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security—1 — Article I.

feb. 16, 1965

SAIGON—The defenses around American billets and Vietnamese airbases are not good enough—<sup>yet</sup> but there is no total defense against bold Viet Cong attacks and acts of sabotage.

In the recent Pleiku attack on February 7th in which eight Americans were killed and 108 wounded in worst battle incident of the war, there were barbed wire fences around the perimeter—<sup>yet</sup> but unlike even the most isolated Vietnamese outpost there were no ~~beer cans~~ with pebblesfilled beer cans to <sup>RATTLE</sup> make a noise when touched—and Viet Cong squads took one-half hour <sup>with detection</sup> to cut a hole in the ~~doubled~~ double rows of wire.

According to American military spokesmen there were trip flares along the fence, but "none of these were activated." There were eight German shepherd scout dogs in Pleiku area, but none of these were assigned to the protection of the base. There were also, he said, flood lights along the barbed wire fence, but none of them were strong enough to see the intruding Viet Cong, dressed in black pajamas. <sup>AS STAFF AS</sup> like the night.

deeps

security--2

feb. 16, 1965

And there were no mines, he said, between the barbed wire fences and the billeting area for American advisors to Two Corps headquarters, which would have impeded or alerted their approach. On one side of the airbase a Vietnamese ambush patrol withdrew into static bunkers only one hour before. In the last analysis, the problems of security are the result of the attack of the half-government which has prevailed in Vietnam since the November, 1963, coup d'etat against Ngo Dinh Diem and the half-way methods of mainly the Vietnamese armed forces and to a lesser degree the American armed forces. Yet there is no total guarantee of security, for the alarming advantage of the Communist guerrilla is to strike by surprise where American and Vietnamese guards are absent--and they can not be everywhere.

Militarily, the dilemma is how many Vietnamese troops should be tied down in either static positions or mobile patrols to defend major installations, such as airbases, which diminishes the number of troops necessary for totally offensive operations against Viet Cong bases and concentrations.

Politically, the dilemma is how much control of the civilian population should be maintained--the more the control the more the chances of alienating them to the extent of openly or secretly opposing the government. But population control in the provinces is ineffective without a stable efficient government in Saigon--which is still the major problem of the country.

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security--3

feb. 16, 1965

In the six Viet Cong anti-American attacks and acts of sabotage within the past year, there are three pertinent points:

1. While the ~~major~~ <sup>best</sup> of these six major attacks grabbed world-wide headlines--and two of them touched off retaliatory bombing raids on North Viet Nam--the Viet Cong launch these attacks in miniature every night of the year against isolated outposts and villages throughout the country.

2. While these six attacks appear disasterous in newspaper accounts, American advisors who have been hit feel they were relatively lucky. In the mortaring of Pleiku, for example, 21 of the 54 mortar and one heroic and lert American guard prematurely triggered the suicide shells fell short of their targets and did no damage. In the mortaring of Bien Hoa airbase on November 1 last year, American pilots and advisors felt they came off lucky--with only four killed and 72 wounded.

3. While American policymakers retaliated ~~against~~ <sup>April</sup> by bombing North Viet Nam for two of the recent attacks, they rejected for unknown reasons ~~that~~ <sup>you</sup> to send American ~~defensive~~ <sup>with N. South Vietnam.</sup> combat teams to defend these bases. While there has been an increase of American security personnel, in December, 1963, <sup>December, 1963 - 1964</sup> one American military police company were among the 1000 military which were withdrawn. <sup>Anti-American</sup> Three months later, the Viet Cong began their acts of sabotage against Americans.

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security

feb. 16, 1963x 1965

The six ~~incidents~~ anti-American attacks and acts of sabotage within the past year accounted for at least thirty one killed (nine in the Qui Nhon billet rubble still are unaccounted for), and 336 wounded. These six incidents fall into three separate categories-- with different problems and different attempted solutions-- direct mortar attack, acts of sabotage and a combination of both.

The acts of sabotage were last year the blowing up of American bleachers during softball game (2 killed; 23 wounded on February 9); the ~~explosion~~ blowing up of American theatre (3 killed and 49 wounded on February 16) ~~incidents~~ blowing up of American officers quarters on Christmas eve (2 killed and 62 wounded) and recently this year the ~~blowup~~ exploding of the Qui Nhon enlisted men's villa in which 12 were killed, 22 wounded and nine still unaccounted for in the mass of rubble.

The attack on the Bien Hoa airbase on November 1 is an example of direct mortar attack (4 killed and 72 wounded plus destroying virtually full squadron of American B-57 jet-fighters); the Pleiku attack is an example of combined mortar attack plus acts of sabotage.

(More)

deeps

security --5

feb. 16, 1965

There is a tacit agreement between the American and Vietnamese governments that American military police and security officials are ~~responsible~~ partially responsible for the helping in the guarding of American installation inside the fences of compounds, ~~but~~ But ~~because~~ the quick, surprise nature of sabotage makes even the most alert American MP helpless to ~~prevent~~ prevent the act. Hence, at the bombing of the American theatre a year ago this week, the American MP shot one of the two saboteurs, but still the attack could not be prevented. The ~~explosion~~ Christmas Eve explosion at the Brink & officers quarters is still presumed to be a mystery; a truckfull of explosive charges-- either tnt or plastique--was driven inside the compound which was to be guarded by American MP's, and simply exploded.

In the other three cases of direct acts of sabotage, indirect complicity by the Vietnamese population or police was implied, though never officially given as a reason ~~of~~ all permitting the ~~act~~ sabotage. ~~Furthermore~~ This does not necessarily imply that the population or the police were directly supporting the Viet Cong terrorist terrorists; it means simply that they looked the other way--and this is a habit of the Vietnamese has existed during the French Indo-China War. A classic case then was when the French security chief was assassinated coming out of his office on the main street of Saigon--and two Vietnamese police simply walked away.

deeps

security--6

Feb. 16, 1965

And so it was, that in the case of the bombing of the American theatre, two white-uniformed Vietnamese police assisting an American MP to guard the theatre simply walked away minutes before the ~~attack~~ Viet Cong terrorists ~~immediately~~ set a satchel-ful of plastique in the doorway. In the case of the blowing-up of the American bleachers during the American softball game--the Viet Cong terrorists had planted twenty-pound bombs (fragments of 100-pound Air Force bombs) under the bleachers the night before and ~~is~~ then electronically detonated them. But these were planted directly in the rear of the Vietnamese High Military Command Headquarters--and in an area housing Vietnamese military dependents--yet no one admitted seeing the planting of the bombs. In the case of Qui Ehen, an American sergeant who survived the blast expressed the opinion that the Viet Cong terrorists had used the houses of the civilian population across a narrow street to hide in until they emerged for the attack. Despite the alertness of the Americans inside the building and ~~bristling~~ security precautions of the Americans--and despite the killing of the three of the terrorists--still the attack act of sabotage could not be prevented.

(More)

deeps

security--7

feb. 16, 1965

If these acts of sabotage can not be prevented, the chances of Viet Cong success can be reduced by the fetidly meticulous control of the population. It means the stopping of busses, cars, trucks traffic coming in and leaving Saigon, the provincial capitals and district towns. In the case of Pleiku, one high ranking American officer suspected that the Viet Cong had carried their mortars and explosive charges into the city during the Chinese lunar New Year season when government security agents were lax. While traffic control of the population has increased around Saigon in the past few months, with the introduction of a massive pacification program in the surrounding provinces, still the fact that the Viet Cong terrorists could bring truckloads of explosives--either collectively or in small packets--into Saigon is evidence the controls are not strict enough. The Viet Cong have through the years been masters of this dangerous smuggling--government agents have found grenades rolled up in the bun in a Vietnamese woman's hair, have found guns and ammunition in the false bottoms of fruit crates, have discovered rifles brought into Saigon in the bullock carts of hair hay.

deeps

security--8

feb. 16

The foundation of this population control is the government in ~~the~~ at the central level, which is the fundamental importance of the ~~efficient~~ efficiency, success--and continuity--of the Saigon government newly named this week.

The problem of direct mortar attacks on major installations is neither simple nor easy to solve. It is reasonably certain, however, that the American casualties were inflicted by American-made mortars using American ammunition, all of which had been given to the Vietnamese forces years ago and since been captured by the Viet Cong guerrillas. Low-echelon American ~~advisors~~ ground advisors--and especially American helicopter pilots--are openly critical that these heavy weapons were given to the Vietnamese in the first place.

"When we (the Americans) started helping the Vietnamese militarily in 1956-57, we gave ~~them everything we had~~ the Vietnamese army battalions the same equipment our battalions used; we gave Vietnamese marine battalions the same as American marine battalions--simply because it was the American military charts that way," one irritated American advisor explained.

"But we did not consider that we were fighting guerrillas--we gave them .81 mm. mortars to hit pillbox positions; but the Viet Cong didn't use pillboxes; we gave them .57 recoilless rifles ~~but~~ but the Viet Cong didn't have tanks; we gave them .50 calibre machineguns for large troop concentrations, but the Viet Cong then were in small bands. Now they are using all of that to fight us."



deeps

security—9

feb. 16, 1965

One American advisor who had survived a mortar attack on his district headquarters—only 20 miles from Saigon—complained bitterly "that Uncle Sam is equipping both sides, but giving advice to only one side." ~~Many~~ American helicopter pilots openly cringe when they hear a .50 calibre calibre weapon has been captured.

"The Viet Cong put a home-made view viewfinder on those .50s," one American pilot explained, "and can shoot down American helicopters as easy as breathing."

A year ago, American military spokesman estimated that only two per cent of the weapo weapons captured from the Viet Cong were made in Communist countries; the remainder were either old French weapons or newly-captured American weapons. Since then, however, the statistics have ~~has~~ become unavila unavailable.

One effective defense against American-made mortars now in Viet Cong hands is ~~is~~ by patrols and static positions in a radius of at least two miles—the range of an .81 mm. mortar—around the installation. ~~But~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~effective~~ ~~controlling~~ ~~of~~ ~~this~~ ~~area~~ The outer perimeter during the Bien Hoa attack, however, was defended by only an irregular battalion that was twentyx percent understrength. But even more troop patrolling and securing of the outer perimeter is limited by the ~~mountain~~ jungled mountain terrain and the number of troops that can be tied down for airbase security.

deeps

security--10

Feb. 16, 1965

"It would take 10,000 troops to ~~securi~~ <sup>totally</sup> secure this airbase," the American security advisor at Bien Hoa explained pointing to the jungled rolling hills, ~~the~~ and the ~~apl~~ palm-tree covered river banks surrounding the airbase. "Obviously the best defense is to be out on patrol, but they can still slip through ~~our rear~~--you can't stop them all."

One of lethal qualities of a mortar is that there is no flash of light nor sound when the mortar round is fired--the noise comes on impact at the target. Hence, ~~at Bien Hoa~~, during the Bien Hoa attack, American aircraft and helicopters poured thousands of rounds of ammunition into suspected areas--but did not kill one Viet Cong.

If mortar attacks can not be totally eliminated--though it there are certain to be more of them--their success also can be reduced. One of ~~these devices~~ is a "counter-firing device" which automatically calibrates the position of the attacking mortar ~~and automatically~~ ~~and~~ and pinpoints the position for government mortars to counter-attack. These devices, used in Korean War and discussed after the November 1 attack were described by American Military Commander Gen. William C. Westmoreland as "pretty good if fire is sustained so one can get the data," but he said were "still being tested." They have got to be shipped to Viet Nam.

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