

sion completed studies, and transmitted to General Chinh, still CG ARVN 25th Division, the Combined Lighting Concept. It brought together in one outpost a US squad, an ARVN squad, and a PF squad.

In response to Washington inquiries, General Westmoreland reported by message in May, 1967, "A command project was initiated on January 26, 1967, to review the performance of RVNAF units and to identify those considered ineffective and non-productive. Units so identified are being evaluated with a view to withdrawal or reduction of military assistance support unless improvement in these units is possible: The evaluation will be conducted every six months resulting in a final determination each June and December . . .

The methodology for evaluation includes:

- (1) Identification of units judged ineffective or nonproductive.
- (2) Evaluation of credibility or feasibility of present plans to guarantee increased effectiveness.
- (3) Study of unit performance trends during the past six months.
- (4) Determination of the availability of plans to train personnel.
- (5) Evaluation of command interest at all levels for improvement.

Units will be classified as Improvement Probable, Improvement Doubtful, and Improvement Unlikely. Those in the latter two groups must justify continued military assistance or action will be initiated to reduce FY 68 support.

Current Status: All VNAF and VNMC units are effective and productive. Support to VNN reduced by \$7800 which reflects discontinuance of support for two fishing boats which are not configured to support any role assigned to VNN. The evaluation of ARVN is only partially completed.

In July, the MACV staff briefed Secretary McNamara in Saigon and touched again on the subject of encadrement. One concept considered was VATUSA (Vietnamese Augmentation to US Army) whereby two or three Vietnamese would be assigned to each squad in US combat battalions. While this scheme offered the advantages of improving ARVN skills and of utilizing additional RVN troops without further strains on already limited ARVN leadership, the only real gain for the US was viewed to be a possible reduction in US strength. The disadvantages pointed out were the political climate, the language barrier, the danger to US unit security, the administrative and disciplinary difficulties and the probable irritation between VATUSA and regular ARVN unit soldiers. These, it was judged, dictated against its adoption.

A second concept considered was salting ARVN forces with US leadership in command positions. The analysis indicated that for political and psychological reasons, it would probably be best to put two US officers and three US NCO's in an instructor's role with each RF company rather than in a command role. Command would be exercised by the RF company commander but he would be required to follow the directions of the US training team leaders.

The conclusion reached was to continue the "salting" experiment with expansion in view if the initial results were good. There is no evidence that anything became of the experiment.

None of this seriously worried top RVNAF leadership; so they indulged in more interesting international activities. In May, talks started between Lao and GVN military staffs. The occasion was planning for barrier extension westward, but Washington realized at once that there was little the US could do to limit the contacts to that subject. In July, it was discovered that GVN was using

Chinat agents, disguised so as to appear to be South Vietnamese with Nung ancestry, on covert operations. JCS disapproved of the effort despite appeals from COMUSMACV. The Chinats appeared to be the result of a secret bilateral agreement concluded during 1966. In September, MACV reported that GVN had occupied Pattle Island in the Crescent Group about 170 miles south of Hainan with the intention of constructing an airfield there. Because these islands are already claimed by Communist and Nationalist Chinas and the Philippines as well, MACV advised against US cooperation in the adventure.

O. THE GVN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Pre-nomination maneuvering and legitimacy of the Presidential campaign were the subjects which occupied American attention above all else. The first task facing Ambassador Bunker as he arrived on station in April was to oversee the delicate transition of GVN to a government based upon a popular election recognized by the world to be fair.

Premier Ky was already openly acting like a Presidential candidate in April. General Thieu was informed that the generals had endorsed Ky while Thieu was absent from the scene recovering from an appendectomy. That was not sufficient to scare Thieu from the race; so the US Mission became increasingly worried that the Thieu-Ky competition threatened the indispensable unity of the military. Dickering remained behind the scenes until Ky formally announced his candidacy on May 12. This served only to intensify the rivalry. By mid-June, the Thieu-Ky confrontation showed no signs of moving toward satisfactory resolution. Basically, Ambassador Bunker believed in an indirect approach. He did not hesitate to approach Ky and Thieu individually on the broader issues of arbitrary press censorship, questionable tactics being pursued by Ky supporters six weeks before it was legal to campaign, or unity of the Armed Forces. But, on the confrontation between the two candidates, Bunker's ploy was to hold an informal luncheon to which the two principals were invited. In the end they had to work out their own solution. They did. At the end of June the 50-60 officers of the Armed Forces Council met in a 2-day, continuous session at which both Thieu and Ky performed histrionics. The surprising result was that Ky agreed to run for the Vice-Presidency on Thieu's ticket. The Mission sighed in relief and agreed that Bunker's approach had worked. The Ambassador congratulated the candidates, and Thieu obligingly announced that if elected he would appoint a civilian as Premier. Ky agreed. The RVNAF chief of staff had earlier announced that there would be no officially endorsed military candidate; yet the Constituent Assembly conveniently approved a draft article which permitted Thieu and Ky to run without resigning from the Armed Forces. By mid-July, the Assembly had voted acceptance of the Thieu-Ky ticket while disallowing one headed by Big Minh who remained in nearby Bangkok as a potential threat to the younger pair. With only a few hitches, the campaigning proceeded so as to satisfy American observers that it was acceptably fair; and the resultant Thieu-Ky victory was a surprise only in its smaller-than-expected plurality.

P. BLUEPRINT FOR VIETNAM, AUGUST, 1967

State suggested that completion of the election process was a proper occasion upon which to consider several proposals, including increased leverage, for advancing the total American effort in South Vietnam. Bunker also mentioned