

zczc sag

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forces 1 (normass/deepe)

~~SECRET~~

(This is the last of a two-part series about revamping the ~~650,000~~^{670,000} man Vietnamese armed forces, the effects of which will partly determine whether American combat troops can begin their withdrawal in at least two years as General William C. Westmoreland has predicted).

~~SECRET~~

SAIGON, January 22--While concentrated efforts are being made to improve Vietnam's 300,000-man provincial forces, their newly appointed commander has protested Saigon snafus and military in-fighting by resigning and taking annual leave.

The resignation of General Nguyen Duc Thang—Saigon's most controversial, competent and dynamic generals—has ~~yet~~^{one of} not yet been accepted and considerable debate has arisen here over whether it will be. General Thang is currently on leave for an unspecified duration. Although he has submitted his resignation from the Vietnamese army a number of times in the past, General Thang ~~continued~~^{HAS} to rise in ~~the~~^{BE DROPPED FROM} either military or governmental circles; yet ~~his~~^{it} ~~if~~^{it} would be considered a serious blow to the ~~effectiveness~~^{rock-bottom} limits of the Army's leadership if he were to ~~drop~~^{BE DROPPED FROM} off the military roster. He is currently the no. 2 officer at the Vietnamese high command responsible for the provincial forces plus the revolutionary development care cadre, who implement the critical pacification program.

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forces 2 (normass/deepe)

The appointment of General Thang as commander of the provincial forces was considered here to be one of the most clean-cut, significant ~~im~~ steps in improving the combat effectiveness of these units. The 1968 program for revamping the ~~650,000~~^{670,000}-man armed forces will concentrate on these provincial forces—equivalent to ~~25 division~~^{9,200 rs} conventional ^{Army} divisions in strength—rather than in the regular armed forces. These provincial forces, are ~~comprised~~ composed of two para-military groupings: the 150,000-man Popular Forces, who are part-time fighters and part-time fighters ~~in~~^{farmers in} at the 250 districts throughout the countryside, and the 150,000-man Regional Forces, ^{with} which operate at the provincial level in the countryside.

These two groupings, often affectionately called "Ruffs" and "Puffs" for their RF and PF designations, ~~us~~² sustain heavier battlefield casualties and desertion rates than the regular forces—they also kill a higher proportion of Communists.—^{smaller salaries} Yet, they are paid lesser amounts, have fewer fringe benefits and have the ~~largest~~^{poorest} grade of weapons. The salary of a Popular Forces private is 2200 piastres ~~am~~^o month (roughly \$22) plus 200 piastres (\$2) a month in rice allowances ~~for each member of his family.~~^{670,000}

Throughout the ~~650,000~~^{670,000} armed forces, heavier manpower drains result from desertions than from battlefield losses. ^{Official Sources}

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forces 3 (nromass/deepe)

General Thang is the first officer at the central government level to have centralized operational control of the Regional and Popular Forces. In the past, generals at the Saigon level have assumed only logistical and administrative responsibility for the ~~se~~ widely-scattered forces, considered by some to be the "unsung heroes" of the ^{ground} war. At the lower levels, a new deputy has been appointed to each province chief to look ~~after~~ after the interests of the Regional and Popular Forces. *summary*

"This is mostly a psychological play to make the little RF and PF feel they ^{HAVE} had a ~~dad~~ daddy," one reliable source reported.

Most of the other improvements in the Regional and ~~Pro~~ Popular Forces center ~~mostly~~ in the logistical and administrative fields. ~~An~~ administrative, support and logistical unit has been set up in each of the 44 provinces ^{BETTER} tailored to serve the needs of the ~~Regix~~ forces ^{by} better. This has thus replaced the regular army division commander as the logistical and administrative superior for the forces which are ^{OPERATE} widely scattered and sometimes ^{the} miles away from ~~headquat~~ headquarters cities. In some provinces, a small element of the Regional and Popular ~~Force~~ Forces will be held in reserve ^(more neuter) so that in times of trouble, it can reinforce a sister-unit without aid of the Vietnamese regulars.

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forces 4 (normass/deepe)

Beginning this year, plans were being made to computerize the accounting system of the ~~lawaxk~~ Popular Forces by starting a "by-name" punch-card IBM system to keep better track of the individual trooper. This system has been started with the Regional Forces in July, 1966, and in ~~early~~ January, of that year the regular army initiated it. This would presumably eliminate the past ~~praxess~~ practice of "phantom soldiers" --names on payrolls of persons who either never ~~exisi~~ existed, or else had been killed or wounded months before.

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forces 5 (normass/deepe)

Thang's disappointment, which ^{ED} lead to his submitting his resignation, center on the greater command and responsibility for the administration of the provinces, the changing and training of new province chiefs, and the ^{LACK OF} increased authority for the province chief, ~~to command~~ rather than the division commander, ^S to control the regular army battalions assigned to a province for pacification-support missions. These pacification-support forces ~~now~~ now include elements of the 960 Regional Force companies, ^{And} the 4,300 ~~platoons~~ Popular Force platoons, now under the day-to-day operational control of the province chief, plus the 50 to 60 regular battalions of regular Vietnamese army troops, who take orders ^w either from the province chief, ^S or their division commander, ^S or sometimes both.

~~(More Reuter)~~
A fourth component, ^{WHO} but not for security--is the revolutionary development cadre, which are the activists to build schools, marketplaces, and dispensaries at the hamlet level for their pacification assignments. These ~~20,000~~ cadre are now under the control of Thang, at the military command, rather than ~~under~~ under the government's Ministry of Revolutionary Development.

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forces 6 (normass/deepe)

General ~~Tahn~~ Thang, a 37-year-old ~~No~~the Northerner, is one of the most controversial, and most progressive-thinking generals in the Vietnamese ~~commzn~~ command. But, he is commonly identified with Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky--certainly on issues of radical change--and ~~hax~~ this has not endeared him to President Thieu, who is in disagreement with Ky on ~~may~~ many points. Thang has in the past been closely identified with retired Air Force general Edward Lansdale, the so-called king-maker of Ramon Magsaysay during the Philippine insurgency, and this has not endeared Thang to many of the more traditional-minded Anti-Lansdale American generals. Thang is also often identified with Robert Komer, the deputy commander in the American military establishment for pacification, who is also known to have considerable disagreements with the more conventional approaches of the American generals. Thang was known to have supported the radical reform proposal in which the polito politico-military powers of the ten Ve Vietnamese division commanders and four corps commanders would have seriously been substantially reduced; thus, Thang lost the enthusians of enthusiasms of this powerful clique of generals.

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forces 7 (normass/deepe)

These conservative-styled Vietnamese generals charge Thang with "empire-building" and "chasing after the Americans;" they also resent the support Thang has from Ky, whom they say, as an air force general "is not military-minded and has not commanded infantry troops in his whole life."

The Ky-Thang-Komer hope was to move the Vietnamese division and corps commanders out of the politico-military chain of command; this has ~~been blocked~~ for the time being, been blocked by ~~the~~ some pivotal American and Vietnamese generals. Then, they wanted to establish a ~~direct~~ direct link between the central government in Saigon and the 44 province chiefs, who are both the political heads and military commanders of Thang's Popular and Regional Forces. Thang wanted the ~~province~~ province chiefs, rather than division commanders, to control those regular army battalions assigned to pacification within a given provinces--but this also ~~has~~ has been blocked by the generals at this time.

(more Reuters)

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Forces 8 (normass/deepe)

More important is who appoints and trains the province chiefs-- and for the past two months ~~the~~ high-level intrigue on the Vietnamese side has revolved around this point. Thang drew up a list of the province chiefs, 15 now in that post, and 29 new ones who have been appointed from other positions. These 44 were to be trained beginning Dec. 4 at the Vung Tau school where Thang's revolutionary development cadre are tutored, but first the Vietnamese corps commanders "torpedoed" the project; it was rescheduled for late December, and then the Ky-Thieu conflict ~~against~~ postponed it. This disgusted Thang, who submitted his resignation in early January. Thieu has since told Thang to set up the training course for the second of February. But Thang has reportedly refused and most of the training is now scheduled to take place in Saigon instead of at the Vung Tau school,

~~While~~ the Saigon government in the past has formally appointed the 44 province chiefs throughout ~~the entire~~ ~~the~~ countryside, but in practice the job has often been sold by the corps commander, sometimes for as much as ~~5~~, five million ~~paistres~~ ^{paistres}--roughly five thousand unistates dollars. The subordinate job of district chief was often sold by the division commander--^{BY} the net effect was rampant corruption ~~from~~ these officers ~~recouping their losses~~ plus a paralysis of government with the district chiefs often quarreling with the province chiefs. ~~Thang~~ In the past several months, Thang was responsible for selecting the 29 newly-appointed province chiefs-- which cut into the financial benefits of the corps commander--~~and~~ and he wanted to ~~transfer~~ ~~move~~ move them into their new jobs in "blitz fashion." ~~Now~~, the central government has, however, decided on a slow-motion change of province chiefs.

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Forces 9 (normass/deepe)

Thang was also eager to begin training the popular forces not simply as security forces, but also as an integrated part of the revolutionary development cadre program, in which they would assist with the construction of schools, wells, marketplaces. But this plan, while reportedly approved by Komer, has been blocked by both the American generals, by President Thieu and the corps commanders. As a consequence, the program to begin re-training 1000 of the 4300 platoons of popular forces, even in their security mission, has been delayed for at least a month and the decision as to what kind of training they should receive has yet to be made.

"Across th board- There's no question but what changes and progress are being made," one knowledgeable American source explained. "But at the current rate it will take us 20 years to get very far."

more
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forces 10 (Normass/deepe)

(Hank: I'll send you tomorrow a story on the weapons escalation, tying in Khe Sanh air raid. The military command here refuses to give briefing ~~xxx~~ re-capitulating three years of bombing North Vietnam as part of my February seventh series. Suggest Pentagon man ~~here~~ try to get that. Also ~~xxxx~~ military command here is edgy about bombing pause; suggest Washington watch this, which is where decision will be made. Regards Bev).

End Raster