

# Civilian Irregular Defense Group:

The First Years:  
1961-1967

By Eugene G. Piasecki



On 7 May 1954, the Communist-supported Vietnam Independence League, commonly known as the Viet Minh, defeated elements of the French Expeditionary Corps at Dien Bien Phu in Northern Indochina.<sup>1</sup> A day later, peace talks began in Geneva, Switzerland that led to an armistice. France lost its colony in Indochina, Vietnam was divided at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, and popular elections were mandated. President Dwight D. Eisenhower promised assistance to South Vietnam's Premier Ngo Dinh Diem and by July 1954, the United States had 342 military advisors in South Vietnam. The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) initially focused on countering Viet Minh action committee false propaganda instigating South Vietnamese opposition to the Diem government.<sup>2</sup>



President Ngo Dinh Diem before his death in South Vietnam's 1963 coup d'etat. Diem's authoritarian government was overturned and power became centered in the hands of inexperienced ARVN generals.

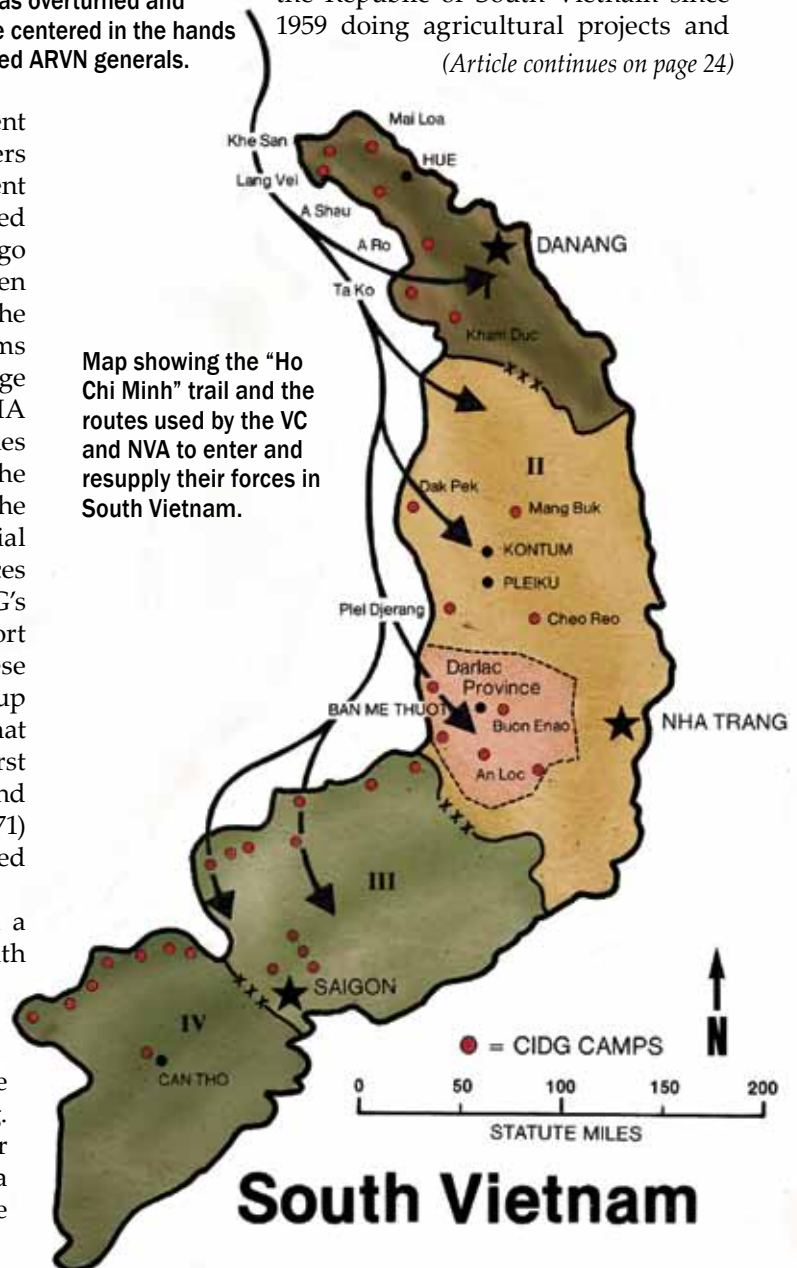
By 1961, the Viet Minh, called Viet Cong (VC) in South Vietnam, began to escalate their insurgency against the government and military. Concerned about the growing numbers of Wars of National Liberation worldwide, President John F. Kennedy, with Congressional support, increased U. S. economic and military aid to now President, Ngo Dinh Diem.<sup>3</sup> This assistance was meant to broaden South Vietnam's counterinsurgency efforts against the Viet Cong and was conducted through several programs such as the one to improve Central Highland village agricultural conditions. This in fact was a covert CIA effort intended to collect information on VC activities and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) infiltrations into the heavy jungle of the mountainous border areas while the agency evaluated developing the paramilitary potential of selected minority groups.<sup>4</sup> U.S. Army Special Forces ODAs, assigned to the CIA's cover organization, MAAG's Combined Studies Division (CSD), provided support with military training and advisory assistance to these minorities through the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program.<sup>5</sup> This article is the first of two that explains the U.S.- sponsored CIDG Program. The first begins with the creation and development (1961-1967) and the second, the CIDG during Vietnamization (1968-1971) when SF-trained units and individuals were integrated into the Army of Vietnam (ARVN) Ranger Command.

Why the CIDG program? First, the CIA believed a paramilitary force of minorities would expand South Vietnam's counterinsurgency efforts into remote areas. Second, the largest of these minorities, the Montagnards, had always been treated as third class citizens by the government which made them prime targets for Communist propaganda and recruiting. VC dominance of the Central Highlands was a major concern.<sup>6</sup> By 1961, the VC insurgency presented a real threat to the Diem regime and the ARVN. The

South Vietnamese government sought the help of the CSD and gave them permission to meet with Rhade tribal leaders (see Buon Enao sidebar). After establishing rapport, the CSD offered defense training and small arms to the Rhade if they would swear allegiance to South Vietnam's government and start village self-defense programs.

The first village selected was Buon Enao in Darlac Province, hence that became "The Buon Enao Experiment."<sup>7</sup> By presidential decree, it was to be controlled solely by the Combined Studies Division, not the Vietnamese Army nor the MAAG. In October 1961, two Americans, David A. Nuttle, a career International Volunteer Services (IVS) official who had been serving in the Republic of South Vietnam since 1959 doing agricultural projects and

*(Article continues on page 24)*



Map showing the "Ho Chi Minh" trail and the routes used by the VC and NVA to enter and resupply their forces in South Vietnam.



This Montagnard longhouse represents the most common type used when American Special Forces served in South Vietnam's Central Highlands.

## Montagnard Tribes

The story of Special Forces in Vietnam is entwined with the "Montagnards." The term "Montagnard" is French, simply meaning "mountain people." The Montagnards are the aboriginal people (ethnically from Mon-Khmer or Malayo-Polynesian groups) who, centuries earlier, had been driven into the mountain highlands by the Vietnamese.<sup>1</sup> The lowland ethnic Vietnamese used the pejorative term "moi," meaning "savage" and treated them with contempt. U.S. Special Forces simply called them "Yards," a term of endearment. From 1962 on, Special Forces in the Republic of Vietnam were increasingly deployed in the highlands to work with the Montagnards.

Vietnam contained between 600,000 to 1,000,000 Montagnards comprising twenty-nine tribal groups, most of whom hated the lowland Vietnamese and the Republic of Vietnam (south) almost as much as they despised the Communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north.<sup>2</sup> The two largest tribes were the Rhade and Jarai. After the 1955 Geneva Accords partitioned Vietnam into north and south, tension grew between the Montagnards and the RVN government when refugees from North Vietnam resettled in the highland areas, often on Montagnard lands. This resettlement was organized and sanctioned by the government in Saigon.

The Montagnards were primarily a matriarchal society. Women owned all property and generally controlled most village activities. The extended family was the basis of Montagnard society, with several family groups forming a village. The adults elected the village leaders, including the headman or chief. Shamans (sorcerers or witches) had enormous power within the village.



Montagnard elders dressed in Rhade tribal ceremonial attire for a special occasion.

The basic Montagnard dwelling was the longhouse. Built on stilts, it was constructed of bamboo, logs, straw (thatch), and palm fronds. Montagnard villages had between five and thirty longhouses, with populations ranging from 200 to 800 people. The terrain and subsistence environment determined the size of the village. Most Montagnards practiced slash and burn agriculture, growing rice, corn and vegetables. Meat came from hunting and raising pigs, chickens, and ducks.<sup>3</sup>

*This article is a reprint from Robert W. Jones Jr. "A Team Effort: Special Forces in Vietnam June-December 1964," Veritas, Volume 3, Number 1, 2007, 24-36.*

### Endnotes

- 1 Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets, The First Thirty Years* (Navato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 100; Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War: US Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 38-39.
- 2 Colonel Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1989), 20.
- 3 Ronald A. Shackleton, *Village Defense: Initial Special Forces Operations in Vietnam* (Arvada, CO: Phoenix Press, 1975), 5; U.S. Army Special Warfare School, *Montagnard Tribal Groups of the Republic of South Viet-Nam* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Warfare School, July 1964).



1st Special Forces Group Flash

The village of Buon Enao as it appeared in 1962.

## The Buon Enao Experiment

In January 1962, MACV renamed the Village Defense Program (VDP) formed in Vietnam's Central Highlands the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program. The Central Highlands were important because they dominated the Mekong Delta to the south, the rice producing lands to the east, and provided the Viet Cong (VC) numerous trails and supply routes from North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam's Delta region. Approximately 700,000 Montagnard tribesmen lived in the Central Highlands and since Vietnam's division in 1954 had been harassed and exploited as much by the VC as they had been ignored by the South Vietnamese government. Captain (CPT) Ronald A. Shackleton would later observe: "All they [the Rhade Montagnard Tribe] really wanted was to be left alone. They were capable of self-protection if given the means."<sup>1</sup> As the VC insurgency gained momentum so did South Vietnam's counterinsurgency. The Viet Cong and South Vietnamese both aggressively pursued efforts to gain and maintain Montagnard loyalty and support for their respective causes.

By developing the VDP, South Vietnam began meeting its objectives of securing Montagnard loyalty, providing them protection, and developing their counter-guerrilla fighter potential. Unlike President Diem's Strategic Hamlet Program, which was intended to isolate rural Vietnamese from VC influences, the Montagnards would stay in their own villages and receive training on how to use updated weapons and defensive tactics to protect their homes, families, and possessions from the VC.<sup>2</sup> The task of creating the VDP was assigned to CPT Shackleton and Detachment A-113, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group on Okinawa. Although A-113 originally trained for duty in Laos, its orders were changed in February 1962, directing Shackleton and seven team members to Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> The village of Buon Enao was inhabited by approximately 400 Rhade tribesmen and selected as the initial VDP site for three reasons. First, the Rhade were considered the most experienced and socially advanced of the Montagnard tribes; second, many of its men were combat veterans of the French Expeditionary Corps; and third, Darlac Province was considered a major VC danger zone.<sup>4</sup>

### A-113 Team Members

CPT (O-3) Ronald A. Shackleton	Commander
MSG (E-8) John Slover	Operations Sergeant
SFC (E-6) Manfred Baier	Medical Specialist
SGT (E-5) Lester Walkley	Communications Chief
SGT (E-5) William Beltch	Communications Specialist
SGT (E-5) John Clark	Heavy Weapons Specialist
SGT (E-5) Charles Lindewald	Light Weapons Specialist
SP5 (E-5) Alford Warok	Engineer Specialist

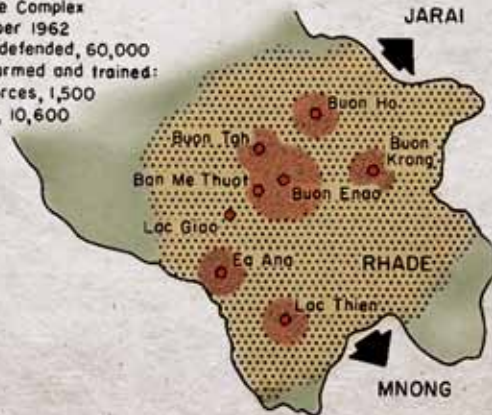


## BUON ENAO EXPANSION

40- Village Complex  
December 1961 - April 1962  
Population in defended villages, 14,000  
Population armed and trained:  
Strike Forces, 300  
Villagers, 975



200- Village Complex  
April - October 1962  
Population, defended, 60,000  
Population armed and trained:  
Strike Forces, 1,500  
Villagers, 10,600



Map showing the expansion of the CIDG Program from its 40-village beginning in December 1961 until its 200-village expansion by October 1962.

From January to August 1962, Shackleton and A-113 prepared Buon Enao to be the province's operational base for directing, supporting, and administering the VDP. This meant preparing village defensive measures such as improving individual training, constructing security fences and digging shelters. Systems were also put into effect which stressed patrolling, early warning, communications, intelligence collection and reporting, population control, and mutual support coordination with neighboring villages.<sup>5</sup> By August 1962, the results of A-113's efforts were becoming obvious. More than 200 Montagnard villages spread over approximately 4,000 square kilometers and more than half of the 120,000 Montagnards in Darlac Province's were protected by a local militia of thousands of village defenders and a 1,500-man mobile strike force. A-113 was so successful that as 1962 came to an end, Darlac Province was declared secure and VDP control became the Darlac Province Chief's responsibility. Realizing the program's future potential to negate VC activity, it was expanded country-wide and its name changed from the Village Defense Program (VDP) to the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Program.<sup>6</sup>



Underground shelters were dug to protect village non-combatants such as the elderly, women, and children from VC attacks.



A fence reinforced by punji stakes around Buon Enao was the village's first line of defense.



Rhade CIDG soldier stands guard at Buon Enao.

### Endnotes

- 1 Colonel Ronald A. Shackleton, *Village Defense: Special Forces Operations in Vietnam* (Arvada, CO: Phoenix Press, 1975), 136.
- 2 Shackleton, *Village Defense*, vii.
- 3 Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets. The First Thirty Years. A History of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 102.
- 4 Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War. U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 41.
- 5 Shackleton, *Village Defense*, 138.
- 6 Shackleton, *Village Defense*, 138.



The American Embassy in South Vietnam was located on Thong Nhut Boulevard in Saigon.

successes prompted the RVN government to assign program responsibility to the Darlac province chief with instructions to include the Jarai and Mnong tribes.<sup>12</sup>

The Buon Eno Experiment generated more American SF activity in South Vietnam. South Vietnamese Special Forces (LLDB) received more training. These increased the number of ODAs in Vietnam on six-month temporary duty (TDY) tours and caused the establishment of Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Forces, Vietnam (Provisional) [USASFV(P)]. In Mid-September 1962, Colonel

(COL) George C. Morton, Chief, Special Warfare Branch, J-3 MACV and seventy-two 5<sup>th</sup> SFG advance echelon (ADVON) personnel from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, formed a C-Team with four ODAs as the nucleus of the USASFV(P) Headquarters in Saigon.<sup>13</sup> By November 1962, the main body had arrived in Saigon. The C-Team now had fourteen officers and forty-three enlisted men. COL Morton sent Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Eb Smith and eighteen enlisted men to Nha Trang to establish the Special Forces Operations Base (SFOB) with the intent of moving the C-Team out of Saigon. From this central location, COL Morton controlled 530 Special Forces soldiers serving on four B-Teams and twenty-eight ODAs throughout South Vietnam.<sup>14</sup>

In the meantime, MAAG, Vietnam restructured and changed its name to the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). This transition triggered two significant changes: MACV would advise and assist the South Vietnamese government on how to organize, train, equip and employ VDP forces; and the Village Defense Program (VDP) was changed to the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Program.<sup>15</sup> In February 1962, the Combined Studies Group ran the CIDG program, controlled the SF units supporting it, and coordinated CIDG activities with MACV. By May 1962, the CSD was in charge of CIDG logistics and



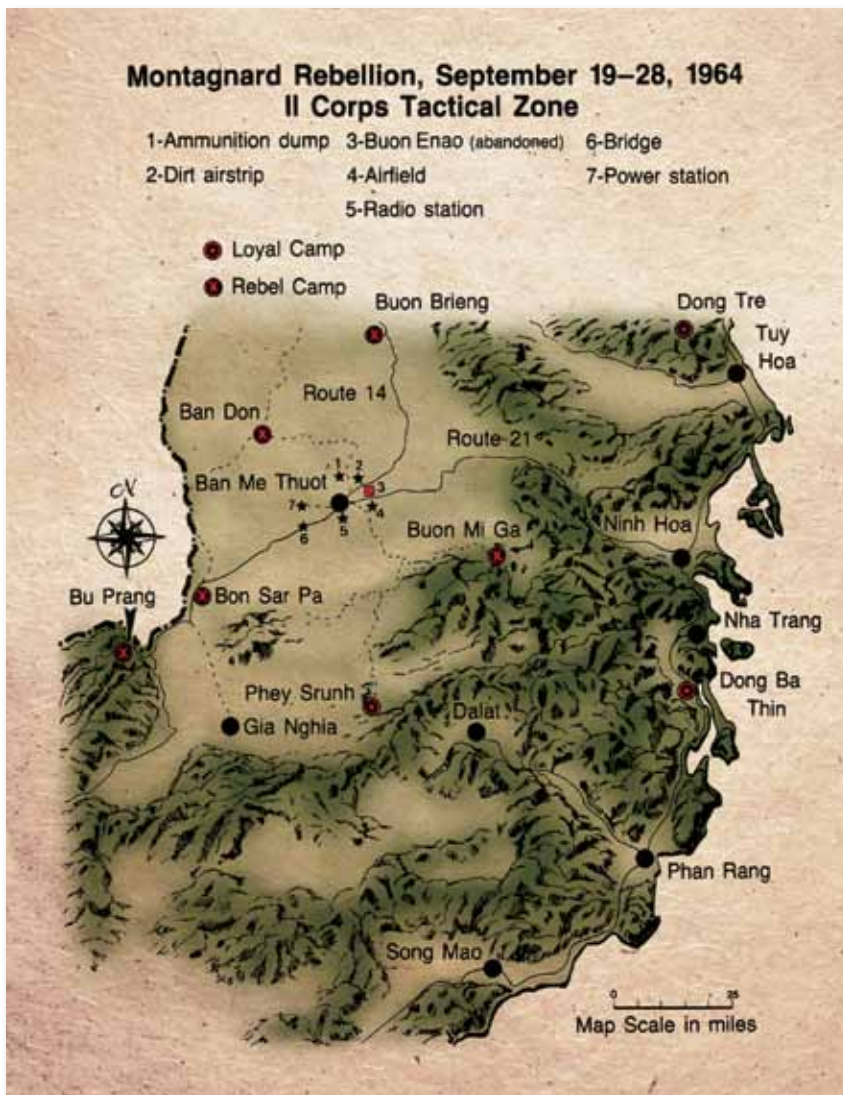
Military Assistance Command Vietnam SSI

a Special Forces Medical Sergeant on special duty from the 1<sup>st</sup> SFG, Staff Sergeant (SSG) Paul F. Campbell, went to Buon Eno. Campbell recalled the first session with the village elders: "Nuttle explained that the project was intended to improve Montagnard living, agricultural, and medical facilities. The concept was to go into a village like Buon Eno, teach the people to put some sort of defense around the village to keep everybody out, not just the Viet Cong, but also the ARVN." It would be "a show of defiance" with the villagers acting as a national guard or a self-defense force.<sup>8</sup> After two weeks of conversations and SSG Campbell's successful medical treatments, the elders agreed and they swore allegiance to start the Village Defense Program (VDP). The Montagnards built a protective fence around the village, dug shelters to protect the elderly, women, and children against VC attack, constructed a training center, built a medical clinic, and established an intelligence network that tracked movement in and around the village and served as an early warning system against attack.<sup>9</sup>

By mid-December 1961 the Buon Eno project was finished. Another fifty men from a neighboring village were trained as a local security or strike force to protect Buon Eno and its environs.<sup>10</sup> With the first village secured, Darlac's province chief expanded the program to include forty more Rhade villages within a fifteen-kilometer radius of Buon Eno and required those village chiefs and sub-chiefs to take defensive training.<sup>11</sup> The Village Defense Program grew so fast that between April and October 1962 another two-hundred Rhade villages were included. By the end of 1962, these

MACV Headquarters Complex, Tan Son Nhut, South Vietnam.





Map showing the areas affected by the Montagnard Rebellion.

operations. Control of the LLDB shifted to South Vietnam's government. These seemingly minor changes redefined operational relationships.

On 23 July 1962, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) National Security Action Memorandum 57 directed that all overt Special Forces paramilitary activities be transferred from the CIA to MACV. The U.S. Army became the executive agent for CIDG logistics. DoD retained sole authority to appoint the Special Forces commander in Vietnam. The U.S. Army was to institute flexible, efficient, effective supply and funding procedures to support the CIDG program.<sup>16</sup>

Codenamed Operation SWITCHBACK, this command and control redirection changed military operational objectives; the VC became military targets, but minority populations were not to be further mobilized.<sup>17</sup> Accomplished in phases, SWITCHBACK was completed on 1 July 1963. By then, Special Forces had trained enough hamlet militia, strike force soldiers, and other indigenous personnel to reduce VC exploitation throughout the rural areas of South Vietnam.<sup>18</sup> The VDP and CIDG program successes from May 1962 to October 1963 were almost negated by significant military and political events.

A *coup d'état* on 1 November 1963 resulted in the death of U.S.-supported President Ngo Dinh Diem and the end of his regime. This prompted MACV and the ARVN to implement major changes afterwards. Diem had not allowed MAAG/MACV and ARVN commanders and staffs to interfere with either U.S. Special Forces (SF) training activities or LLDB and CIDG operations.<sup>19</sup> On 5 January 1964, the military-dominated South Vietnamese government followed the precedent of Operation SWITCHBACK and restricted LLDB independence by assigning them to the ARVN.<sup>20</sup> Without Diem's restrictions, MACV quickly instituted major command and control changes. SF personnel in Vietnam were placed under the operational control of the senior U. S. Army advisor (MACV) in each Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). COL Theodore Leonard replaced COL Morton as the USASFV(P) commander. COL Leonard reevaluated and redefined USASFV(P)'s mission and centrally located and controlled the CIDG program. Management was further shifted to MACV Headquarters. Operationally, MACV directed that the Republic of Vietnam's border be manned by fortified SF camps defended by Chinese Nung mercenary units.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, SF area-development projects were deemphasized and CIDG forces were to be organized as conventional elements (Strike Forces) to supplement regular ARVN combat formations.<sup>22</sup>

These operational changes and the resumption of minority mistreatment by Vietnamese authorities almost killed the CIDG program. On 19 September 1964, five Montagnard CIDG camps near Ban Me Thuot revolted against the Vietnamese government.<sup>23</sup> Located in the II CTZ, Ban Me Thuot was the provincial and traditional Montagnard capital. The ten-day revolt ended only when U.S. advisers, acting as intermediaries, were finally able to stop hostilities. They convinced the Vietnamese government officials that each side could benefit if they were willing to accept or at least consider compromises on native rights.<sup>24</sup> Though of short duration, the rebellion had long-term consequences because in the end, "old grievances and old hatreds remained unresolved."<sup>25</sup>

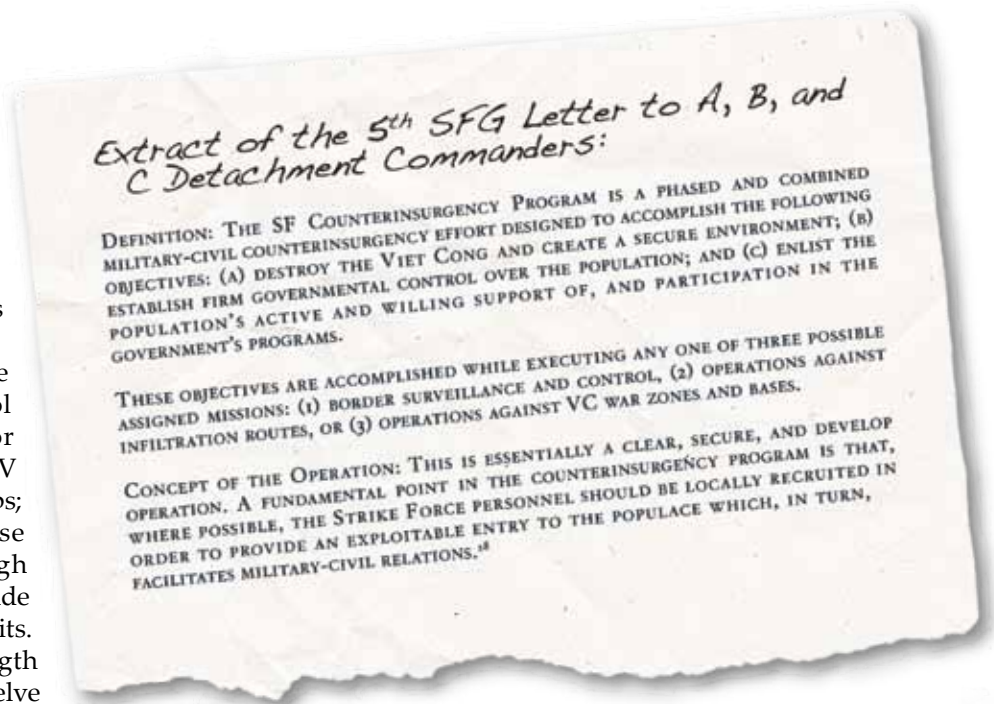
Special Forces had to accept reality: MACV disliked irregular forces; the Vietnamese resented those sympathetic toward the Montagnards and other minorities; CIDG camps could be closed as quickly as they were opened.<sup>26</sup> With the country's internal stability shaken, the Viet Cong increased their activities. DoD and MACV realized that future SF assignment and employment policies in Vietnam had to be established.

On 1 October 1964, DoD reassigned the 1,297-man 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (SFG) (Airborne) from Fort Bragg,

North Carolina to Nha Trang, South Vietnam to replace USASFV(P). The 674 members of the USASFV(P) would be integrated into Headquarters, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG. Overseas assignments to the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG in Vietnam would be one-year permanent change of station (PCS). The six-month temporary duty tours by SF ODAs would end by 1 May 1965.

The 5<sup>th</sup> SFG mission was to: exercise command less operational control of ODAs deployed with U.S. senior advisers in each corps; advise MACV on opening and closing of CIDG camps; establish new CIDG camps; advise the Vietnamese Special Forces High Command; and when required, provide formal training for LLDB and CIDG units. Mission “creep” increased SF strength in South Vietnam to four ODCs, twelve ODBs, and forty-eight ODAs by February 1965.<sup>27</sup>

Initially, the presence of the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG headquarters had little effect on the activities of the ODAs or the CIDG strike forces. SF continued advising and assisting the CIDG program while its strike forces protected tribal villages.<sup>28</sup> During Tet in late 1964, the military situation in Vietnam changed. Organized main force VC units began engaging and defeating large ARVN forces. Thus, the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG redefined its counterinsurgency program in January 1965. DoD announced that large well-equipped conventional military forces would arrive for combat duty in Vietnam by the Spring. Until these units arrived and became operational, General William C. Westmoreland,



Commander, MACV, directed that “SF and the irregulars assume an offensive role with the mission of becoming hunters and finding and destroying the enemy.”<sup>29</sup>

This increased insurgent operational tempo (OPTEMPO), instead of being the rationale for expanding foreign internal defense and development (FIDD in those days), had caused U.S. military leaders to commit American conventional forces to assist the ARVN. This added impetus to MACV's intent to “conventionalize” civilian irregular forces, convert selected CIDG units to Regional Force status by 1 January 1967, and implement the first steps of its master plan to phase out all American SF in Vietnam. CIDG strike force operations switched from protecting tribal and territorial holdings against VC exploitation to offensive conventional actions country-wide to defeat the enemy.<sup>31</sup>

During this transition, MACV realized that SF-led CIDG troops were highly skilled at gathering intelligence, finding and fixing enemy forces, and could engage the enemy on his own terms. These capabilities created a double-edged sword for SF and CIDG strike forces. The quality of the intelligence provided served to revitalize and strengthen the CIDG program, but reduced effective area development and information gathering on home front VC activities.<sup>32</sup> As intelligence requirements increased between 1965 and 1968, efforts to expand the minority village defense system declined.

SF-led CIDG forces continued to engage the enemy. With helicopters provided in May 1966 they became mobile counterinsurgency strike forces to commit against enemy-controlled zones. As mobile strike force numbers doubled and combat skills improved, they were employed more frequently as exploitation forces or reaction forces for camps that needed reinforcement during VC attacks. By September 1966, SF had opened twenty-two new camps and increased the number of CIDG combat reconnaissance platoons from thirty-four to seventy-three. MACV tasked 5<sup>th</sup> SFG to establish a Recondo School at Nha

### 5th SFG Commanders:

Colonel John H. Spears	August 1964-July 1965
Colonel William A. McKean	July 1965-June 1966
Colonel Francis J. Kelly	June 1966-June 1967
Colonel Jonathan F. Ladd	June 1967-June 1968

5th Special Forces Group Headquarters, Nha Trang, South Vietnam November 1963-March 1971.





Trang. The mission was to provide a twelve-day combat orientation course for all SF replacements and the long-range patrol personnel of conventional combat units.<sup>33</sup> Having achieved more success against the VC in 1966 by emphasizing night operations, General Westmoreland directed COL Francis J. Kelly, 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, to closely examine current and proposed ODA deployments throughout Vietnam and to produce an annual campaign plan coordinated with each Corps Tactical Zone commander.<sup>34</sup>



MACV Recondo Patch



Entrance to the MACV Recondo School located at Nha Trang and operated by 5th SFG personnel.

This relook directed by COMUSMACV contained specific guidance: Each SF Team and camp was to be positioned to maximize its full mission potential; ODAs could be replaced by converting civilian irregular strike forces into ARVN forces; coordinate campaign plan with Corps MACV senior advisors and their counterparts.<sup>35</sup> “Simply stated, our mission is to help the Vietnamese people to help themselves,” said COL Kelly in August 1966.<sup>36</sup> If American SF advisors were being reduced, the Vietnamese Special Forces (LLDB) would have to assume the role.

The Americans in Vietnam had little confidence in the LLDB organization and capabilities. This was based on experience with joint SF-LLDB operations. While on combat operations, LLDB officers and non-commissioned officers proved to be poor leaders who lacked initiative. They were not very aggressive. Because of this, American SF advisors often commanded CIDG camps and led combat operations. They had little time left to advise the teams. During the Montagnard uprising, Camp To Chau’s LLDB detachment (one officer and three enlisted) disappeared and did not return until it was over according to CSM (ret) John E. Kessling (A314).<sup>37</sup>

This had to be changed. SF advisors worked to improve LLDB performance to the point that they assumed complete control of the Plei Mrong CIDG camp by 1 May 1967. Those LLDB at Vinh Gia and Min Thanh did the same by the end of June 1967.<sup>38</sup> Progress was constantly overshadowed by American and South Vietnamese political maneuvering.

By 1967, the MACV campaign plan did not have a schedule to end the war. It only addressed U.S. military expansion and a major increase in ARVN forces. Still, COL Kelly published the CIDG program annex that had been reviewed and approved by all four Vietnamese Corps commanders and their senior American advisors. It had: a country-wide strategy for the CIDG camps and a plan to phase-out American Special Forces by the end of 1971. To accomplish both, MACV had to withdraw SF from those camps without a border surveillance mission and reallocate them to new CIDG camps along the frontier.<sup>39</sup> The intent was not to reduce the number of camps or Special Forces personnel, but to reapportion critical U.S. assets to better support the allied effort to

“Vietnamize” the war. Unfortunately for the U. S. and South Vietnamese armies, North Vietnam had other plans. MACV long-range plans collapsed in January 1968 during the Tet Offensive. ♣

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## Endnotes

- 1 Colonel Francis J. Kelly, *Vietnam Studies, U.S. Army Special Forces* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1989), 3.
- 2 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 4.
- 3 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 5.
- 4 Paul F. Campbell, Personal notes of COL Gilbert Layton, Director of the Office of Combined Studies, MAAG, email to Eugene G. Piasecki, 18 August 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Hereafter referred to as Layton Notes.
- 5 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 6.
- 6 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 19.
- 7 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 24.
- 8 Christopher K. Ives, *US Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam. Military innovation and institutional failure, 1961-1963* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 15-16. Paul F. Campbell, interview with Stephen Sherman, 27-28 January 1991, Raleigh, North Carolina, *Broken Promises and Other Readings about U.S. Army Special Forces and the Montagnards of South Vietnam*, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 9 “US Army Special Forces Vietnam, Provisional 1962-64,” *US Army Special Forces Vietnam, Provisional*, 1 June 2009, [http://www.groups.sfhq.com/adv\\_rvn\\_61\\_63.htm](http://www.groups.sfhq.com/adv_rvn_61_63.htm).
- 10 Layton Notes. **When first formed, the mobile fighting units were called Strike Forces. When MACV gained control, they referred to them as Mike Forces.**
- 11 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 25.
- 12 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 28.
- 13 Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War. U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 52-53.
- 14 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 54. **At this time ODAs (A-Teams) were comprised of two commissioned officers and 10 non-commissioned officers (12), and ODBs (B-Teams) had six officers and seventeen enlisted men (23), and ODCs (C-Teams) had six officers and eighteen enlisted men assigned.**



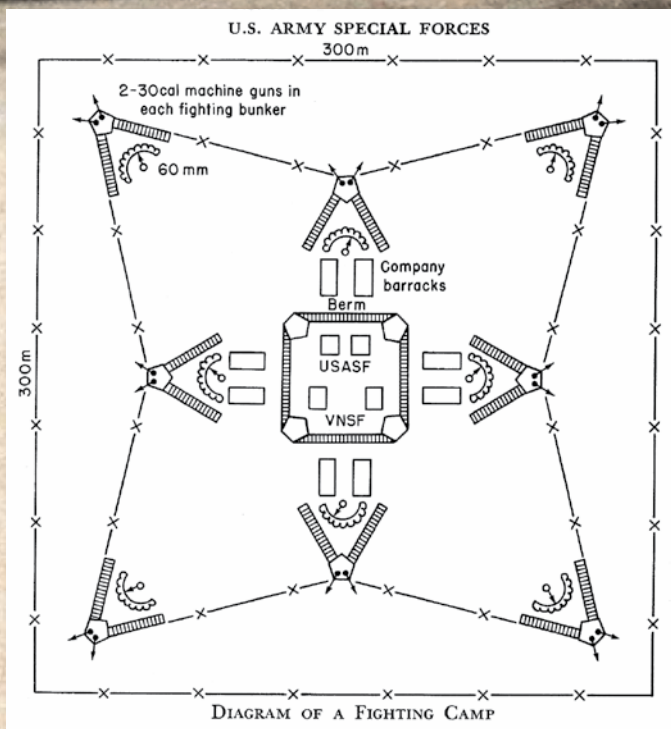
CIDG camps were constructed to maximize the natural defensive characteristics of the terrain and support combat operations. Pictured is a 1965 photograph of Camp A-322, located at Minh Thanh in the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ).

## A 1967 CIDG camp

In 1967 each CIDG camp was supposed to be commanded by a Vietnamese Special Forces (LLDB) A Detachment commander. The A Detachment organization paralleled that of the American Special Forces ODA; its members were trained in operations, intelligence, medical, weapons, political warfare, communications, supply and demolitions. Each Vietnamese detachment member was advised by his American ODA counterpart.

The ideal CIDG camp consisted of:

- Four 132-man CIDG companies.
- Two combat reconnaissance platoons.
- One civic action and psychological operations squad.
- A recoilless rifle or 105mm artillery section.<sup>40</sup>



15 "US Army Special Forces, Vietnam, Provisional 1962-64," *US Army Special Forces Vietnam, Provisional*, 1 June 2009, [http://www.groups.sfhq.com/ad\\_rvn\\_61\\_63.htm](http://www.groups.sfhq.com/ad_rvn_61_63.htm).

16 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 30.

17 Ives, *US Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam*, 24.

18 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 57.

19 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 64.

20 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 76.

21 CSM (ret) John E. Kessling, interview by Eugene G. Piasecki, 10 October 2009, Fayetteville, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

22 Shelby L. Stanton, *Special Forces at War. An Illustrated History, Southeast Asia 1957-1975* (Charlottesville, VA: Howell Press, 1990), 37.

23 Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, 37. One account of the Montagnard Uprising can be found in an article written by LTC Robert W. Jones, Jr., USASOC Command History Office. It is entitled: "A Team Effort: The Montagnard Uprising of September 1964" and is contained in *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, Volume 3, Number 2, 2007.

24 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 64. A list of demands made by the Montagnards to the Vietnamese government can also be found on this page. They are not listed here because their political implications exceed the scope of this article.

25 Stephen Sherman, *Broken Promises and Other Readings About U.S. Army Special Forces and the Montagnards of South Vietnam* (Houston, TX: The RADIX Press, 1999), 61. USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. This first appeared in an article written by Howard Sochurek titled: "American Special Forces in Action: How Coolness and Character Averted a Blood Bath When Mountain Tribesman Rose in Revolt," for *National Geographic Magazine*, Volume 127, No. 1, January, 1965.

26 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 79. The five camps involved in the Montagnard uprising, Bon Sar Pa, Ban Don, Bu Prang, Buon Mi Ga and Buon Brieng were all shut down within a year of the uprising.

27 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 74.

28 Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, 91.

29 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 77.

30 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 77.

31 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 78-79.

32 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 81.

33 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 96. This is supported by Shelby Stanton in *Green Berets at War*, 170-173.

34 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 97.

35 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 97.

36 Colonel Francis J. Kelly, "The Role of the Special Forces Soldier in Vietnam," *The Green Beret*, 1 August 1966, Volume 1, Number 1, 1:2.

37 CSM (ret) John E. Kessling, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe and Eugene G. Piasecki, 21 April 2009, Fayetteville, NC, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

38 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 102.

39 Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets, The First Thirty Years. A History of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 200.

40 Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 102.