Military Consequences of the Vietnam Snowball. The effective application of U.S. military force in Vietnam has been hindered by both military and political factors, making it difficult to establish a quantitative relationship between the support concepts in Vietnam and the effectiveness of U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the subjective nature of this cause and effect relationship should not preclude analysis. If the frustration and waste of Vietnam are to be reduced in future conflicts, military men must carefully analyze the logistical weaknesses that reduced their effectiveness—both in operations and in the development of strategy itself.

In reconstructing the Vietnam experience for analysis, both the cumulative size of the overall support operation as well as detailed accounting of specific functions are relevant. Specific analyses of various support operations, such as the post exchange system and permanent facility construction, contributes to an understanding of the internal effects on in-country military operational effectiveness while overall cost and resource analysis may serve as indicators of the war's effects on the U.S. global defense posture. The snowball effect of logistics will always be a restricting factor on military operations, but, hopefully, the crippling effects of the expanded Vietnam snowball can be substantially reduced in the future by applying the lessons contained in the Vietnam experience.

The decision in 1965 to inject 350,000 U.S. troops into Vietnam precipitated a monumental logistics problem, as detailed by the Joint Logistics Review Board:

> By 31 December 1965, 184,000 troops had been deployed in-country and were being supported adequately, although not at maximum efficiency. One hundred and twenty-two ships were loaded with cargo and awaiting discharge in Vietnamese waters. In addition, a substantial number of ships were held up in anchorages in the Philippines, Okinawa, and other locations. Cargo was beginning to overflow in the depots, and masses of undocumented material were stored in every available space—mostly in the open on unimproved ground. It was clear that additional introduction of troops must be delayed in order to give logistic forces an opportunity to restore some measure of logistic control.[15]

In the early days of the buildup, the

predictable inertia of a new logistics system appears to have been ignored. The lack of an effective policy excluding nonessentials from the combat zone added significantly to the basic logistic problem. Frequently, many tons of overstowed nonessential cargo (e.g., overstuffed furniture, air conditioners, water ski equipment, stereo sets, et cetera) had to be offloaded just to reach the essential tools of war.

The exact tactical and strategic consequences of this disruption in the flow of arms and war material in Vietnam are difficult to determine, although the delay in deploying U.S. forces to their full effect had to be helpful to the Communists in restructuring their own efforts to meet this new challenge. After the 2 lean years (1965-1966), the inertia of the logistics system was overcome. Permanent base camps for each major combat unit were established, and these required added troops for administration and housekeeping. Each air-conditioned oasis had to be secured, and there was a natural tendency to remain close to the security of camp.

The affluent (for a combat zone) living conditions of the U.S. support base areas presented the Vietcong with perfect targets for their physical and propaganda attacks. The propaganda, originally directed at the French colonialists, was easily redirected at American rear area troops. Even though a physical probe by guerrillas into one of the U.S. support activities might not inflict significant material damage, an undisciplined response by logistics troops often created serious incidents in nearby Vietnamese villages. These incidents were invaluable to the Communist war of words and nerves. Rear support areas have always been the soft underbelly of armies and have often been exploited (e.g., Confederate cavalry raids in the Union rear areas during the U.S. Civil War). But the disproportionate size and prodigal living conditions of our base areas in Vietnam, plus the fluid guerrilla environment, gave the Communists special advantages in Vietnam.

In Qui Nhon, from October to December 1970, a series of U.S. responses to Communist guerrilla probes into the logistical complex resulted in serious property damage and loss of life in nearby villages. Anti-American demonstrations followed each incident. Subsequently, the combined United States/Vietnamese ammunition storage area in Qui Nhon was attacked and destroyed by guerrillas three times in the period of late 1970 and early 1971, with a total loss of approximately $20 million and additional Vietnamese lives.

Contrasts in living conditions between the support troops and combat troops have always caused morale problems for U.S. military forces, but in Korea and other past American conflicts the differences were not as noticeable as in Vietnam. In Korea most of the rear area troops continued to live in tents throughout the conflict and generally had a lower level of personal demand items and entertainment available than has been the case in Vietnam. While a truly objective measurement of the adverse effects on military efficiency created by glaring differences between rear area and frontline living conditions is not possible, most of the officers interviewed who served in Vietnam felt that the hostility created between the two areas impeded teamwork in direct support operations and degraded morale/performance in both areas.

Finally, one is compelled to note the counterproductive impact made by extensive permanent U.S. facilities and U.S. logistics base activities upon the general strategy of the war. North and South Vietnamese alike became convinced that the United States was absolutely committed to a protracted military engagement. The leverage initially possessed by Washington to influence direction of the South Vietnamese Government was seriously reduced by this

overt and concrete manifestation of long-term commitment. Convinced that the Americans were past the "point of no return," the Saigon regime was content to remain the pupil and leave the fighting to its new-found mentor. The conflict increasingly became an American war, and the U.S. objective of developing an independent nation with the will and ability to resist communism was being frustrated. Not until U.S. troop withdrawals convinced the South Vietnamese that the United States was not hopelessly entrapped did they truly begin to develop the capability to stand up to Hanoi's challenge.

Economic, Sociological, and Political Disruption of South Vietnam. In addition to the adverse military consequences, the enormous U.S. support operations substantially disrupted the economy, society, and political culture of South Vietnam. The disruption of nations by foreign armies in time of war is nothing new, and it must be recognized that the injection of U.S. military power into any developing country will create problems. If, however, as in Vietnam the objective is to develop an independent *will* and *ability* in the host nation to resist subversion, then the degree to which the host nation is disrupted internally by its allies would appear to be proportionately counterproductive to the attainment of the basic goal. Clearly, the massive U.S. presence in South Vietnam has brought with it this unfortunate byproduct, but even more tragically, excessive logistic support and the evils it supports have compounded an already difficult situation.

Although torn by war for nearly three decades, South Vietnam still had a relatively stable economic situation in 1964. The impact of inflation had been relatively minor with the price index rising from a base of 100 in 1958 to only 124 in 1964.[16] Exports of rice and rubber still brought over a billion piasters per year into the country.[17] The gross national product was $3 billion in 1964, and the average per capita income was $161.[18] However, since 1965 the Vietnamese economy has suffered a severe inflation that is still in progress as depicted in figure 2.

The purchasing power of the average American is at least 10 times that of the average Vietnamese at the legal rate of exchange, and this differential is further exaggerated by the black market barter of post exchange products. This severe economic disparity has been especially disruptive in the logistics base areas where Americans and their allies participate freely in the civilian economy.

Thousands of South Vietnamese have been directly employed by the U.S. forces, and thousands more were employed by firms that were sustained by American patronage.[19] This artificial economy appears to have raised the economic expectations of a large portion of the population above the level the Vietnamese economy alone can support after an American withdrawal. The relatively slow withdrawals of U.S. forces in 1970 and 1971 have already created serious unemployment problems, despite the fact that many of the snowball support bases remain relatively intact. As U.S. troop withdrawals continue, substantially reducing these base areas, the disintegration of the artificial economy will create additional economic pressures on the Saigon Government.

The basic sociological character of Vietnamese society is not usually apparent to the foreign visitor in Saigon inasmuch as the colonial facade of a progressive urban society appears to be representative of the country as a whole; thus many Americans have failed to grasp the fundamental gulf between the Vietnamese and themselves. As Ellen Hammer has analyzed them:

> The Vietnamese lead a Spartan existence in a difficult land. The character and behavior of both

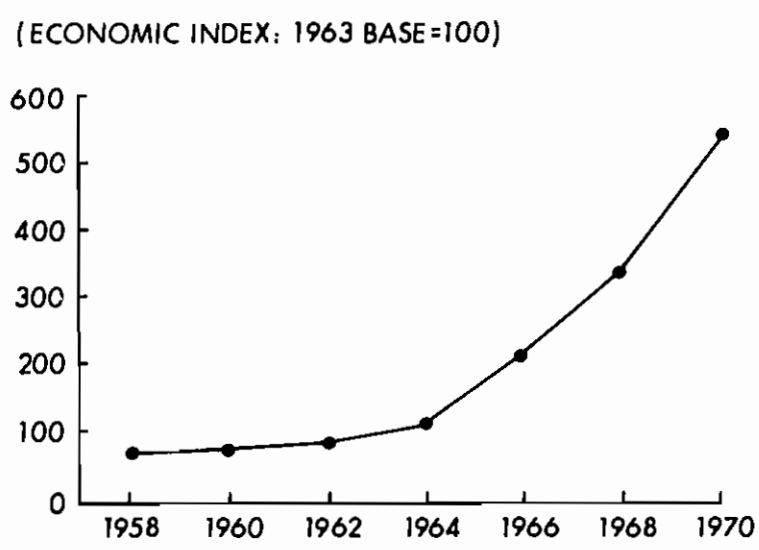

Fig. 2—Growth of Inflation in South Vietnam (1958-1970)

Source: "Economic Review of Indochina," *Quarterly Economic Review,* March 1971, p. 4, 29, 30.

> peasants and officials—the only two important classes in Vietnam during most of its history—were shaped by the harsh conditions of daily life. The agricultural nature of their civilization combined with the strong influence of confucianism to favor the growth of a collective society in which the interests of the individual were strictly subordinated to those of the group.[20]

Both the wealth and waste displayed by Americans are sources of "culture shock" to the people of a developing nation like Vietnam. American sociologists have written volumes about the shock that Americans suffer when injected into the poverty environment of the developing nation, but little has been said about the countershock that even individual Americans with their relatively greater economic power and aggressive character inflict on native hosts. The series of shocks inflicted upon the Vietnamese by a steady stream of Americans was substantial, though perhaps in some cases unintentional. Their economy was disrupted, their traditions ridiculed, their social standards challenged, and their women denigrated.

The search for security and American dollars brought thousands of rural Vietnamese into the cities of Vietnam after 1965. This dislocation of the population radically changed the social and economic pressures on these new city dwellers. Many of these transients were attracted by a "get rich quick" philosophy which focused on the American soldier and the huge U.S. support bases. Regardless of the motive that brought the peasant to the city, he was quickly swept up in the economic and social competition. The collective traditions of the joint family are difficult to maintain in the frantic urban environment, and many of the psychologically uprooted transplants become easy targets for Communist propaganda. With its war-torn, demoralized, and disrupted population, South Vietnam may well find both the political and economic costs prohibitive as the artificial American economy withers away. Individual Vietnamese cut off from the sense of security and fulfillment previously pro-

vided by the extended family may well develop into a force of discontented, unemployed, and politically volatile elements threatening the political stability of successive governments in Saigon.

Support of the huge logistics support operations required hiring of thousands of Vietnamese, leasing property and facilities from Vietnamese, and massive local procurement on the civilian economy. Most of these procurement funds, plus direct American aid, were by bureaucratic necessity channeled through the Vietnamese economic/political power elite that owns or controls most major commercial activities in the country. The South Vietnamese Government has been continuously embarrassed by disclosures of corruption throughout the country. This massive U.S. injection of wealth into the top of the Vietnamese society, due in part to the high level of U.S. support concepts, has, in effect, raised the stakes of corruption in Vietnam and contributed to its proliferation—thus further heightening popular dissatisfaction and political instability in the South.

Finally, close military and economic ties between the United States and the Vietnamese Central Government have led to increasing pressures for political centralization. This trend toward centralization has only served to aggravate the traditional hostilities of certain factions in the country which have resisted the gravitation of power to Saigon in the past. The Central Government initially promised extensive social reforms, but the artificial economic sufficiency produced by American aid and employment reduced the pressure for such reforms. As the American presence recedes, progress toward effective social reforms may well prove to be the key to survival of the current government as well as the political system.

Conclusions. Generally, the experience of U.S. Armed Forces in Vietnam suggests that too many resources were expended for too few results. Operational lessons about military logistics have been learned, especially through the efforts of the Joint Logistics Review Board in their analysis of logistics support in the Vietnam era. In their summary report they held:

> . . . that logistics support of U.S. combat forces in S.E. Asia during the Vietnam era was effective, but that the efficiency, and hence the economy, of that support could have been improved. Inadequate control of shipments, congestion at seaports and air terminals, unidentified materiel in storage yards, inaccuracy of inventory records, deterioration of supplies in open storage, and identified excesses all indicate that substantial improvements in efficiency and economy must be made in the conduct of logistics operations in a combat area.[21]

They went on to suggest that the major causes of logistical inefficiency during the Vietnam conflict were:

- The conduct of complex logistic operations overseas with the limited or nonexistent facilities inherent to an underdeveloped country.
- Inadequate numbers of trained logistic personnel and units.
- The failure to limit the introduction of supplies to the throughput capacity of the ports, depots, and bases.[22]

The conclusions of the board are a realistic appraisal of the operational factors that influenced logistics in Vietnam. The board further concludes that after the initial inertia of the logistics system was overcome,

> The military commander in Vietnam, the General Accounting Office, and Congress all have attested that, with relatively minor and temporary exceptions, U.S. forces committed to conflict have

> never been better supplied than those in S.E. Asia. In this context, it may be said that the logistician achieved his goal—satisfying the requirements of the soldier, sailor, marine, and airman facing the enemy at the end of the pipeline.[23]

The Joint Logistics Review Board observed that this performance was achieved with a significant degree of waste. However, the members of the board failed to address the more fundamental problem—i.e., command control over inflated logistics requests coming from the field. Although these problems are not new, they have not received sufficient attention outside the writings of S.L.A. Marshall who has provided the following analysis:

> I give it as my judgement that such tremendous waste came mainly from two faults in the system. The first is our overindulgent attitude toward our troops; we seem to feel that their loyalties cannot be commanded unless the Army acts as a pappy to them and puts their creature comforts above all else. The second was a basic weakness in the checks or controls over the supply demands of the field armies. It is impossible to say which of these evils—and they are still present in the logistical thought of every service—was in the long run the most unmilitary, the more encumbering and the more extravagant. Both come, however, from the illusion that American resources are practically inexhaustible. That idea of the national wealth, and how we should use it when war comes is by no means confined to the armed forces. But to the extent that they follow this public fancy, instead of determining a fundamental soundness for their own economy, they sanction the bogging down of true mobility under unsupportable weights.[24]

Not only did the overindulgent U.S. support concept diminish military efficiency in Vietnam, it also inflicted serious damage to the overall American strategic objective for the area—"to assist them (the countries of Southeast Asia) to develop will and ability to resist communism from within and without."[25]

The Joint Logistics Review Board, in recommending conceptual changes for future logistics support in combat zones incorporating the Vietnam experience, stated that:

> The fundamental cause of inefficiency is the shortage of logistics resources in the form of personnel and facilities. Although some adjustments in priority are practical, the hard fact is that logistic resources will always be severely taxed. If capability must be less than desired, then attention should be directed toward reducing the requirement for logistical support. Logisticians have always directed maximum effort toward meeting every requirement for responsive support to combat units. The result has sometimes been generation of logistic requirements without full realization of the impact on logistic resources in the combat area. *It is time now to find ways to maintain responsive support and at the same time "minimize the requirements for logistic resources in the area of conflict."*[26] [Emphasis added.]

This analysis led to their Finding Number 15: "Available techniques must be aggressively pursued to reduce the requirements for logistic resources in the combat area without a reduction of operational capability."[27]

The permanent nature of the support bases in Vietnam and the extended period of the conflict were conducive to

an inordinate expansion of the traditional logistics snowball. Yet the nature of this war made the presence of the overindulgent U.S. support a critical detraction from both tactical operations and strategic objectives.

It is probable that, despite the current public disaffection with the Vietnam involvement, American military forces will again be deployed in similar situations. As Edwin O. Reischauer projected in his book *Beyond Vietnam:*

> The net results of our withdrawal from the war in Vietnam, however skillfully we might try to conceal the withdrawal, would probably be an increase in instability in much of Asia and a decrease in the influence of the United States and in our ability to contribute to the healthy growth of Asia. These adverse consequences might be felt in much of Asia for years to come. The effects might not be limited to Asia. They might be felt in somewhat similar terms in other less developed parts of the world and might also affect our more important relations with the advanced nations.[28]

Given our experience in Vietnam, any application of U.S. military force into a similar environment in the future should be predicated on an absolute dedication to austerity. This country's current economic troubles, induced as they were in part by the manner in which we pursued the war in Vietnam, only confirm the fact that austerity in the conduct of military activities may be the only path which will allow successive American governments to use the military as a tool to implement foreign policy.

> In the age of total warfare, extravagance in a national concept of war, or in the operations of a national military system, will beget extravagance in the operations of a field division or a rifle squad. Whatever is manufactured beyond what is likely to be needed, whatever is put into the supply pipeline that might have been eliminated at no cost to the army's hitting power, inevitably decreases the volume of fire delivered against the enemy—lessens the chance of victory. Such waste of force is a depreciation of capital which, even should it not lead to defeat, must of necessity be carried as a debit into the peace that follows the war.[29]

The Nixon Doctrine, dictated as it is by the realities of both domestic and international politics and economies, appears to require an austere support concept for military success in the future.

Any future application of U.S. military force should be tailored to U.S. strategic objectives in the area of conflict. Special attention should be given to orienting the living standards of the military force to the local level, thereby minimizing the negative effects upon the host nation. If the basic objective is to develop the independent will and ability of the host nation to resist subversion, then every facet of the military operation should be tuned to that end.

To achieve minimum impact on the host nation in any future American military commitment, the land presence of support activities should be restricted and isolated from the native population. The current seabase concept, featuring minimum support forces ashore and dependence on selective unloading of ships (utilized as floating depots), seems to be a step in the right direction. Of course, this concept would restrict the size and activity of the combat force supported. The American presence in Cam Rahn Bay, isolated from Vietnamese population centers, probably had an insignificant effect on the Vietnamese society or economy, even though the same relative level of prodigal support was practiced there. This type of isolated base could be utilized to supplement the seabase concept, with intra-

theater break-bulk operations from deep draft to selectively loaded shallow draft shipping. In addition to supply functions, the bulk of the force maintenance should also be performed afloat or at an isolated base such as Cam Rahn Bay. Any practical concept that will reduce American presence in the host nation should be fully analyzed for future utilization.

The wisdom of fighting a war of national liberation with a large draftee army on short rotation will be a subject of discussion by historians for many years. But in Vietnam many combat and logistics support units, basically composed of short rotation draftees, displayed outstanding efficiency and esprit de corps in every phase of their mission. These units were usually separated from the air-conditioned, post exchange oriented environment of the logistics base areas. A realistic analysis should be made to determine essential morale items (e.g., shaving gear, beverages, and snacks), and then effective command controls should be applied to bar the remainder from the combat zone. Instead of trying to buy morale with a shotgun pattern of cosmetic gimmicks, the American military should return to the leadership fundamentals that made its morale and performance a much sought after pattern by other armed forces around the globe. A military commander who has a realistic knowledge of his profession and his men and takes care of his men will probably accomplish his mission and have high morale in his organization. Taking care of one's men does not mean overindulging them with material consumption; in fact, it usually means the exact opposite—i.e., preparing them with tough training and material sacrifice to accomplish any required mission under the rigors of combat. Lasting morale is much more influenced by leadership and performance than by post exchanges, club facilities, swimming pools, air conditioning, mod hair styles, or R & R in Hong Kong. This weapon morale, as earlier defined by Eccles, is based on:

> . . . rigorous discipline, hard training, confidence in one's leaders, one's weapons, one's ability to use them, and above all by pride in one's ability to accept great risk and hardship . . . [it] is unpopular and difficult to attain, but it stands the test of fire . . . while all concepts are affected, combat effectiveness and the logistics snowball are most sensitive to the evil effects of mediocre morale and leadership.[30]

Continuing emphasis should be placed on the development of a philosophy of austere supply discipline and the establishment of effective controls to enforce that philosophy throughout the U.S. Armed Forces. Of course the tendency exists to pass this responsibility

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Lt. Col. Harold D. Gallagher, U.S. Army, did his undergraduate work at South Dakota State University and earned a master's degree in industrial management from Stanford University. His primary service training and experience has been in transportation and engineering. More recently he served as Operations Officer with the 125th Transportation Battalion in Germany, as Port Operations Officer with the 5th Transportation Terminal Command, and as Logistics Task Force Commander with the 1st Logistical Command in Vietnam (1966-67) and again in Vietnam as Senior Adviser to the Vietnamese 2d Logistics Command and as a logistics staff officer at the Headquarters Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (1970-71). Lieutenant Colonel Gallagher is a recent graduate of the College of Naval Command and Staff and is currently serving as Deputy Professor of Military Science (ROTC) at South Dakota State University.

to the civilian chiefs in the Department of Defense, but as Marshall so aptly stated:

> We cannot pass the whole buck into the civilian lap so long as most professional soldiers who shape our military policy are content to rock with the grain. The services are not improved by the tendency to accept with little question outside counsel on all prime matters of service efficiency. There is no substitute for generalship in its real sense . . . The lack of a fundamental supply discipline in all ranks of all the services causes more friction and destroys more mobility in the operations of American forces than any other weakness. And it is a chief contributor to our moral weakness.[31]

The capacity for the military to be the dominant influence on supply discipline in the combat zone was demonstrated by the marked difference in supply discipline between various units and services in Vietnam (e.g., U.S. Marine units often operated with a fraction of the logistics support required for U.S. Army units with similar missions). That ability to provide relatively equal combat effectiveness with less resource expenditure within the same civilian guidance was directly dependent upon the support philosophy of the military commander. Such an austere approach to supply discipline must start at the top of the military organization to achieve widespread acceptance and effectiveness.

Any future projection of U.S. military power into a limited war environment will require sensitivity to the full spectrum of generated effects relevant to U.S. strategic objectives. The strategic effect of successful combat operations may again be counteracted by the adverse effects of logistic operations in the host nation. Successful future involvement of U.S. military forces in a limited, political conflict in a developing nation is doubtful under a Vietnam level support concept, but if any future effort is effectively restricted to the military essentials of firepower and mobility, such a "lean American camel" might transit the "needle's eye" without seriously disrupting the host nation or the U.S. global defense posture.

FOOTNOTES

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Strategy and tactics and logistics are different aspects of the same thing. If completely separated they become meaningless.

James A. Huston: A History of U.S. Army Logistics 1775-1953