

The US Military in Lebanon, 1958: Success Without A Plan

Lawrence A. Yates

On 15 July 1958, elements of a US Marine battalion landing team stormed ashore across beaches south of the Lebanese capital of Beirut. Clad in combat gear and heavily armed, the leathernecks staked out their positions and dug in as sunbathers, soft-drink and ice-cream vendors, casually dressed vacationers, and denizens of a nearby village looked on. The surreal atmosphere heightened the uncertainty many troops experienced as to what exactly would happen now that they were in Lebanon. Most were aware that the country was in turmoil, and some probably had heard that the pro-West government of Iraq had been overthrown in a bloody coup d'état the previous day. The battalion's officers had orders to seize Beirut's international airport during the landing operations and to proceed north to the city itself after that. What would happen then was anyone's guess. Most marines assumed, however, that there were armed and malevolent forces at work in the country, and that unless those hostile groups were subdued, the United States would suffer a serious reversal in the Cold War.

At the time of the US intervention in Lebanon, the Cold War had been the dominating feature in world affairs for just over a decade.¹ Initially just a struggle between the Soviet Union and its erstwhile Western allies over the political/ideological composition of post-World War II Europe, the conflict had, by the early 1950s, spread to the Far East and, by mid-decade, to the Middle East. In response to what American officials perceived as the expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union and, after 1949, the People's Republic of China, the US government had adopted a policy of containing communism. In the late 1940s, that general approach translated into such concrete measures as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), all designed to fortify friendly European governments vulnerable to Soviet military threats, subversion, and psychological warfare. In 1950, less than a year after mainland China fell to Mao Dezhong's Red army, the United States led UN forces in a "police action" to stop the extension of communism to the Republic of South Korea. By the time an armistice ended the Korean War in 1953, Washington had concluded formal alliances with South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan, thereby institutionalizing the containment policy in the Far East.

That same year saw the death of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, whose successors in the Kremlin moved to adopt more flexible tactics in the Cold War. Seeking to acquire friends and clients, not satellites, through the expansion of Soviet influence, not control, the new leadership made offers of economic and military aid to

developing countries, thus ushering in a new, more competitive phase in the Cold War. One region targeted by this change in Soviet tactics was the Middle East.

It was only during World War II that the United States began to look upon the Middle East, given its oil reserves and geopolitical position, as an area vital to the country's national security. At war's end, the presence of Soviet troops in northern Iran and the Kremlin's pressure on Turkey for territorial and strategic concessions helped contribute to the onset of the Cold War, but both issues were resolved relatively quickly, permitting Washington to focus, as noted, on the threat of communist expansion in Europe and, soon thereafter, Asia. In the mid-1950s, though, as Stalin's successors turned their attention to the Middle East, the United States felt compelled to follow suit.

When Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded Harry Truman as president in 1953, America's position in the region did not appear all that bleak.² In the Arab world, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Libya had governments considered to be friendly to the West. Egypt had recently changed regimes, with the pro-West King Farouk being ousted in a nearly bloodless coup d'état by a group of "Free Officers," but the new leaders initially expressed a willingness to maintain amicable and productive relations with the United States. In Iran, where a nationalistic leader had been threatening British and American oil interests, a CIA-backed coup in 1953 placed the pro-West shah in power. Still, when Eisenhower's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, visited the region that year to gain support for, among other anticommunist measures, a regional defense pact modeled on NATO that would include Arab countries, he found an area in flux, with many Arab leaders more concerned about Zionism and Western imperialism than America's Cold War fixation. The Eisenhower administration subsequently scaled back its plans for a defense pact, restricting it to the "Northern Tier" states of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. The president also made it clear that the United States would pursue more "evenhanded" policies with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and in dealing with the remnants of imperialism in the region, represented primarily by the French in Algeria and the British bases in Egypt and throughout the Gulf.

In 1954, as the Soviet Union undertook to woo Middle Eastern governments with offers of foreign assistance and with open support for the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist positions of many prominent Arab leaders, Eisenhower and Dulles feared that the Kremlin would "leapfrog" the Northern Tier and establish its influence deep in the region. To counter Soviet appeals, Eisenhower attempted to make good on his pledge of evenhandedness, hoping at first to work with the new Egyptian strongman, Gamal Abdel Nasser. This initiative seemed to bear fruit in 1954, when the United States assisted in bringing about an Anglo-Egyptian agreement that would remove British troops from their bases in Egypt (although not British

control over the Suez Canal).

When the Eisenhower administration also tried to enlist Nasser in arranging an Arab-Israeli settlement, the result was less satisfying. The desired peace agreement never materialized, in some part because Nasser, a very charismatic leader who saw himself as the spokesman for the Arab world, recognized that concessions to Israel would jeopardize his ambitions, which he sought to further by espousing a secular program of Pan-Arab nationalism.³ The Arab world, Nasser proclaimed, represented a single nation by virtue of common language, history, territory, and religion. That the “nation” was not united but divided was the doing of the Western imperialists who had exploited the region economically and had arbitrarily drawn the boundaries of most current Middle Eastern states. Moreover, in 1948, as another blow to Pan-Arab nationalism, the imperialists had created the Western “colony” of Israel within the Arab homeland. Arabs, if they hoped to realize their national destiny, needed to unite, remove the remnants of Western imperialism from their midst, adopt a new social order to alleviate the plight of the poor, and insist on a position of neutrality in the Cold War. Furthermore, “reactionary” Arab rulers who did not embrace these sentiments but who continued to cooperate with the West needed to be removed from power.

Nasser’s anti-Western rhetoric, his appeal to the Arab “street” as well as to many Arab leaders, his shrill verbal assaults upon Iraq for being the only Arab state in 1955 to join the Baghdad Pact (a modified version of the Northern Tier defense organization), his denunciation of other pro-West Arab governments, and his neutralist sentiments all set off alarm bells in Washington. Neither Eisenhower nor Dulles thought the Egyptian a communist, but they both believed that Soviet leaders would use him to ensconce their influence firmly in the Middle East. The next three years seemed to confirm that assessment, as Nasser continued his objectionable rhetoric; mounted propaganda campaigns aimed at stirring up unrest in such countries as Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan; received arms from the Soviet bloc (after the United States balked at his requests for American weapons); and recognized the People’s Republic of China. In 1956, the Eisenhower administration demonstrated its growing aggravation with Nasser by withdrawing an offer it had made to help Egypt build a dam at Aswan. Nasser retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal. This move, in turn, prompted Israel, France, and Great Britain—each operating from its own motives—to take military action against Egypt in a war that had the ironic effect of putting the Eisenhower administration in diplomatic opposition to two of its NATO allies and the Israeli government. The threat of US sanctions forced all three countries to relinquish the territory they had seized, but it was Nasser and the Soviet Union who received the bulk of the credit for this victory over “imperialism.”⁴

Washington perceived that Great Britain's humiliation in the Suez crisis had created a power vacuum in the Middle East that the Soviet Union would fill if the United States failed to act. Consequently, the US Congress in March 1957 passed a resolution, popularly known as the Eisenhower Doctrine, that pledged American aid and support, including military intervention, to any Middle Eastern country "requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism." The doctrine was intended to deter Soviet adventurism, but also to bolster those pro-West governments through which Eisenhower hoped to isolate Nasser. Of the countries in the region, only Lebanon wholeheartedly embraced the Eisenhower Doctrine, and as events turned out, only Lebanon would benefit from it.⁵

In the year that followed passage of the congressional resolution, the US position in the Middle East seemed to deteriorate even further, Nasserism seemed to be attracting even more adherents, and the Soviet Union seemed to increase its influence, especially in Egypt and Syria. In February 1958, those two countries merged into the United Arab Republic (UAR), a move that many in the Middle East saw as the first step toward realizing the ideal of a truly Pan-Arab political entity. Once formed, the UAR intensified Nasser's vituperative propaganda campaign aimed at toppling pro-West regimes in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. The royal family in Iraq and the officials that governed in its name were not all that popular but did not seem in imminent danger. The same could not be said of young King Hussein in Jordan, who had barely weathered a domestic crisis in 1957. As for Lebanon, it was also in the throes of a political crisis and seemed highly vulnerable to Nasserite pressures from within and outside its borders. In spring 1958, it was the turmoil in Lebanon that had the Eisenhower administration most concerned.⁶

On a rudimentary level, the principal players in Lebanese politics were organized along confessional, geographical, and family lines; they included Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christians, the Druze, Sunni, and Shia Muslims, and smaller groups representing other denominations. These groups were broken into subgroups, each generally led by a prominent family patriarch, or *zaim* (loosely translated as *boss*). In 1958, the status and power of these *zuama* in the country's political structure were still based on the National Pact of 1943, which mandated that the Lebanese president be a Maronite Christian—the largest confessional group in Lebanon during the post-World War I mandate period; the prime minister a Sunni, and the president of the parliament a Shiite. But changing demographics, combined with the appeal of Nasser's Pan-Arab nationalism, caused several Muslim groups by the mid-1950s to desire a greater role in Lebanese politics. Conversely, the country's president, Camille Chamoun, embraced the Maronites' traditionally pro-West orientation and sought to stave off the Nasserite challenge. His failure to denounce England and France during the Suez crisis angered Muslims throughout

the Middle East. A year later, several of his prominent critics were defeated in Lebanon's parliamentary elections—elections that, the losers rightly charged, had been fraudulent. In addition to these divisive events, many powerful *zuama*, including some Christians, were outraged at Chamoun's machinations to amend the constitution in order to seek a second term as president.

In May 1958, after a left-wing, anti-Chamoun journalist was murdered, many in opposition to the president took up arms to redress their grievances. Chamoun requested US intervention at that time, invoking the Eisenhower Doctrine, but Washington was not yet ready to take such a drastic step. By mid-year, the violence subsided, and many observers concluded that the immediate crisis was under control. But then, on 14 July 1958, a group of Iraqi officers apparently sympathetic to Nasserism overthrew the country's government, murdering the royal family and various government officials in the process. Eisenhower and his advisers quickly convened a series of emergency meetings in Washington, as they envisaged a similar scenario playing out in Lebanon and Jordan. To save two of the few remaining pro-West governments in the Middle East, Eisenhower ordered American troops into Lebanon, while the British intervened in Jordan. The next day, US marines, who had been sailing off Lebanon earlier in the crisis, returned to the area and entered the country.

During the year leading up to the American intervention in Lebanon, US military planners and their British counterparts had been working on contingency plans for putting troops from both their countries into the Middle East. Since the planners could imagine hundreds of scenarios that might require Western intervention, the completed plans remained vague regarding the kinds of operations the troops might actually have to perform. The planners focused instead on identifying which units would be sent, how they would get to their objective, and what critical ground and facilities they would seize upon arrival. In the case of Lebanon, as noted, the plan called for establishing a beachhead south of Beirut, seizing the international airport nearby, and moving on to the capital itself. What would follow would be anyone's guess.⁷

At the time he ordered the intervention on 14 July, Eisenhower himself had little idea of what the troops would be required to do. Nor did he have any idea when they would leave the country. The important thing, from his point of view and that of his national security advisers, was to get the troops in. To do nothing, they were convinced, would allow Nasser to dominate the Middle East, to the advantage of the Soviet Union and to the detriment of the West. Inaction would also have serious global, as opposed to regional, ramifications, the president believed: the United States would lose credibility among friends and foes alike, leading the former to doubt whether they could rely on American commitments and tempting

the latter to take risks that could end in a superpower confrontation no one wanted. As Secretary Dulles concluded, the Cold War losses America would suffer from doing nothing were bound to be worse than the consequences of taking action. Consensus on this point held, even after both Secretary Dulles and his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles, made it clear that it would be easier to send in the troops than to get them out, and that no one knew how the situation might develop once the troops deployed. Thus, with no clear idea of what US forces would be called upon to do, and with no clear idea of when or under what conditions the troops would be withdrawn, the president had ordered the intervention.⁸

The US Marine and Army units arriving in Lebanon could not be expected to know what the president himself did not. As the commanding general of the Army forces told one group of infantrymen deploying from Europe, “At this time I cannot tell exactly what our future mission may be.”⁹ Most suspected that they were there to support the pro-West Lebanese government, and they expected that this would require combat operations, but against whom, they could not say. Perhaps they would have to fight the rebels who were holding the government in Beirut under siege; perhaps they would have to take on the Syrian army, rumored—falsely, as it turned out—to be in Lebanon supporting the rebels. What the first marines ashore did know was that they were to march overland to the capital city just north of them. If they were apprehensive about what might happen along the way, they had reason to be. As things turned out, the move to Beirut precipitated a confrontation that came close to disaster.

The setting for the near debacle began to take shape as soon as the marines established their beachheads on the 15th. When the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Hadd, came ashore, he was greeted in quick succession by two emissaries from the American embassy sent by US Ambassador Robert McClintock. The first to arrive, a naval attaché, bore instructions from the ambassador to have the marines reboard their ships and sail north to the port of Beirut. McClintock was concerned that the planned march overland toward the city might be opposed as a matter of honor by the Lebanese army. In the ambassador’s view, a firefight between the two forces would destroy what chances the US intervention had for restoring some semblance of stability to the country. Lieutenant Colonel Hadd, however, refused to reembark his troops, and his immediate superior backed him up. McClintock was furious and let the State Department know it. An agreement between the department and the Pentagon, reached well before the intervention, stated that “In case of difference between the military commander and the local United States diplomatic representative in regard to political matters relating exclusively to Lebanon, the views of the latter shall be controlling.” The ambassador believed Hadd was in violation of this agreement, while the lieutenant colonel, relying on his orders, was completely unaware that it existed.¹⁰

The next day, the marines, having seized the international airport during their initial landings, assembled for the move to the capital city. En route, as the ambassador feared, they encountered elements of the Lebanese army deployed for a fight. Only the timely, albeit last-minute arrival of McClintock, Admiral James Holloway (the commander of US forces in the intervention), and the Lebanese army commander averted a firefight. The three men huddled together on the scene in an impromptu conference and hammered out a compromise agreement whereby the Lebanese soldiers would escort the marines to Beirut. With that decision, the stage was set for US forces and the Lebanese army to work together as partners in a collaboration that would determine the role US troops would play during the remainder of the intervention. One can only speculate on the course events would have taken had the marines and the Lebanese engaged in battle.

It would take almost a week to work out the details of the “partnership.” In the meantime, there was no shortage of advice as to what US forces should do and concerns over what they would do. McClintock, for his part, urged caution, fearing that if the Americans became involved in fighting with Lebanese rebels, the spectacle of US soldiers killing Muslims would set the whole of the Middle East on fire. Chamoun, on the other hand, demanded that the troops not only stabilize Lebanon but eliminate through military action the threats emanating from Iraq, Egypt, and Syria as well. Upon hearing this, Dulles let it be known that the United States would not engage in “preventive war” to stamp out Nasserism and communism in the Middle East, but would employ “patience” in seeking to resolve the crisis in Lebanon. Then there was the counsel of Vice Admiral Charles Brown, commander of the US Sixth Fleet, who, after visiting Beirut, advised Washington to have US forces, so far confined to the area around the capital, fan out to other key areas of the country. Admiral Holloway, together with McClintock, immediately let Washington know that Brown’s unsolicited advice contained “counterproductive” recommendations.¹¹

After a key meeting on 21 July, the Lebanese and US commanders reached agreement on a division of labor between their two forces.¹² According to a plan that went into effect on the 24th, US forces were assigned the task of ringing Beirut (with marines north of the city, Army units in the south). For its part, the Lebanese army would provide a buffer between US troops and the main concentration of rebels in an area of the capital known as the Basta. What was not immediately determined, however, was the fate of the rebel force. Chamoun, McClintock, and Holloway all wanted the Lebanese army commander, General Fuad Chehab, to clear the Basta, by force if necessary, but Chehab adamantly refused, fearing that his army would disintegrate along confessional lines should it be ordered to attack the mostly Muslim rebel force. A frustrated Holloway informed Chehab that, should the rebels attack US forces, he would order American troops to clean out

the Basta. The threat was not a bluff, although the admiral and the general both realized that the negative ramifications of such action would likely intensify the crisis, not settle it.¹³

While the discussions to determine the role of American troops in Lebanon were taking place over the first week of the intervention, Robert Murphy, a special envoy for President Eisenhower, arrived in Beirut. Initially sent to smooth out the friction that purportedly existed between the American embassy and the US military commanders, he quickly found that McClintock and Holloway had established a genuine rapport and were cooperating with each other fully. That freed Murphy to address the more important issue of Lebanon's internal crisis. In a flurry of talks with Lebanese leaders representing all the contending parties, the seasoned diplomat acquainted himself with the troubles afflicting the country. As a British colleague observed, "Mr. Murphy after 24 hours here is beginning to hold his head in his hands at the intricacies of the Lebanese situation." What Murphy found was that, once he assured the various rebel factions, both Muslim and Christian, that the US military was not in Lebanon to keep Chamoun in power and that it was not an occupying force, the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the crisis brightened, so much so, in fact, that on 19 July, he advised Washington that it should eschew military action in favor of a political settlement. Eisenhower and Dulles, both concerned about the decline of America's prestige in the Arab world, readily concurred.¹⁴

In Murphy's assessment, the essential first step toward a peaceful outcome was the immediate election of a new president. The Lebanese parliament was scheduled to meet later in the month, so there was little time in which to find a candidate acceptable to all parties. The breakthrough came when Chamoun not only agreed to step aside, but also pledged to throw his support behind his rival, General Chehab, a man whose family background, religious affiliation (Maronite), and experience in commanding a Muslim-Christian army qualified him more than most for the presidency. Chehab's election took place on 31 July, but he did not take office until 23 September. In the interim, several crises threatened to derail the settlement, but Murphy and McClintock plied their diplomatic skills to see that the agreement held.

The American military intervention, despite all the risks it entailed, turned out to be critical to the successful diplomacy conducted by the two senior US diplomats on the scene. For over three months, the joint American force surrounding Beirut engaged in a variety of activities and performed a number of tasks, none of which approximated what they had anticipated upon their arrival. There were, in other words, no truly combat operations. Rather, the troops contributed to the successful negotiations simply by being present, mounting patrols, manning checkpoints, and

displaying the power at their disposal.¹⁵ In short, they provided a show of force to which Murphy or McClintock could point, when need be, to persuade some recalcitrant Lebanese official or *zaim* to behave more responsibly. At times, the troops became the targets of small-arms fire from the rebel area, but the threat was sufficiently low and the force sufficiently protected so that only one US soldier out of a force of over 14,000 died from hostile fire.

The final threat to a peaceful outcome arose when Chehab announced that his cabinet would contain several former rebels. This development infuriated Chamoun and the Christian Phalangists, not to mention the CIA, and the former president and his followers threatened a general strike and military action. McClintock saved the day, using his good offices to find a formula that Chehab used to reorganize his cabinet in a more balanced way. At this point, the Eisenhower administration had already begun withdrawing some of the US force. By the end of October 1958, all American troops had left Lebanon.

The intervention had been successful, in that patience, diplomacy, and a show of force provided the means to resolve the local crisis. Lebanon, despite its sectarian divisions, would remain at peace for 17 years. Furthermore, soon after the crisis, Nasser fell out with the new Iraqi leadership, the Soviet Union, and his Syrian partner in the UAR, all causing him to seek better relations with the United States. The Eisenhower administration, for its part, extended diplomatic recognition to the new Iraqi government and accepted the fact that, since the United States could not destroy Nasserism, it should reach an accommodation with it. With both sides receptive to a rapprochement of sorts, US-Egyptian relations improved throughout the remainder of Eisenhower's second term and into the 1960s. The Cold War, of course, continued unabated until the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 brought a general lessening of tensions that survived the Vietnam War and two Arab-Israeli wars in the Middle East (1967 and 1973).

The point to be made here, though, is that the US military and the Eisenhower administration had not planned for all this at the time American troops intervened in Lebanon on 15 July 1958.¹⁶ Those troops, as they themselves quickly discovered, had no clear mission; nor could they refer to any plan for withdrawing them, what in today's parlance would be called an "exit strategy." Yet, by adjusting to the situation as they found it, however unconventional and daunting it turned out to be, and by working closely with American diplomats on the scene, the troops provided the "muscle" that encouraged the contending factions to reach a negotiated solution.

Notes

1. For a historical overview of the Cold War from its inception up through the Nixon years, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

2. Eisenhower's policies toward the Middle East are covered in Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The documentary record of these policies can be found in the appropriate volumes of US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *FRUS*] (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

3. For a summary of Nasser's Pan-Arab nationalism, see Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 31-32; John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (3rd Edition; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67-72; Don Peretz, *The Middle East Today* (4th ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978), 216-54.

4. Once the USSR realized that the United States opposed the British, French, and Israeli military actions, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev threatened to rain rockets on Paris and London. The threats were empty but served to enhance the Kremlin's status among the multitudes of Nasserites throughout the Middle East.

5. For accounts of the origins and implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, see Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; John A. DeNovo, "The Eisenhower Doctrine," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, Vol. I, edited by Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 292-301.

6. For an overview of the Lebanese crisis, see Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1989), 105-27. Mackey's book provides a very readable introduction to the history of Lebanon and the background and events surrounding the crises of 1957-58 and 1975-1990. See also Chapter 13 in Peretz, *Middle East Today*.

7. For an account of the planning for possible US intervention in a Middle Eastern country, see Roger J. Spiller, "'Not War But Like War': The American Intervention in Lebanon, Leavenworth Paper No.3 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1981).

8. For the deliberations of President Eisenhower and his advisers prior to the decision to intervene in Lebanon, see the relevant material for 14 July 1958 in *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Vol. XI, *Lebanon and Jordan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992). The crisis in Lebanon was a topic of high-level discussion within the administration from April 1958 through the intervention. After one particular meeting in June, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., Eisenhower's ambassador to the UN, sent a message to John Foster Dulles, expressing some concerns over the possibility of a US intervention in Lebanon. Among the questions raised by Lodge were the following: "How are we going to get our troops out once we have got them in? How long shall they remain? What will the formula be for getting them out? What will the formula be for holding elections in Lebanon while our troops are there? What happens if the elections should go definitely against us?" To these and other issues, Dulles responded that the "hard questions" Lodge raised were being given a great deal of thought.

As noted in the text of this essay, the administration had not come up with any answers three weeks later. *Ibid.*, 168-69.

9. The general's speech can be found in U.S. Army, 24th Infantry Division, *After Action Report for Operation GRANDIOS, 15-31 July 1958*, 5 November 1958. A copy is located in the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

10. After the intervention, Hadd and McClintock defended their respective positions in print. See, H.A. Hadd, "Orders Firm but Flexible," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (October 1962), 81-89; Robert McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," *ibid.*, 65-79. The State-Defense departments agreement is cited in the McClintock piece.

11. The views cited concerning how US forces might be employed are contained in various documents for the early period of the intervention and can be found in *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Vol. XI.

12. For a brief summary of the 21 July 1958 arrangement between the Lebanese army and US forces, see Jack Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon 1958* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966).

13. Practically every key US official on the scene started out by demanding that Chamoun relieve Chehab of command for the latter's refusal to clean out the Basta. Over time, virtually every one of these critics came to accept the wisdom of Chehab's position. In the Great Civil War that began in Lebanon in the mid-1970s, the Lebanese army did get involved and, in the process, disintegrated along confessional lines.

14. For details of the Murphy mission, see Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), Chapter 27; entries in *FRUS, 1959-1960*, Vol. XI, for the period of Murphy's stay in Lebanon. The observation regarding Murphy's endeavor to learn about Lebanese politics is quoted in Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 240.

15. For the kinds of operations in which US troops in Lebanon engaged, see Spiller, "Not War But Like War"; Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon 1958*; U.S. Army, 24th Infantry Division, *After Action Report for Operation GRANDIOS*; U.S. European Command, *Final Report on Critique of US CINCEUR Participation in CINCSPECOMME OPLAN 215-88*, 2-3 December 1958; U.S. Specified Command, Middle East, *American Land Forces After Action Report, 15 July-25 October 1958*, 25 October 1958; Headquarters, 24th Airborne Brigade, *Command Report, 1-31 August 1958*, 8 September 1958; *Ibid.*, 1-30 September 1958, 12 October 1958.

16. Seven years after the United States intervened militarily in Lebanon, the Lyndon B. Johnson administration sent American troops into the Dominican Republic. In very broad terms, that intervention was quite similar to the one in Lebanon: the troops went in on short notice; the plan available to them discussed the units to be used, the means to get them into the country, and the critical terrain to be seized, but not the kinds of operations they might have to perform; the mission was vague; and, at the outset, there was no plan for withdrawing the troops. Yet, as in Lebanon, even without a clear mission, an "exit strategy," and with plenty of "mission creep," the Dominican intervention was considered a success.

Vietnamization: An Incomplete Exit Strategy

James H. Willbanks

By the fall of 1968, US involvement in Southeast Asia had reached a pivotal point. The Communist forces had been defeated decisively on the battlefield during the Tet Offensive earlier that year, but in the process they had reaped a tremendous psychological victory. Although US troop levels were at an all-time high and much had been said about the “light at the end of the tunnel,” the sheer scope and ferocity of the Communist attacks had been startling, and the cries to get out of Vietnam reached a new intensity. A shaken Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not run for re-election. Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon squared off in a fight for the soon-to-be-vacated White House.

During his campaign, Nixon made the war in Vietnam a major element of his platform, promising “new leadership that will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific.”¹ He proclaimed: “The nation’s objective should be to help the South Vietnamese fight the war and not fight it for them. . . . If they do not assume the majority of the burden in their own defense, they cannot be saved.”² Despite his later protestations to the contrary, such pronouncements gave many voters the impression that Nixon had a “secret plan” for ending the war, and this no doubt was a factor in his victory at the polls in November.

On 20 January 1969, Richard Milhous Nixon was inaugurated as the 37th president of the United States. Once elected, Nixon faced the same problems in Vietnam that had confronted Lyndon Johnson. Escalation and commitment of increased numbers of American troops had not worked; the Tet Offensive had demonstrated that fact only too clearly. The resultant stalemate was unacceptable not only for those clamoring for a US pull-out, but also for an ever-increasing sector of the American people who would no longer tolerate a long-term commitment to what appeared to be an unwinnable war. The only answer was to get out of Vietnam, but the problem was how to devise an exit strategy that would allow the United States to withdraw gracefully without abandoning South Vietnam to the Communists.

On his first day in office, Nixon immediately set about to find a solution, issuing National Security Study Memorandum 1 (NSSM 1), titled “Situation in Vietnam,” which was sent to selected members of the new administration, requesting responses to 29 major questions and 50 subsidiary queries covering six broad categories: negotiations, the enemy situation, the state of the armed forces of South Vietnam, the status of the pacification effort, the political situation in South Vietnam, and American objectives.³ The memorandum was sent to, among others, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency,

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Embassy in Saigon, and Headquarters Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). The memorandum, according to Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser at the time, was designed "to sharpen any disagreements so that we could pinpoint the controversial questions and the different points of view."⁴ Chief among the new president's concerns were the viability of the Thieu government and the capability of the South Vietnamese to continue the fight after any US withdrawal.⁵ If Nixon wanted divergent views and opinions on the war, he certainly found them in the wide range of responses to what became known as the "29 questions." Kissinger and his staff summarized the responses to NSSM 1 in a 44-page report, which revealed that there was general agreement among most respondents that the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) could not in the foreseeable future defend against both the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army (or more accurately, PAVN, the People's Army of Vietnam).⁶ In the same vein, most respondents agreed that the government of Vietnam (GVN) probably could not stand up to serious political competition from the National Liberation Front (NLF) and that the enemy, although seriously weakened by losses during the Tet Offensive, was still an effective force capable of being refurbished and reinforced from North Vietnam.

Despite agreeing on these points, there was disagreement among the respondents about the progress achieved to that point and the long-range prognosis for the situation in Southeast Asia. There were two opposing schools of thought in this matter. The more optimistic group, best represented by the MACV response and shared by Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. (commander in chief, US Pacific Forces), held that the North Vietnamese had agreed to peace talks in Paris because of their military weakness, that pacification gains were real and "should hold up," and that the "tides are favorable."

Although the MACV opinion emphasized that significant progress was being made in modernizing the ARVN, it warned that the South Vietnamese could not yet stand alone against a combined assault, stating that "the RVNAF simply are not capable of attaining the level of self-sufficiency and overwhelming force superiority that would be required to counter combined Viet Cong insurgency and North Vietnamese Army main force offensives."⁷ Accordingly, General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., MACV commander, stressed in his response that any proposed American troop withdrawal had to be accompanied by a concurrent North Vietnamese withdrawal.

Differing strongly with the MACV report and definitely representing a decidedly more pessimistic view were the responses from the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, and civilians in the Defense Department, all of which were

highly critical of Saigon's military capabilities and US progress to date. The Defense Department went so far as to say that the South Vietnamese could not be expected to contain even the Viet Cong, let alone a combined enemy threat, without continued and full American support. These respondents agreed that pacification gains were "inflated and fragile" and that the Communists were not dealing from a position of weakness on the battlefield and had gone to Paris only for political and strategic reasons—to cut costs and to pursue their aims through negotiation—rather than because they faced defeat on the battlefield.

Thus, there existed two divergent opinions about the long-term projection for the future of South Vietnam and its military forces. What had been designed as a means to clear the air on the Vietnam situation and assist in developing a viable strategy had only served to obfuscate things further for the new president. Henry Kissinger wrote, "The answers [to NSSM 1] made clear that there was no consensus as to facts, much less as to policy."⁸ Thus, Nixon faced a serious dilemma. He had promised to end the war and bring the troops home, but he could not, as Kissinger later observed in his memoirs, "Simply walk away from an entire enterprise involving two administrations, five allied countries, and thirty-one thousand dead as if we were switching a television channel."⁹ The new president had to devise an exit strategy to get the United States out of Vietnam, without "simply walk[ing] away." While the survival of South Vietnam remained an objective, it manifestly was not the prime goal, which was to get the United States out of Vietnam. Nixon and his advisers began to consider how the US could disengage itself from the conflict and at the same time give the South Vietnamese at least a chance of survival after the American departure. It was acknowledged that this would not be easy and might even prove impossible in the long run.

Despite the uncertainty involved in trying to strengthen the South Vietnamese armed forces, the president and his closest advisers, particularly Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and Secretary of State William P. Rogers, agreed that this was the only feasible course of action if the United States was ever to escape from Vietnam. Nixon ordered American representatives to take a "highly forceful approach" to cause President Thieu and the South Vietnamese government to assume greater responsibility for the war.¹⁰ Unspoken, but still clear to all involved, was the implication that an assumption of greater combat responsibility by the RVNAF would precede a resultant withdrawal of American forces, which by this time totaled 543,000.

To get a better sensing for the situation on the ground in Southeast Asia, Nixon directed Laird to go to South Vietnam to conduct a firsthand assessment. On 5 March 1969, the secretary of defense, accompanied by General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, arrived in Saigon. There they were briefed by senior MACV

officers, who emphasized the view that significant improvements were being made in the South Vietnamese armed forces. Laird instructed General Abrams to speed up the effort so that the bulk of the war effort could be turned over to the Saigon forces as soon as possible. Abrams repeated his earlier warning that the South Vietnamese were not prepared to stand alone against a combined threat. Nevertheless, Laird, citing political pressures at home, directed Abrams to improve the RVNAF and turn over the war to them “before the time given the new administration runs out.”¹¹ As historian Lewis Sorley points out, this was not a new mission for Abrams; he had been working on this effort since his days as Westmoreland’s deputy in Saigon.¹² However, the urgency was a new factor.

Despite Abrams’ warning, Laird returned to Washington convinced that the South Vietnamese could eventually take over prosecution of the entire war, thus permitting a complete US withdrawal. A former Republican congressman with 17 years in the House, Laird was anxious to end the war because he realized the traditional grace period afforded a new president by the public, the press, and Congress following his election victory would be short-lived. Anti-war sentiment on Capitol Hill was growing, and Laird knew that Nixon would feel the brunt of it if he did not end the war quickly. Moreover, if the war in Vietnam continued much longer, Laird reasoned that it would weaken American strength and credibility around the world in places far more important to US security than Southeast Asia. He believed that any effort to prolong the conflict would lead to such strife and controversy that it would seriously damage Nixon’s ability to achieve an honorable settlement. Therefore, according to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Jerry Friedheim, Laird was “more interested in ending the war in Vietnam rather than winning it.”¹³

Laird told Nixon he believed the president had no choice but to turn the entire war over to the South Vietnamese to extricate US forces and placate both the resurgent anti-war movement, as well as the ever-growing segment of the American population who just wanted the war to go away. He proposed a plan designed to make the South Vietnamese armed forces capable of dealing not only with the ongoing insurgency, but also with a continuing North Vietnamese presence in the south. Laird argued that the large US presence in country stifled South Vietnamese initiative and prevented them from getting on with taking over the war effort. He told Nixon that he believed the “orientation” of American senior commanders in Vietnam “seemed to be more on operations than on assisting the South Vietnamese to acquire the means to defend themselves.”¹⁴ Laird wanted the senior US military leaders in South Vietnam to get to work on shifting their focus from fighting the war to preparing the South Vietnamese to stand on their own. Accordingly, he recommended withdrawing 50,000-70,000 American troops in 1969.

In a National Security Council meeting on 28 March, the president and his

advisers discussed Laird's recommendations. In attendance was General Andrew Goodpaster, then serving as General Abrams' deputy in Saigon. He reported to the president that substantial improvement in the South Vietnamese forces had already been made and that MACV was in fact close to "de-Americanizing" the war. According to Henry Kissinger, Laird took exception to Goodpaster's choice of words and suggested that what was needed was a term like "Vietnamization" to put the emphasis on the right issues. In very short time, this term was adopted as the embodiment of Nixon's efforts to turn over the war to the South Vietnamese.¹⁵

Laird later described the objective of the new program before the House Armed Services Committee as "the effective assumption by the RVNAF of a larger share of combat operations from American forces" so that "US forces can be in fact withdrawn in substantial numbers."¹⁶ Such statements were clearly aimed at selling the new policy to Congress and the American public. Alexander M. Haig, then a member of Nixon's National Security staff, later described Laird's plan as a "stroke of public relations genius" but pointed out that it was "a program designed to mollify American critics of the war, not a policy for the effective defense of South Vietnam."¹⁷ Nevertheless, Laird, according to Henry Kissinger, had convinced himself that Vietnamization would work and it became his top priority.¹⁸

Nixon was quickly won over by Laird's arguments, later writing, "It was on the basis of Laird's enthusiastic advocacy that we undertook the policy of Vietnamization."¹⁹ It may not have taken very much to convince the president to endorse this approach; Haig maintains that Nixon had begun talking about troop withdrawals shortly after his inauguration and Laird's Vietnamization plan provided the rationale he was looking for.²⁰ It would enable the president to initiate a phase-down of combat operations by US troops with the ultimate goal of complete withdrawal. However, Nixon realized that American forces could not be pulled out precipitously. Although the situation was improving in South Vietnam, there was still a significant level of fighting. Time was needed to make the RVNAF sufficiently strong enough to continue the war alone. Thus, American forces would have to continue combat operations to gain the necessary time to build up the South Vietnamese forces.

In early April 1969, Nixon issued planning guidance for the new policy in National Security Study Memorandum 36 (NSSM 36), which directed "the preparation of a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war" that would address "all aspects of US military, para-military, and civilian involvement in Vietnam, including combat and combat support forces, advisory personnel, and all forms of equipment."²¹ The stated objective of the requested plan was "the progressive transfer...of the fighting effort" from American to South Vietnamese forces.

Nixon's directive was based on a number of assumptions. First, it was assumed

that, lacking progress in the Paris peace talks, any US withdrawal would be unilateral and that there would not be any comparable NVA reductions. This was a significant change from previous assumptions, because it meant that the South Vietnamese would have to take on both the NVA and the VC. Second, the US withdrawals would be on a “cut and try” basis, and General Abrams would make periodic assessments of their effects before launching the next phase of troop reductions. Third, it was assumed that the South Vietnamese forces would willingly assume more military responsibility for the war. Based on these three assumptions, the American troop presence in South Vietnam was to be drawn down eventually to the point where only a small residual support and advisory mission remained.

Thus, the Nixon administration, despite assessments from a wide range of government agencies that agreed that the RVNAF could never combat a combined VC-NVA threat, devised a program to prepare the South Vietnamese to do just that, instructing the American command in Saigon to develop plans for turning over the entire war effort to Saigon. All that was left to institute the new strategy was a public announcement.

On 8 June 1969, President Nixon met with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu at Midway and publicly proclaimed for the first time the new American policy of “Vietnamization.” Nixon stated that there would be a steady buildup and improvement of South Vietnamese forces and institutions, accompanied by increased military pressure on the enemy, while American troops were gradually withdrawn. He emphasized that the ultimate objective was to strengthen RVNAF capabilities and bolster the Thieu government such that the South Vietnamese could stand on their own against the Communists. Before closing, Nixon announced he was pulling out 25,000 troops and that at “regular intervals” thereafter, he would pull out more. According to the president, this withdrawal of US forces was contingent on three factors: 1) the progress in training and equipping the South Vietnamese forces, 2) progress in the Paris negotiations, and 3) the level of enemy activity.²²

Privately, President Thieu was not pleased with the American president’s announcement. According to Nixon, Thieu, realizing what the end state of US withdrawals meant, was “deeply troubled,” but Nixon later claimed he “privately assured [Thieu] through Ambassador [Ellsworth] Bunker that our support for him was steadfast.”²³ Thieu and many of his generals were upset with another aspect of “Vietnamization” and that was the word itself. The South Vietnamese leaders took exception to the whole concept and the connotation that the ARVN were “finally” stepping up to assume responsibility for the war. To the South Vietnamese who had been fighting the Communists since the 1950s, the idea that the war would now be “Vietnamized” was insulting. As one former ARVN general wrote after the war,

“It was after all our own war, and we were determined to fight it, with or without American troops. In my opinion, Vietnamization was not a proper term to be used in Vietnam, especially when propaganda was an important enemy weapon.”²⁴

Despite the sensitivities of the South Vietnamese, Henry Kissinger recorded that “Nixon was jubilant. He considered the announcement a political triumph. He thought that it would buy him the time necessary for developing our strategy.”²⁵ A later memorandum revealed that Nixon hoped his new policy of Vietnamizing the war would demonstrate to the American people that he “had ruled out a purely US solution to the problem in South Vietnam and indeed had a plan to end the war.”²⁶

To solidify the new strategy, Nixon met with Laird and General Wheeler upon his return from Midway. The purpose was to discuss a mission change for General Abrams. The current mission statement, which had been issued by President Johnson, charged MACV to “defeat” the enemy and “force” his withdrawal to North Vietnam. As a result of the discussions following the Midway announcement, a new order to Abrams that would go into effect on 15 August directed him to provide “maximum assistance” to strengthen the armed forces of South Vietnam, to increase the support to the pacification effort, and to reduce the flow of supplies to the enemy down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. With this order, the effort had begun by General Abrams when he assumed command of MACV became official White House policy. Nixon’s new strategy hinged on transferring the responsibility for fighting the war to the South Vietnamese, while Henry Kissinger worked behind the scenes in Paris in an attempt to forge a cease-fire and subsequent peace agreement. Thus, Nixon hoped to extricate the United States from Southeast Asia and achieve “peace with honor.”

The Vietnamization effort would be implemented in three phases. In the first phase, responsibility for the bulk of ground combat against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces would be turned over gradually to the RVNAF. During this phase, the United States would continue to provide air, naval, and logistic support. The second phase consisted of developing capabilities in the RVNAF to help them achieve self-reliance through an increase in artillery, air, naval assets and other support activities. The second phase proceeded simultaneously with the first phase, but it would require more time. Even after the bulk of US combat forces were withdrawn, US forces would continue to provide support, security, and training personnel. The third phase involved the reduction of the American presence to strictly a military advisory role with a small security element remaining for protection. It was assumed that the advisory and assistance presence would be gradually reduced as South Vietnam grew in strength, but the new strategy, at least as it was described initially, always included leaving a small residual force in South Vietnam “for some time to come,” as Laird told a House subcommittee in February 1970.²⁷

The South Vietnamese took statements such as this and many more like it as evidence of a promise that the United States would not desert them. As the cries for complete US withdrawal increased in volume, the idea of a residual US force in Vietnam would eventually be abandoned and this change would have a devastating impact on the fortunes of South Vietnam.

While the United States continued to conduct combat operations with American forces, the new Vietnamization policy focused initially on modernizing and developing the South Vietnamese armed forces. This effort was not a new initiative, but during the earlier years of US involvement in Vietnam, particularly during the period of American buildup (1965-1967), it had been of secondary importance as US military leaders focused on the conduct of operations by American units in the field. With the election of Richard Nixon and his subsequent emphasis on Vietnamization, the effort to strengthen and modernize the South Vietnamese forces became a top priority for MACV.²⁸

When Nixon met with President Thieu at Midway in June 1969 and announced the initiation of the Vietnamization policy, Thieu expressed significant concerns about the capabilities of his forces in light of the inevitable US troop withdrawals. Abrams was told to work with the South Vietnamese to develop a recommendation on how to further improve the force structure and fighting capability of the RVNAF. The subsequent improvement program, which became known collectively as the “Midway increase,” was approved by Laird on 18 August 1969. At the same time, Laird directed MACV and the Joint Staff to review all ongoing and projected programs for improving the RVNAF, telling them to consider not just force structure and equipment improvements, but also to look at new ways to improve leadership, training, and to develop new strategy and tactics best suited to South Vietnamese capabilities.

On 2 September, Abrams responded to Laird’s guidance, pointing out in very clear terms that, in his opinion, proposed modernization and improvement programs, even with the Midway increase, would not permit the South Vietnamese to handle the current combined threat. Citing poor leadership, high desertion rates, and corruption in the upper ranks of the RVNAF, Abrams reported that he thought the South Vietnamese forces could not be improved either quantitatively or qualitatively to the extent necessary to deal with a combined threat; he clearly stated that he thought what the secretary of defense wanted simply could not be done in the timeframe expected and with the resources allocated.²⁹

Laird could not accept Abrams’ assessment, because if he did, it meant that he would have to admit that the United States could never gracefully exit South Vietnam, particularly in light of the increasingly obvious fact that the North Vietnamese

were not going to agree to a bilateral withdrawal of US and PAVN troops from South Vietnam. On 10 November, he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to come up with a new plan that would, one way or the other, create a South Vietnamese military force that could “maintain at least current levels of security.”³⁰ He told the military planners to assume unilateral US withdrawals that would reduce American military strength first to a “support force” of 190,000-260,000 troops by July 1971 and then to a much smaller advisory force by July 1973. He was effectively telling the planners for a third time to come up with a viable Vietnamization program but with the new caveat that they were not to assume a significant residual US support force.

It appears that Abrams and his staff, realizing that despite their great misgivings, the dye was cast with regard to eventual US withdrawal and they attempted to devise the best plan possible given Laird’s adamant directives. To comply with the secretary’s orders, the military planners assumed a reduced Viet Cong threat and a declining PAVN presence in South Vietnam, while virtually ignoring Hanoi’s forces based just outside the borders of South Vietnam. Based on these somewhat questionable assumptions, MACV submitted its new recommendations at the end of December.³¹ In January 1970, the Joint Chiefs included them in the Phase III RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan, which called for an increase in RVNAF strength to 1,061,505 over a three-year period (mid-1970 to mid-1973) and the activation and equipping of 10 new artillery battalions, 24 truck companies, and six more helicopter squadrons.

Laird and his staff thought this plan was finally a step in the right direction, but they were concerned that MACV planners still had not accepted that there would be no large residual American support force and suspected that the military was trying to stall the withdrawal process. Accordingly, in mid-February 1970, Laird flew to Saigon to meet with Abrams and Thieu to impress upon them the urgency of the situation. He voiced disappointment about what he perceived as the lack of any new or fresh approaches from MACV regarding the implementation of the Vietnamization program. While in Saigon, he met separately with senior South Vietnamese generals who expressed concern with the Phase III plan and reiterated earlier requests for additional artillery, to include long-range 175-mm artillery pieces and air defense artillery, and again asked for financial assistance to improve the lot of their soldiers.

When Laird got back to Washington, he ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to re-evaluate the proposed Phase III plan in light of the South Vietnamese requests and to come up with a more comprehensive plan. Two months later, the Joint Chiefs submitted the revised plan, which became known as the Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan, or CRIMP. This plan, which covered the

1970-1972 fiscal years, raised the total supported South Vietnamese military force structure to an even 1.1 million.³²

CRIMP had a significant impact on the entire RVNAF. As in the past, the ARVN got the largest share of the improvements, eventually receiving 155-mm and 175-mm long-range artillery pieces, M-42 and M-55 anti-aircraft weapons, M-48 tanks, and a host of other sophisticated weapon systems and equipment. By the end of 1969, the United States had supplied 1,200 tanks and armored vehicles, 30,000 machine guns, 4,000 mortars, 20,000 radios, and 25,000 jeeps and trucks. The new equipment and weapons received in the two years following the approval of CRIMP enabled the ARVN to activate an additional division (3d Infantry Division), as well as a number of smaller units, to include 25 border ranger battalions, numerous artillery battalions, four armored cavalry squadrons, three tank battalions, two armored brigade headquarters, and three anti-aircraft battalions. By the beginning of 1972, the South Vietnamese army strength would increase to 450,000 and consist of 171 infantry battalions, 22 armored cavalry and tank squadrons, and 64 artillery battalions.³³

The territorial Regional and Popular Forces (RF/PF) also benefited greatly from CRIMP. As Vietnamization gained momentum, MACV and Washington planned to fill the gaps left by departing US divisions with an expansion of the RF/PF, which would hopefully be able to take over the major share of territorial security and support of the pacification program. This expansion effort involved a significant increase in numbers and improved equipment. Under CRIMP, the RF and PF received newer, more modern weapons, including M-16 rifles, M-60 machine guns, and M-79 grenade launchers; all were vast improvements over the hodgepodge of older cast-off weapons with which they previously had been armed. The influx of new 105-mm howitzers enabled the Joint General Staff to activate eventually a total of 174 territorial artillery sections to provide support for the RF, PF, and border ranger forces, thus vastly improving the fire support available to the territorial forces while reducing the burden on the regular artillery forces, who could then focus on supporting the regular maneuver battalions in their combat operations.³⁴ In addition to the new equipment, the manpower strength of the Regional and Popular Forces was increased to get more government troops into the countryside to support the pacification effort. The command structure of the Regional Forces was improved and several RF group commands were formed.

The ground forces were not the only beneficiaries of CRIMP. The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) also received a windfall, growing from 17,000 in late 1968 to 37,000 by the end of 1969, and ultimately to 64,000 by 1973. Along with this increase in the number of personnel, there were also significant upgrades in aircraft and command-and-control capability. The VNAF's older propeller-driven aircraft

began to be replaced by A-37 and F-5A jet fighter-bombers, thus vastly increasing ground-support capability. VNAF's cargo hauling capability was also improved with the upgrading of the C-47 fleet to C-119 aircraft initially, and eventually to C-123 and C-7 aircraft. The helicopter fleet (unlike the US arrangement, where most of the troop-carrying and attack helicopters belonged to the Army, VNAF controlled all the helicopters in the South Vietnamese inventory) was greatly enlarged and improved as US Army aviation units began to redeploy, turning over their aircraft and equipment to newly activated Vietnamese helicopter squadrons. Late in 1972, as the United States prepared for total withdrawal, VNAF, under the provisions of a special program called Enhance Plus, received 32 C-130A four-engine cargo planes and additional C-7 cargo planes, F-5A fighter-bombers, and helicopters.

During this period, the Vietnamese Air Force grew to six times its 1964 strength and, by 1973, operated a total of 1,700 aircraft, including over 500 helicopters. By then it had six air divisions, which included a total of 10 A-37 fighter-bomber squadrons, three A-1H attack helicopter squadrons, three F-5E fighter-bomber squadrons, 17 UH-1 helicopter squadrons, four CH-47 helicopter squadrons, 10 liaison and observation squadrons, three C-7 squadrons, four AC-47, AC-119, and EC-47 squadrons, and other additional training units. In terms of equipment, VNAF, by the time of the US withdrawal in 1973, would be one of the most powerful air forces in Southeast Asia.

The Vietnamese Navy (VNN) also underwent significant expansion during the Vietnamization period. The navy numbered only 17,000 in 1968, but it would reach 40,000 by 1972. To increase the capability of the VNN and to meet the goals of the Vietnamization program, MACV instituted two new programs in 1969. The first was called the Accelerated Turnover of Assets (ACTOV), which was designed to rapidly increase naval strength and training and, at the same time, accelerate turnover of ships and combat responsibility from the US Navy to the South Vietnamese Navy. The second program was called the Accelerated Turnover of Logistics (ACTOVLOG), which was aimed at increasing naval logistic support capabilities.

The VNN received two small cruisers in May 1969. Shortly thereafter, the US Navy Riverine Force began to turn over its vessels and river-patrol responsibilities to the VNN. By mid-1970, over 500 US brown-water navy boats had been transferred to the South Vietnamese. In September of that year, the VNN took over the ships and mission of the Market Time coastal interdiction program. By 1972, the Vietnamese Navy operated a fleet of over 1,700 ships and boats of all types, to include sea patrol craft, large cargo ships, coastal- and river-patrol craft, and amphibious ships.

In terms of the sheer volume of materiel and modern equipment, Vietnamization worked. By 1970, South Vietnam had made a quantum leap in terms of modernization and was one of the largest and best-equipped military forces in the world. Unfortunately, however, equipment and sheer numbers were not the only answers to the problems facing South Vietnam as it prepared to assume ultimate responsibility for the war. The fighting ability of the South Vietnamese armed forces had to be improved. To do this, MACV increasingly placed more emphasis on training and the advisory effort, which had been ongoing since the earliest days of US involvement in Southeast Asia. US advisers were found in essentially three areas: they advised South Vietnamese combat units, served in the training base, and worked in the province pacification programs.

MACV Headquarters provided the advisory function to the Joint General Staff (JGS), the senior headquarters of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. However, only a part of MACV Headquarters staff personnel actually served in a true advisory capacity. In 1970, only 397 out of 1,668 authorized spaces in MACV's 15 staff agencies were designated officially as "advisers" to the GVN and the JGS.³⁵ Nevertheless, as the war continued and more US forces were withdrawn, the MACV staff agencies became increasingly more involved in purely advisory functions.

Just below the JGS level were four South Vietnamese corps commanders who were responsible for the four corps tactical zones (later, military regions) that South Vietnam comprised. Initially, their US counterparts were the senior US field force commanders in each of the corps tactical zones.³⁶ In this capacity, the senior US commander was assisted by two deputies who worked directly with the South Vietnamese forces. His deputy for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) was the principal adviser to the ARVN corps commander in the area of pacification and development. Additionally, the senior US commander had another deputy, who served as the senior adviser to the corps commander and was actually the chief of the US Army Advisory Group attached to the ARVN corps headquarters. As such, he and his staff provided assistance, advice, and support to the corps commander and his staff in command, administration, training, combat operations, intelligence, logistics, political warfare, and civil affairs.

Later, as additional US units and the senior American field-force headquarters were withdrawn, the advisory structure changed. During 1971-1972, four regional assistance commands were established. The regional assistance commander, usually a US Army major general, replaced the departing field-force commander as the senior adviser to the South Vietnamese corps commander in the respective military regions.³⁷ The mission of the Regional Assistance Commander was to provide assistance to the ARVN corps commander in developing and maintaining an effective military capability by advising and supporting RVNAF military and paramilitary

commanders and staffs at all levels in the corps in military operations, training, intelligence, personnel management, and combat support and combat service support activities. To accomplish this, the Regional Assistance Commander had a staff that worked directly with the ARVN corps staff. He also exercised operational control over the subordinate US Army advisory groups and the pacification advisory organizations in the military region. As such, he and his personnel provided advice, assistance, and support at each echelon of South Vietnamese command in planning and executing both combat operations and pacification programs within the military region.

Below the senior US adviser in each military region, there were two types of advisory teams: province advisory teams and division advisory teams. Each of the 44 provinces in South Vietnam was headed by a province chief, usually a South Vietnamese Army or Marine colonel, who supervised the provincial government apparatus and also commanded the provincial Regional and Popular Forces. Under the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program initiated in 1967, an advisory system was established to assist the province chiefs in administering the pacification program. The province chief's American counterpart was the province senior adviser, who was either military or civilian, depending on the security situation of the respective province. The province senior adviser and his staff were responsible for advising the province chief in civil and military aspects of the South Vietnamese pacification and development programs. The province senior adviser's staff, which was made up of both US military and civilian personnel, was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with area and community development, to include public health and administration, civil affairs, education, agriculture, psychological operations, and logistics. The other part of the staff dealt with plans and operations, and focused on preparing plans and assisting with the direction of military operations by the territorial forces within the province.

The province chief exercised his authority through district chiefs. To provide advice and support to the district chiefs, the province senior adviser supervised the district senior advisers, who each had a staff of about eight members (although the actual size in each case depended on the particular situation in that district). The district level advisory teams assisted the District Chief in the military and civil aspects of the pacification and development program. Additionally, the district team (and/or assigned mobile assistance training teams) advised and trained the RF/PFs located in the district. By the end of 1967, a total of 4,000 US military and civilian personnel were involved in the CORDS advisory effort. When Vietnamization was officially declared in 1969, total US Army advisory strength stood at about 13,500, half of which were assigned to CORDS organizations.³⁸ This increase was due to the expansion of the pacification program following the 1968 Tet Offensive. In

addition to CORDS advisory teams, there were also advisory teams with RVNAF regular forces. In January 1969, MACV, in an attempt to upgrade the capability of the regular ARVN divisions, initiated the Combat Assistance Team (CAT) concept. Under this plan, the emphasis was on reducing the number of tactical advisers in the field and changing their mission from “advising to combat support coordination” at the ARVN division level. The Division Combat Assistance Team’s mission was to advise and assist the ARVN division commander and his staff in command and control, administration, training, tactical operations, intelligence, security, logistics, and certain elements of political warfare. The division senior adviser was usually a US Army colonel, who exercised control over the regimental and battalion advisory teams.

Each ARVN division usually had three infantry regiments, one artillery regiment, and several separate battalions, such as the cavalry squadron and the engineer battalion. The regimental advisory teams were normally composed of from eight to 12 US Army personnel (they were eventually reduced in strength as the drawdown of US forces in country gradually reduced the number of advisers assigned) and were usually headed by a US Army lieutenant colonel and included various mixes of officers and noncommissioned officers. The separate battalion advisory teams usually consisted of one or two specialists who advised the South Vietnamese in their respective functional areas; for example: cavalry, intelligence, engineering, etc.

Elite ARVN troops, such as the airborne and ranger units, were organized generally along the same lines as regular ARVN units, but the highest echelon of command in these units was the regiment.³⁹ Each of these regiments was accompanied by an American advisory team, which was headed by a colonel and was similar, but somewhat larger than those found with the regular ARVN regiments. The advisory structure for the Vietnamese Marine Corps was similar to the ARVN, but the advisers were US Marine Corps personnel.

US advisers did not command, nor did they exercise any operational control over any part of the South Vietnamese forces. Their mission was to provide professional military advice and assistance to their counterpart commanders and staffs. The idea was that these advisory teams would work themselves out of a job over time as the ARVN and VNMC began to assume more responsibility for planning and executing their own operations.

In addition to the US advisers assigned to the CORDS effort and those serving with South Vietnamese combat units in the field, there were also a significant number of advisers assigned to support the RVNAF training base in an effort to increase the training of the South Vietnamese forces. By the end of 1972, South Vietnamese

would have one of the largest and most modern military forces in Southeast Asia, but even vast amounts of the best equipment in the world were meaningless if the soldiers, sailors, and airmen did not know how to use it or did not have the leadership and motivation to put it to good use in the field against the enemy. Training the Vietnamese had, in theory, received high priority throughout the war, but in practice too little attention had been given this critical function before the initiation of Vietnamization. Even with the new policy in place, improving South Vietnamese training proved to be an uphill battle.

The ARVN training system consisted of 56 training centers of various types and sizes. There were nine national training centers (not including the airborne and marine divisions, which had their own training centers) and 37 provincial training centers. This extensive system of schools and training facilities was under the control of the RVNAF Central Training Command (CTC), which had first been established in 1966. This command was advised and supported by the MACV Training Directorate, which was responsible for providing advice and assistance in the development of an effective military training system for the RVNAF. As such the training directorate provided US advisers at the RVNAF schools and training centers, where they assisted RVNAF commandants in the preparation and conduct of training programs.

At first glance, the RVNAF training system of schools and training centers in 1968 was an impressive arrangement, but deeper investigation revealed that it was less than effective in producing the leaders and soldiers necessary to successfully prosecute the war. MACV had made numerous proposals to the Vietnamese Joint General Staff and Central Training Command for improving the personnel capacity and effectiveness of the South Vietnamese training facilities, but these recommendations received little attention from the RVNAF high command. As the MACV Command Overview stated, "Despite CTC and MACV efforts, little progress was made in 1969 in these areas due to the complex personnel changes required, JGS reluctance to give the program a high priority, and refusal by RVN field commanders to release experienced officers and NCOs [noncommissioned officers] from operational responsibilities."⁴⁰

By early 1970, the US authorities were so disturbed by this situation that the Army chief of staff dispatched a fact-finding team to Vietnam led by Brigadier General Donnelly Bolton, to tour RVNAF training facilities, to provide an objective assessment of the training capabilities of the South Vietnamese, and to examine the state of US training assistance. This team found the efforts of both South Vietnamese and the US military training advisers in Vietnam to be less than adequate. The MACV Training Directorate, responsible for providing advisers to RVNAF training facilities, was at only 70 percent of assigned strength, and all the

US training advisory detachments in the field were likewise under strength. The quality of advisory personnel assigned to train the South Vietnamese at the RVNAF schools was also an issue, since it appeared to the team that often those deemed unfit to serve in more prestigious operational and staff positions were placed in the RVNAF training billets. Colonel (later Major General) Stan L. McClellan, a member of the Bolton team, wrote, "It was clear that top professionals were not being assigned to training advisory duties."⁴¹

General Abrams agreed with the findings of the Bolton team and urged Bolton to recommend to the Joint Chiefs of Staff upon his return to the Pentagon that they send more and better training advisers to Vietnam. He was very concerned with filling the ranks of his advisory teams with personnel at their authorized grade level (for instance, lieutenant colonels in positions authorized lieutenant colonels, and so forth), thereby reducing the number of low-ranking advisers with little or no combat experience. Abrams told Bolton, "It's time that they [the Joint Chiefs of Staff] recognize in Washington that the day of the US fighting force involvement in South Vietnam is at an end. All we have time for now is to complete the preparation of South Vietnam to carry on the task."⁴²

At the same time Abrams was trying to convince the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the critical importance of the advisory mission in South Vietnam, he was bringing pressure on the RVNAF high command to make improvements to their training system. In a March 1970 letter to General Cao Van Vien, chief of the Joint General Staff, in March 1970, Abrams urged senior South Vietnamese commanders to get behind the training effort. He wrote, "Arrangements for support of CTC activities must be widened and accelerated. As a first order of effort it is essential to enlist the personal interest and assistance of corps, divisional tactical area, and sector commanders each of whom...is a user of the product of the training system, and should contribute to improving the quality of the product."⁴³

Due in large part to Abrams' urging and the realization that US forces were in fact going to be withdrawn, the RVNAF high command began to put more emphasis on improving their training system. The fact that the United States contributed \$28 million to expanding and improving the South Vietnamese facilities also helped. Eventually there would be a total of 33 major military and service schools, 13 national and regional training centers, and 14 division training centers. By 1970, the South Vietnamese leaders began to transfer experienced officers and NCOs to the training centers. Although field commanders only reluctantly gave up their veteran small-unit leaders, by the end of 1971 nearly half of the South Vietnamese training instructors were men with combat experience. Also by this time the number of US training advisory personnel was increased and by the end of 1971 there were more than 3,500 US advisers directly involved in training at most

of the training centers and major RVNAF schools.⁴⁴

Even as the South Vietnamese began to realize the necessity of upgrading their training programs, the quality and quantity of US advisers remained an issue. This was true of not just the advisers in the training centers, but also the advisory personnel at all levels, both with field units and with CORDS advisory teams. In December 1969, as the Vietnamization policy began to gather momentum and the above-cited changes in force structure, equipment, and training were instituted, Secretary Laird, realizing the criticality of the advisory effort to the Vietnamization process, asked the service secretaries to look at what could be done to upgrade the overall advisory effort.⁴⁵ Before this time, service as an adviser was seen by many in the US Army as much less desirable than field command with a US unit, and many officers and NCOs avoided advisory duty. More often than not, the selection process for determining who would become an adviser was largely due to who was available for overseas duty when advisory billets became vacant due to rotation or casualties.⁴⁶

For those selected to become advisers, the training program was limited to a six-week course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, followed by eight weeks of Vietnamese language training at the Defense Language Institute. Thus, many assigned as advisers had neither the experience, the training, or the inclination to be an adviser. Laird set out to change the situation; he wanted to put the best people in as advisers. He did not get much help initially from the Army; Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor said he would continue to study the problem but did not offer any useful solutions.⁴⁷ The Army was trying to deal with severe personnel problems. The demands of the war resulted in Army officers and noncommissioned officers returning to Vietnam for multiple tours, some separated by less than a year and the demand for advisers only exacerbated the strain on the personnel system. Nevertheless, Abrams continued to urge that more emphasis be placed on assigning qualified combat experienced officers to advisor duty. He demanded “guys who can lead/influence...the business of pacification,” officers who “feel empathy toward the Vietnamese...appreciate their good points and understand their weaknesses;” he wanted advisers who “can pull ideas and actions out of the Vietnamese” in pursuit of two major goals: “pacification and upgrading the RVNAF.”⁴⁸

Laird agreed with Abrams in demanding that the advisory posts be filled and ordering the service secretaries to send “only the most highly qualified” personnel to be advisers. Eventually the message got through to the services and by the end of 1970, there was “an infusion of top-flight military professionals into South Vietnam’s training advisory effort.”⁴⁹ The advisory effort also benefited from the US troop drawdown because as more American units departed, the number of available combat assignments declined, thus freeing up for advisory duty large numbers of

those officers who would have gone to US units. During 1969, the overall strength of the field advisory teams increased from about 7,000 to 11,900 and then to 14,332 in 1970.

While Abrams focused on improving the advisory effort, President Nixon and Secretary Laird continued to push for more and faster troop reductions. Nixon had announced the first US troop withdrawal at Midway, but he and Laird were given new motivation to expand their withdrawal plans by former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford. In June 1969, he published an article in *Foreign Affairs* that urged the unilateral withdrawal of 100,000 troops by the end of the year, and of all other personnel by the end of 1970, leaving only logistics and Air Force personnel.⁵⁰ Nixon, never one to shrink from a challenge, stated at a press conference that he could improve upon Clifford's schedule. This statement received a lot of attention in the press and effectively committed the United States to a unilateral withdrawal from South Vietnam, thus removing the promise of troop reductions (or the pace thereof) as a bargaining chip for Kissinger in his dealings with the North Vietnamese in Paris. This would have serious consequences for peace negotiations and the efficacy of the eventual cease-fire agreement.

The first redeployment of 25,000 US troops promised by President Nixon was accomplished by 27 August 1969 when the last troops from the 1st and 2d Brigades of the 9th Infantry Division departed the Mekong Delta. In the months following the Midway announcement, there were continuing discussions about the size and pace of the US withdrawal. Laird had come up with several options for the rest of 1969 that ranged from withdrawing a total of 50,000 troops, at the low end, to 100,000 at the high end; in between were a number of different combinations of numbers and forces. In a memorandum to the president, Laird cautioned him to be careful about withdrawing too many troops too quickly as this would have serious consequences for the pacification program.⁵¹ Laird's warning proved timely. On 6 August, as soldiers from the 9th Infantry Division prepared to depart South Vietnam, there was a Communist attack on Cam Ranh Bay. Five days later, the Communists attacked more than 100 cities, towns, and bases across South Vietnam. An official North Vietnamese history of the war revealed that the politburo in Hanoi had concluded after the Midway announcement that the United States had "lost its will to fight in Vietnam" and thus the Communists, believing they were in a position to dictate the degree and intensity of combat, launched the new round of attacks.⁵²

When Nixon had made his announcement in June about the initial US troop withdrawal, he emphasized that one of the criteria for further reductions would be the level of enemy activity. These new Communist attacks clearly went against Nixon's conditions, and accordingly, he announced he was delaying a

decision about additional troop withdrawals. This caused an uproar in Congress and the media. On 12 September, the National Security Council met to discuss the situation. Kissinger reported that “a very natural response from us would have been to stop bringing soldiers home, but by now withdrawal had gained its own momentum.”⁵³ Kissinger had sent the president a memorandum two days before the meeting, expressing concern about the administration’s “present course” in South Vietnam. He warned that, “Withdrawals of US troops will become like salted peanuts to the American public; the more US troops come home, the more will be demanded. This could eventually result, in effect, in demands for a unilateral withdrawal...The more troops are withdrawn, the more Hanoi will be encouraged.”⁵⁴ Kissinger would be proven right, but during the NSC meeting, he was the only dissenter to the decision to go ahead with the scheduled troop reductions. On 16 September, Nixon ordered a second increment of 35,000 American troops to be redeployed by December. According to Kissinger, the withdrawals became “inexorable...[and] the President never again permitted the end of a withdrawal period to pass without announcing a new increment for the next.”⁵⁵

On 15 December, Nixon ordered a third increment of 50,000 to be redeployed before April 1970. On 20 April 1970, he announced that even though 110,000 US troops had been scheduled to be redeployed during the first three increments, a total of 115,000 had actually departed Vietnam. The second phase of the withdrawal, from April 1970 to April 1971, would reduce the total US strength by a further 150,000. By the end of 1970, only about 344,000 US troops remained in South Vietnam; the 9th Infantry Division, the 3d Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division, the 1st Infantry Division, the 3d Marine Division, two brigades of the 25th Infantry Division and the entire 4th Infantry Division had been redeployed. As these US forces prepared to depart, they suspended combat operations and the RVNAF took over responsibility for their respective operational areas.

From the initial announcement of US troop withdrawals in June 1969 to the end of November 1972, the United States brought home 14 increments, reducing total US strength in Vietnam from a peak of 543,400 to a residual force of 27,000. Once the initial departure of US forces began, the RVNAF was forced to assume more responsibility for the war, regardless of the progress of Vietnamization and pacification. This was the situation that confronted General Abrams. Faced with a war that continued to rage, he had to increase the efforts to prepare the RVNAF to fill the void on the battlefield left by the redeploying US forces. He was essentially fighting for time.

When Abrams assumed command of MACV in 1968, he knew that something had to be done to improve the combat capabilities of the South Vietnamese armed forces. Even before President Nixon had announced Vietnamization as the new

US policy in South Vietnam, General Abrams had taken measures to increase the effectiveness of the RVNAF training base. However, this had not historically been the focus of MACV's efforts. Abrams had inherited the long-standing US mission of closing with and defeating the Communists to force them to withdraw from South Vietnam. With Nixon's announcement of the Vietnamization policy and the receipt of the new mission statement, Abrams was directed "to assist the Republic of Vietnam Armed forces to take over an increasing share of combat operations" and focus on (1) providing "maximum assistance" to the South Vietnamese to strengthen their forces, (2) supporting the pacification effort, and (3) reducing the flow of supplies to the enemy.⁵⁶

General Abrams, although continuing to have serious misgivings about the accelerated US troop withdrawals, understood his marching orders and stepped up measures to improve the combat capabilities of the South Vietnamese units. This was not a new problem for Abrams; since his assumption of command, he had been concerned that the United States and South Vietnamese forces were essentially fighting two different wars. Abrams had sought to end the division of roles and missions between American and South Vietnamese combat forces by the adoption of a single combined allied strategy, thus eliminating "the tacit existence of two separate strategies, attrition and pacification."⁵⁷ Abrams described this "one war" concept as "a strategy focused upon protecting the population so that the civil government can establish its authority as opposed to an earlier conception of the purpose of the war—destruction of the enemy's forces."⁵⁸ This approach had already effectively been instituted by Abrams but was formalized in the MACV Objectives Plan approved in March 1969 and was eventually adopted jointly by the US and Saigon as the Combined Strategic Objectives Plan, which specified that the "RVNAF must participate fully within its capabilities in all types of operations...to prepare for the time when it must assume the entire responsibility."⁵⁹

As soon as the new plan was signed, Abrams set out to make sure that MACV forces fully accepted his "one war" concept, forever eliminating the division of labor that too often had fragmented allied efforts. Thus, Abrams was already shifting the focus of MACV when he received the official change of mission from President Nixon. Armed with the new "one war" combined strategy and urged by his commander in chief to Vietnamize the war, Abrams hoped to bring the combat situation under control while at the same time shifting the preponderance of the responsibility for the war to the South Vietnamese as American troop withdrawals increased in size and frequency. One way that he wanted to do this was to have the ARVN fight side by side with the American troops in the field in combined operations.

American and South Vietnamese units had conducted combined operations

prior to the adoption of the “one war” policy, but during earlier operations, the South Vietnamese troops usually filled a secondary, supporting role on the periphery of the main action. Many American combat commanders were reluctant to operate with South Vietnamese units and typically regarded the ARVN as no more than “an additional burden” that had to be taken in tow, more “apt to cause problems...than be helpful.”⁶⁰ Although this situation changed somewhat for the better after the 1968 Tet offensive, Abrams, faced with the urgent task of Vietnamizing the war, ordered closer cooperation between the American and South Vietnamese forces. The hope was that American units would serve as models for Saigon’s soldiers by integrating the operations of the two national forces more closely together. This had worked very well in South Korea and had eventually improved the fighting abilities of the Republic of Korea armed forces. Abrams and his advisers manifestly hoped that the Korean model would also work with the South Vietnamese.

Although the effort to integrate the South Vietnamese troops into the main battle effort would prove to be uneven and varied from corps tactical zone to corps tactical zone, several new programs were instituted in accordance with Abrams’ directives. In I Corps Tactical Zone, Lieutenant General Richard G. Stillwell, the US XXIV Corps Commander, worked very closely with the ARVN commander, Major General (later Lieutenant General) Ngo Quang Truong, integrating the South Vietnamese units into operational plans as a full partner. Under what was essentially a US/ARVN combined command, the South Vietnamese forces operated closely with the US 3d Marine Division, the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), and the 1st Brigade of the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.⁶¹ After Stillwell was replaced by Major General Melvin Zais later in 1969, the new commander continued Stillwell’s emphasis on combined operations and other US forces in I Corps stepped up their cooperative efforts with the ARVN. Abrams was extremely pleased with the performance of the ARVN forces in I Corps; and later in 1969, he ordered the US 1st Cavalry Division south, reoriented remaining American combat forces in the region toward area security, and eventually sent home one of the two American marine divisions there.

In II Corps Tactical Zone, US commanders also pursued combined operations but with less success. General William R. Peers, commander of I Field Force and his counterpart, Lieutenant General Lu Lan, commander of ARVN II Corps, jointly established the “Pair Off” program, which called for each ARVN unit to be closely and continually affiliated with a US counterpart unit. Operations were to be conducted jointly, regardless of the size unit each force could commit, and coordination and cooperation were effected from corps to battalion and districts. Under this program, the US 4th Infantry Division and the US 173d Airborne Brigade joined forces with the ARVN 22nd and 23rd Infantry Divisions. During the period follow-

ing the initiation of the Pair Off program, three significant combined operations were conducted in II Corps, and each achieved a modest level of success. However, this approach did not work as well as the combined operations in I Corps for a number of reasons. First, the two corps-level headquarters, unlike those in I Corps, were not co-located, and this made coordination more difficult. Additionally, the ARVN field commanders in II Corps were not as enthusiastic about working with US forces as were Major General Truong and his fellow ARVN commanders in I Corps. Consequently, the motivation to learn from the Americans was not present, and this affected coordination and cooperation between the two national forces.

In III Corps Tactical Zone, US II Field Force Commander Lieutenant General Julian Ewell and his counterpart, Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri, commander of ARVN III Corps, instituted a program called “Dong Tien” (Progress Together). The three major goals of this program were: (1) to increase the quantity and quality of combined and coordinated joint operations; (2) to materially advance the three major ARVN missions of pacification support, improvement of combat effectiveness, and intensification of combat operations; and (3) to effect a significant increase in the efficiency of utilizing critical combat and combat support elements, particularly Army aviation assets.⁶² This program called for the close association of ARVN III Corps and US II Field Force units on a continuing basis. Under this concept, as an ARVN battalion reached a satisfactory level of combat effectiveness, it was to be phased out of the program and returned to independent operations. The Dong Tien program had a positive effect on ARVN units throughout III Corps. The 1st US and 5th ARVN Infantry Divisions worked very closely together, and the repetitive combined operations prepared the ARVN division to assume the American unit’s area of operation when it was redeployed in 1970. When the 5th ARVN Division moved its command post to Binh Long Province and assumed control of the old “Big Red One” area, a major milestone in the Vietnamization process had been passed.

Although these combined operations were not all successful, they were instrumental in most cases in increasing the battlefield proficiency of the RVNAF units. Thus, they helped pave the way for the South Vietnamese commanders and troops to assume new responsibilities as more US forces began to withdraw. Unfortunately, however, these programs could not eliminate many of the long-standing problems that haunted the RVNAF and would ultimately be one of the contributing factors to the downfall of the South Vietnamese regime. The expanding RVNAF suffered from a lack of technical competence, weak staff officers, inexperience at planning and executing large-scale combined arms operations, and a number of other serious maladies. Leadership, particularly at the senior levels, lay at the root of all RVNAF weakness. This problem greatly concerned General Abrams and his senior commanders as they tried to prepare the South Vietnamese to assume

responsibility for the war. Programs such as Pair Off and Dong Tien were designed to help bolster RVNAF leadership and combat skills, but they could not fully repair long-term ills in the South Vietnamese system.

By the end of 1969, Vietnamization had made progress in several areas. The modernization effort had resulted in the equipping of all ARVN units with modern equipment. The advisory effort had received new emphasis, and the RVNAF training system was improving. The redeployment of US troops had forced the RVNAF to assume more responsibility for the war, as the number of battalion-size operations conducted by the South Vietnamese almost doubled between 1968 and 1969. Still, combat performance of the South Vietnamese was uneven at best. Some units, such as the 51st ARVN Infantry Battalion, did very well against their Communist opponents, while others, such as the 22d ARVN Infantry Division, were largely ineffective in the field (the 22d had conducted 1,800 ambushes during the summer months of 1969 and netted only six enemy killed).⁶³

The MACV Office of Information publicized the increased participation of RVNAF emphasizing that, in time, the South Vietnamese forces would be able to stand on their own.⁶⁴ Despite these claims, many advisers felt that the South Vietnamese were still too dependent on US forces for support and worried about their ability to carry on the war by themselves after the United States withdrew. The MACV public relations statements were correct in one sense—it was clear that time would be necessary before the South Vietnamese could stand on their own against the North Vietnamese. The key question for many was whether there was enough time left before all US units were withdrawn.

Vietnamization received its first test in the spring of 1970 when Nixon ordered an attack into the North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia. This was a combined attack that involved 32,000 American soldiers and 48,000 South Vietnamese troops. The main attack into the “Fishhook” region was made by elements of the 1st Cavalry Division, 25th Infantry Division, and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. At the same time, South Vietnamese forces conducted an attack into the “Parrot’s Beak” region. Both attacks went very well, and the allied forces located and destroyed numerous large Communist base camps, capturing an impressive array of supplies and material, to include 16 million rounds of various caliber ammunition; 143,000 rockets; 22,892 individual weapons; 5,487 land mines; 62,000 grenades; 14 million pounds of rice; and 435 vehicles.⁶⁵

The South Vietnamese forces, most of whom were under the command of Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri, supported by US artillery, tactical air, and helicopter gunships, performed well, accomplishing all assigned missions. Nixon announced that the South Vietnamese performance in Cambodia was “visible proof

of the success of Vietnamization.”⁶⁶

The truth of the situation was somewhat less than Nixon wanted to believe. Many of the South Vietnamese units that had participated in the incursion were mostly from elite units, rather than the mainstream of South Vietnamese troops. In addition, there had been no intense fighting in the ARVN sector because most of the Communist soldiers there fled when the allied forces launched the invasion. Nevertheless, South Vietnamese artillery continued to demonstrate an inability to provide support for their own troops, so the ARVN commanders continued to rely heavily on US fire support. Therefore, the picture of South Vietnamese capabilities that Nixon attempted to paint was somewhat misleading.

The significant shortcomings that still existed in the RVNAF were amply demonstrated the following year when operation LAM SON 719 was launched as part of a continuing effort to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail and deny the North Vietnamese sanctuaries; the specific objective of the attack was a series of base areas along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos just adjacent to Military Region I. This time, although US air support would participate in the operation, American ground troops were prohibited from crossing the border, so the South Vietnamese forces would attack by themselves without US units or American advisers. The attack along Highway 9 into Laos kicked off at 0700 on 8 February and went reasonably well at first. The South Vietnamese secured their initial objectives, but then became bogged down along the highway. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese had rushed reinforcements to the area, and a major battle ensued that lasted for another month. While some South Vietnamese soldiers fought valiantly, many more fought poorly or fled in panic. The operation ended with ARVN units fleeing back across the border in disarray. US sources listed South Vietnamese losses as 3,800 killed in action, 5,200 wounded, and 775 missing. Nixon tried to put the best face on the situation, but the truth was that the South Vietnamese had performed very poorly on their own. With no US support on the ground and without their American advisers, the South Vietnamese were not able to handle the North Vietnamese regulars in pitched battle.⁶⁷

LAM SON 719 demonstrated that Vietnamization had not been the success that Nixon had previously proclaimed. US and South Vietnamese military officials worked hard to bolster the morale and confidence of the ARVN after the debacle in Laos. Training programs were intensified and new equipment was issued to replace that which had been lost during the LAM SON operation. At the same time, the US troop withdrawals continued unabated. By January 1972, only 158,000 Americans remained in South Vietnam, the lowest number since 1965.

The North Vietnamese watched the US withdrawals closely and decided that it

was time to put Vietnamization to the final test. Acknowledging that Nixon's Vietnamization policy had begun to increase the combat capabilities of the South Vietnamese, they nevertheless believed that the US did not have enough combat power left in South Vietnam to prevent a South Vietnamese defeat if Hanoi launched a new offensive. Accordingly, the politburo in Hanoi ordered a massive invasion of South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese attack began on 30 March 1972 when three divisions attacked south across the Demilitarized Zone that separated North and South Vietnam toward Quang Tri and Hue. Three days later, three more divisions moved from sanctuaries in Cambodia and pushed into Binh Long Province, the capital city that was only 65 miles from Saigon. Additional North Vietnamese forces attacked across the Cambodian border in the Central Highlands toward Kontum. A total of 14 NVA infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments (including 120,000 troops and approximately 1,200 tanks and other armored vehicles) participated in the offensive, which was characterized by large-scale conventional infantry tactics, supported by tanks and massive amounts of artillery fire and rockets. This was a scale of warfare that the South Vietnamese had seldom experienced. At first, they were almost totally overwhelmed. South Vietnamese forces in Quang Tri fled in the face of the North onslaught, abandoning the city and fleeing south. At An Loc and Kontum, the ARVN soldiers fared better but suffered horrendous casualties during the North Vietnamese attacks. The battles raged all over South Vietnam into the summer months. US advisers and American air power enabled the South Vietnamese to hold on and eventually prevail, even retaking Quang Tri in September.

Nixon declared Vietnamization a resounding success. There was all kinds of evidence to the contrary. The South Vietnamese had indeed withstood the North Vietnamese onslaught, but it had been a near thing that could have gone either way. The South Vietnamese had fought well in many cases, but in others they had not. General Abrams stated that "American airpower and not South Vietnamese arms" had caused the North Vietnamese defeat.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Nixon and his advisers trumpeted the idea that the South Vietnamese victory demonstrated that Vietnamization had been a success. Jeffrey Kimball writes, Nixon "needed Vietnamization to succeed, and because he did, he wanted to believe it could."⁶⁹ Thus, for better or worse, Vietnamization was officially validated and the South Vietnamese victory became one of the underlying rationales for complete US withdrawal and Nixon's "peace with honor."

While the fighting continued in South Vietnam, Henry Kissinger had been striving to hammer out a peace agreement in Paris. By the fall of 1972, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the lead North Vietnamese negotiator, were close to an agreement but by December were at an impasse again. When the North Vietnamese walked out on the talks, Nixon launched what became known as the "Christmas bombing."

Beginning on 18 December and for the next 11 days, US B-52s, F-105s, F-4s, F-111s, and A-6s struck targets all over North Vietnam, dropping over 40,000 tons of bombs. Shortly thereafter, the North Vietnamese negotiators returned to the table in Paris. Kissinger and Tho finally reached an agreement and at 0800 Sunday morning Saigon time on 28 January, the cease-fire went into effect.

Under the terms of the cease-fire agreement, the United States agreed to “...stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam” and remove remaining American troops, including advisers, from South Vietnam within 60 days.⁷⁰ US forces departed South Vietnam as agreed, with the last troops leaving Saigon on 29 March 1973. That day, the last 61 American POWs known to be held by the North Vietnamese were released. Vietnamization was over once and for all. America was out of Vietnam.

Unfortunately for the South Vietnamese, the Paris Accords did not address an estimated 150,000 North Vietnamese troops inside the borders of South Vietnam. The cease-fire was short-lived and combat returned as both sides tried to grab as much territory as possible. For the rest of 1973 and most of 1974, the North and South Vietnamese fought each other all over South Vietnam.

Nixon had coerced Thieu into acquiescing to the Paris Accords, promising that the United States would come to the aid of the South Vietnamese if North Vietnam tried another major offensive. With this in mind and using weapons and equipment stockpiled during 1972, the South Vietnamese initially held their own against the North Vietnamese. However, as these stocks began to wane, Thieu had no one to turn to for support. Nixon, reeling from the impact of the Watergate investigation, was fighting for his political life and was unable to generate any interest in the plight of the South Vietnamese. On 9 August 1974, Nixon resigned from the Presidency. Thieu and his countrymen had always relied on Nixon’s promises to intervene if the North Vietnamese violated the cease-fire. Now Nixon was gone. Nixon’s successor, Gerald Ford, promised that “the existing commitments this nation has made in the past are still valid and will be fully honored in my administration.”⁷¹

This was a commitment that Ford could not keep given the prevailing sentiment in Congress. When the North Vietnamese decided to test the South Vietnamese with a limited attack against Phuoc Long Province, the ARVN fought poorly and the North Vietnamese routed the defenders, killing or capturing 3,000 soldiers, took control of vast quantities of war materiel, and “liberated” the entire province. The United States did nothing.

Both Saigon and Hanoi were shocked. Thieu finally realized that his forces had been relegated to fighting a “poor man’s war” while the North Vietnamese, still being resupplied by China and the Soviet Union, got stronger every day. The

North Vietnamese decided that the time was ripe for a knockout blow. Believing the United States would not or could not intervene, they planned a two-year strategy that called for large-scale offensives in 1975 to create conditions for a “general offensive, general uprising” in 1976.⁷²

The North Vietnamese launched their offensive on 10 March 1975 with an attack on Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands. They overran the city in two days and then turned their attention on Pleiku and Kontum. The South Vietnamese, realizing they were on their own without any hope of US support, fell back in panic. When Thieu decided to shorten his lines by withdrawing his forces out of the Highlands, supposedly to concentrate his forces for a major effort to retake Ban Me Thuot, the retreat rapidly turned into a rout. While the Communist forces in the Highlands attacked toward the sea, additional Communist troops in the northern provinces drove southward from Quang Tri. One by one, the coastal cities and bases fell. The Communists drove rapidly down the coast and on 30 April 1975, their tanks crashed through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon and the war was over. The demoralized South Vietnamese forces had collapsed in less than 55 days; Vietnamization had failed its ultimate test.

In the final analysis, Vietnamization provided a suitable (at least from the American perspective) cover for the withdrawal of the United States from South Vietnam, but it was an incomplete strategy that failed in its stated objective, which was to prepare the South Vietnamese to defend themselves after the departure of US troops. That objective had always been predicated on continued US support, and America’s failure to honor that commitment led to the downfall of South Vietnam.

Whether Nixon and Laird were only looking for a “decent interval” as some have suggested or really thought that Vietnamization would actually succeed in preparing the South Vietnamese to defend themselves is subject to debate. Both Nixon and Kissinger have written after the fact that they believed the strategy would have worked had not Congress cut off aid to the South Vietnamese. Jeffrey Kimball challenges such pronouncements and writes that Nixon’s policies “unnecessarily prolonged the war, with all of the baneful consequences of death, destruction, and division for Vietnam and America.”⁷³

When one contemplates what could have been, there are, as Lewis Sorley suggests, “too many what ifs.”⁷⁴ However, it is clear the performance of the South Vietnamese forces in 1975 demonstrated that Nixon’s exit strategy had been tragically flawed, at least in its execution. Once the North Vietnamese began their attack in December 1974, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, which had wavered but ultimately held under tremendous pressure with US support in 1972, found themselves abandoned by the United States and performed abysmally in a

fight that turned out to be for the very life of their nation. The war was clearly lost on the battlefield by the South Vietnamese, but that does not absolve the United States of its large share of the responsibility for the debacle. Despite gains made in preparing the South Vietnamese to assume responsibility for the war, the United States rushed to sign the Paris Peace Accords, which left more than 150,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. Later, when the North Vietnamese attacked and the United States failed to live up to the commitment made by Nixon, this doomed the armed forces of South Vietnam.

The army that had become so dependent on US firepower and support lost its will and was unable to fight on its own when the promised support was denied it. Despite all the time and treasure expended in getting them ready to defend themselves, they proved woefully inadequate for the task when abandoned by the United States. Arguably, the situation may have been different had the United States demanded that North Vietnamese forces be withdrawn from South Vietnam in 1973 and continued to provide the promised long-term support as it had to the Republic of Korea forces, but such was not the case. And in the end, Vietnamization, when coupled with the flawed Peace Accords and the failure of the United States to honor promises made by two presidents, proved to be an incomplete exit strategy. It extricated the United States from Vietnam but failed to ensure the continued viability of its ally in Saigon. In the end, Nixon's strategy achieved neither peace for the South Vietnamese nor honor for the United States. The final result was that the United States lost the first war in its history, and the Republic of South Vietnam ceased to exist as a sovereign nation.

Notes

1. Robert B. Semple, "Nixon Vows to End War With a 'New Leadership,'" *The New York Times*, 6 Mar 1968.
2. Semple, "Nixon Withholds His Peace Ideas," *The New York Times*, 11 Mar 1968.
3. National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 1, Henry A. Kissinger, Special Assistant for National Security, for the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, 21 Jan 1969, DepCORDS Papers, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC.
4. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 238.
5. In December, Nixon had seen an intelligence assessment made by the CIA that was very critical of the Thieu government and the capabilities of the RVNAF. This assessment is contained in Message, Wheeler JCS 14581 to Abrams 12217 Dec 68, subject: RVNAF capabilities, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC.
6. Memo, Henry A. Kissinger for Members of the National Security Council Review Group, 14 Mar 69, Subject: Summary of Responses to NSSM 1 Vietnam Questions, DepCORDS Papers, US Army Center of Military History. Actual agency responses are found in the Thomas C. Thayer Papers, Folders 13, 20, 134, and 136, US Army Center of Military History.
7. Ibid.
8. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 239.
9. Ibid, 227-28.
10. George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996), 198.
11. Interview (transcribed) of General Andrew J. Goodpaster, by Colonel William D. Johnson and Lieutenant Colonel James C. Ferguson, 1976, Andrew J. Goodpaster Papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
12. Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt, From the Battle of the Bulge to Vietnam and Beyond: Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 254-56,
13. Interview of Jerry Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1969-1973, by William H. Hammond, 3 Oct 86, US Army Center of Military History.
14. Memo, Laird to the President, 13 Mar 69, subj: Trip to Vietnam, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives and Records Administration.
15. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 272. By all accounts, "Vietnamization" became the accepted term for Nixon's new policy at this meeting. However, Abrams biographer Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 254-56, maintains that Abrams started the process of helping the South Vietnamese armed forces become more capable when he assumed command

from General Westmoreland in 1968 and that Nixon and Laird merely adopted the “Vietnamization” label and formalized it as administration policy (accompanied by US troop withdrawals). Nixon said virtually the same thing earlier in *No More Vietnams* (New York: Touchstone, 1990), 105.

16. US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Military Posture, Part I*, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, 7023-7024.

17. Alexander M. Haig, Jr. with Charles McCarry, *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World, A Memoir* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 226.

18. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 262.

19. Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), 392.

20. Haig, *Inner Circles*, 225-29.

21. National Security Study Memorandum 36, Kissinger to SecState, SecDef, and DCI, 10 Apr 69, subject: Vietnamizing the War, US Army Center of Military History; Nixon, *Memoirs*, 392; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 272.

22. Richard M. Nixon, *Public Papers of the President, 1969* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 443. The assessment of RVNAF progress and level of enemy activity would be left to Abrams’ on-site evaluation.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Indochina Monographs: Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1980), 18.

25. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 274.

26. Talking Paper, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 3 Oct 69, subject: US Objectives in Southeast Asia, Thomas C. Thayer Papers, US Army Center of Military History.

27. US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Department of Defense, *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1971, Part I*, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 1970, 311.

28. Even before Nixon assumed office, plans had been developed to increase the size of the RVNAF. Under what became known as the May-68 Plan, MACV had instituted a program to increase and modernize the South Vietnamese armed forces. This program focused on developing the RVNAF into a balanced force with command, administration, and self-support capabilities to continue the fighting successfully after the withdrawal of US and NVA troops. However, It is important to note that at no time during the discussion and implementation of the May-68 Plan did anyone, including MACV, ever consider the “prospect of a unilateral American withdrawal that would leave South Vietnam facing a combined Viet Cong and North Vietnamese threat.” This was to change under Nixon and Laird.

29. Jeffrey C. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years, The U.S. Army in Vietnam*

(Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 354.

30. Memo, Laird to Chairman, JCS, 10 Nov 69, subject: Vietnamization—RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Aspects and Related US Planning, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.

31. Clarke, *Advice and Support*, 355.

32. Ibid, 356; Military History Branch, Headquarters, USMACV, “Command History, 1970,” 2:VII- 4-16.

33. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 39.

34. Ibid, 42.

35. Cao Van Vien, Ngo Quang Truong, Dong Van Khuyen, Nguyen Duy Hinh, Tran Dinh Tho, Hoang Ngoc Lung, and Chu Xuan Vien, *Indochina Monographs: The U.S. Adviser* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1980), 10.

36. This was not true in IV Corps, where there was never a corps-level US headquarters; in that region, a designated US major general served as the senior adviser. In I Corps, the III Marine Amphibious Force commander served as the senior adviser.

37. The exception to this was Military Region II, where John Paul Vann, a civilian, was in charge. He could not technically command, so his headquarters was designated Second Regional Assistance Group, rather than a command. His military deputy, an Army brigadier general, exercised command on behalf of Vann.

38. Ibid, 7-8, 10.

39. Eventually however, the airborne brigades and marine regiments would form an airborne and marine division respectively.

40. David Fulghum and Terrence Maitland, *The Vietnam Experience: South Vietnam on Trial*, Mid-1970 to 1972 (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1984), 55.

41. Ibid, 54.

42. Clarke, *Advice and Support*, 317; Fulghum and Maitland, *South Vietnam on Trial*, 56-57.

43. Fulghum and Maitland, *South Vietnam on Trial*, 56.

44. Vien, Truong, Khuyen, Hinh, Tho, Lung, and Vien, *The U.S. Adviser*, 175.

45. Memo, Laird to Service Secretaries, 16 Dec 69, subject: Quantity and Quality of US Advisers in Vietnam, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.

46. This was the author’s personal experience; advisory duty was not seen as “career enhancing.” The author, as a newly promoted captain with two years in the Army and not even having commanded a company, was assigned in late 1971 as an adviser to a South Vietnamese infantry regimental commander. Before departing for Vietnam, I attended the Military Assistance Training Advisor course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, followed by a Vietnamese Language course at the Defense Language Institute (Southwest Branch) at Fort Bliss, Texas.

47. Memo, Resor to Secretary of Defense, 2 Feb 70, subject: Quantity and Quality of US Advisers in Vietnam, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.
48. Memorandum for Record, Brigadier General Albert H. Smith, Jr., MACV J-1, 15 Dec 69, subject: General Abrams' Guidance on Selecting Advisers, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.
49. Fulghum and Maitland, *South Vietnam on Trial*, 56.
50. Clark Clifford, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 47, no. 4 (July 1969), 610.
51. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 275.
52. Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Report to General Vo Nguyen Giap, A Consolidated Report on the Fight Against the United States for the Salvation of Vietnam by Our People*, Hanoi, 1987, 26. The North Vietnamese found that they could not sustain the August attacks because they had not fully recovered from the losses incurred during the 1968 Tet Offensive.
53. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 283.
54. Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, Subject: Our Course in Vietnam, 10 Sep 1969, reprinted in *White House Years*, 1480-1482.
55. Ibid.
56. Message, Wheeler JCS to McCain and Abrams, 6 Aug 1969, Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.
57. Clarke, *Advice and Support*, 362.
58. Samuel Lipsman and Edward Doyle, *The Vietnam Experience: Fighting for Time* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1983), 53.
59. JGS-MACV Combined Campaign Plan 1969, 30 Sep 1968, Southeast Asia Branch Files, US Army Center of Military History.
60. Ngo Quang Truong, *Indochina Monographs: RVNAF and US Operational Cooperation and Coordination* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1980), 162.
61. Ibid, 117.
62. II FFORCEV Circular Number 525-1, 26 June 1969, subject: The Dong Tien (Progress Together) Program, Long Binh, South Vietnam.
63. Lipsman and Doyle, *Fighting for Time*, 70.
64. Message, Wheeler to Abrams, 4 Jul 1969, subject: Publicizing ARVN Performance; Message, Abrams to Wheeler, 8 Aug 1969, subject: Publicizing ARVN Achievements, both in Abrams Papers, US Army Center of Military History.
65. William H. Hammond, *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1968-1973* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1996), 401-492.

66. Nixon, *Public Papers, 1970*, 536. In a memo from Nixon to Haldeman, on 11 May 1970, the president said that he wanted him to devise "...a positive, coordinated administration program for getting across the fact that this mission has been enormously successful."

67. The North Vietnamese did not come off unscathed and suffered heavy casualties, many of them inflicted by the US air support. It would take the North Vietnamese another year to crank up the next offensive.

68. Clarke, *Advice and Support*, 482.

69. Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 182.

70. The entire agreement, including the Protocols on the Cease-Fire and the Joint Military Commission, Prisoners and Detainees, the International Commission of Control and Supervision, and Mine Clearing in North Vietnam is found in Walter S. Dillard, *Sixty Days to Peace: Implementing the Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam 1973* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1982), 187-225.

71. Letter, Ford to Thieu, 10 August 1974, White House Central Files, Gerald R. Ford Library.

72. Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 19-20.

73. Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War*, 371.

74. Sorley, *A Better War*, 384.

Planning For Post-Conflict Panama: What it Tells Us About Phase IV Operations

John T. Fishel

As I write this it has been 15 years since Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY were executed in Panama. And it has been 12 years since I finished my study of what are now called Phase IV operations in Panama. Since that time I have published studies of postconflict operations in Kuwait, Northern Iraq, and related operations in Somalia and Haiti. In the last decade the United States has also conducted stability operations and support operations in the guise of peacekeeping in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Haiti again. All this is, of course, in addition to the occupation of Iraq and its follow-on (continuation) stability operations in the wake of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. With all of these Phase IV operations, we should have become quite expert at postconflict restoration and reconstruction. The fact that we have had significant difficulty achieving clear success in Iraq prompts this essay. In it, I propose to examine what we did right—and wrong—in Panama in terms of a series of issues I believe are relevant to the Iraqi case. While I do not plan to be explicitly comparative as I develop these issues, I will return to relevant lessons for the future in the conclusions. Finally, this essay focuses primarily on planning and only to the extent absolutely necessary on execution.

Issue: Planning for Conflict

Planning for what became Operation JUST CAUSE began in early February 1988 as soon as the commander in chief (CINC) of the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) returned from Washington, DC, having been informed in the office of the assistant secretary of state for Inter-American Affairs that the de facto dictator of Panama, General Manuel Noriega, had been indicted by two Florida grand juries on charges of drug trafficking.¹ General Fred Woerner immediately directed his plans division to begin planning for operations in defense of the Panama Canal and US military bases in which the Panama Defense Force (PDF) would be hostile. At the same time he requested the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to direct him to develop plans for conflict with the PDF. On 28 February 1988, the JCS issued the planning order.

Under the Joint Operations Planning System extant, the plans division, in the crisis action planning (CAP) mode, developed a four-phase operation order. When the planners briefed it to General Woerner, he asked where Phase V—postconflict—was. It had not been drafted, so Woerner directed that it be done by 1700 that very day (which happened to be Sunday). As a result, the two senior members of the four-man civil affairs branch were called in and drafted a skeletal plan on butcher

paper that they briefed to the CINC at 1700. This resulted in the activation of planning elements, primarily from the CAPSTONE civil affairs reserve unit, the 361st Civil Affairs Brigade, arriving in Panama in increments every 30 days throughout the winter and spring of 1988 to flesh out the plan for postconflict operations. Initially, this was Phase V of the plan known as *Elaborate Maze*, but later the JCS directed that the phased plan be deconstructed and issued as a series of separate plans, known as the *Prayerbook*, that could be executed independently, simultaneously, or in sequence.

As is evident from this discussion, the source of all planning guidance was the CINC. General Woerner had recognized, the moment he was informed of Noriega's indictment, that the situation in Panama had changed. The PDF no longer was a difficult ally (or at worst a neutral party); it had become the adversary. Thus, the CINC ordered his staff to begin planning for a contingency operation targeted on the PDF. When the draft operation order was presented to him lacking any concept for postconflict operations, Woerner ordered the staff to develop this phase. His interest, focus, and insistence that Phase V not only be part of the operation but that it be under the CINC's personal control illustrated how seriously he treated postconflict operations.

Issue: Linear Bias

One often hears criticism of the linear bias in the American military planning system—JOPES, which replaced the JOPS in effect at the time (both are alleged to have the linear bias). This is due to the concept of phasing—one phase follows the previous phase. Although this critique is logical, we must consider the guidance that General Woerner gave his planners for the phases of *Elaborate Maze*. They were to plan to execute each phase independently, concurrently, or in sequence with any other phase. Thus Woerner clearly recognized and specifically addressed the potential for a linear bias in the phased plan that he directed. It was clear to him that the circumstances in Panama were such that all of the possibilities he envisioned for execution were almost equally likely, as was the contingency that nothing would be executed.

By the summer of 1988, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had concluded that it would be better if *Elaborate Maze* were deconstructed into a family of related plans, perhaps reflecting concern about the potential for linear bias. As a result, the *Prayerbook* came into being. Post Time was the plan for force augmentation or build up; *Klondike Key* addressed a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) in both permissive and nonpermissive environments; *Blue Spoon* was the plan for combat operations that combined Phase III (defensive operations) and Phase IV (offensive operations) of *Elaborate Maze*; and *Krystal Ball* focused on postconflict reconstruction operations. Within six months *Krystal Ball* was renamed *Blind Logic*.

With the establishment of the *Prayerbook*, General Woerner reiterated his guidance for each phase of the operation in terms of each of the separate plans—each plan was to be capable of being executed independently, concurrently, or in sequence with any other *Prayerbook* plan. Coupled with the separation of the phased plan this guidance clearly overcame any potential linear bias. The interesting question, however, is whether there was any linear bias in *Elaborate Maze*. Our experience was that Woerner’s guidance essentially prevented the development of a linear bias. Indeed, that was the case both under the phases of *Elaborate Maze* and the separate plans of the *Prayerbook*.

Issue: Synchronization of Plans at Different Levels

By the late summer of 1988, plans were in existence and only needed regular updating. At the same time, the Panama “crisis” quieted down. While the SOUTHCOM plans division was updating and maintaining *Post Time*, *Klondike Key*, and *Blue Spoon*, the officers responsible for *Blind Logic* were four Active Guard/Reserve officers who made up the command’s Civil Affairs section. In addition to being responsible for *Blind Logic* planning, they had day-to-day operational responsibilities. They were also in a different joint directorate from plans.² Moreover, with the completion of the *Blind Logic* plan the Reserve augmentees from the 361st Civil Affairs Brigade returned to the United States and were not replaced, leaving the four civil affairs officers to plan and execute all civil affairs activity.

In May 1989, Woerner and his staff principals realized that *Blind Logic* needed to be revisited. The civil affairs officer who was in charge of *Blind Logic* began to prepare a decision briefing for Woerner regarding the future of the plan. First, he coordinated with me—at the time, I was chief of Policy & Strategy in the J5. Although I was not a civil affairs officer, I had served as co-chief of the branch among other SOUTHCOM assignments and had related civilian experience. What he was requesting was that *Blind Logic* be transferred back to the J5 because of the relative qualifications of J5 personnel required for its execution and the ongoing relationship between the J5 and the 361st. I agreed and raised the issue with my superiors, who concurred up through the director. The J3 also concurred.

As a result, on 18 May Woerner agreed to the transfer of *Blind Logic* back to J5 where it fell under policy and strategy. He also authorized limited Reserve augmentation to establish a workable planning cell. The cell consisted of three other Reserve officers—two from the 361st and one from another unit who had worked on the plan the previous year. In addition, I also had the assistance of a fourth Reserve officer on a part-time basis.

Blind Logic had been developed as a plan on two separate levels. The higher level was the SOUTHCOM plan, which would be integrated with the other plans

for execution. This would involve identifying forces required to execute, getting them included on the troop list, coordinating execution with the other plans, and so forth. The lower level was the plan to be executed during the operation. This involved identifying the tasks, sequencing them, and assigning them to organizations and units. General Woerner had decided at the beginning that the postconflict plan was the most important and politically delicate of all the contemplated military actions. Therefore, he had assigned the execution of *Blind Logic* to his J5 where nearly all his foreign area officers were assigned and where, until the end of 1988, the civil affairs section had been located. The J5 had the capability to provide language and culture competent officers to conduct postconflict operations.

When we began our review of the *Blind Logic* plans, we quickly discovered that the plan for execution by the J5 (called the COMCMOTF—Commander, Civil-Military Operations Task Force plan) did not need much work. The SOUTHCOM-level plan, however, needed to be relooked from its assumptions through its coordination with all the other plans at that level and with the several execution plans. First, there was a need to make certain that all the SOUTHCOM level *Prayerbook* plans were fully coordinated. This really meant making sure that SOUTHCOM's *Blue Spoon* combat plan was not in conflict with *Blind Logic*. Minor conflicts were rapidly reconciled.

There were, as well, *Blue Spoons* to be executed by SOCSOUTH, JTF-Panama, and later, the XVIII Airborne Corps as JTF-C, and subsequently, JTF-South. Critical areas for deconfliction were the possible use of SOCSOUTH assigned/attached units in the execution of *Blind Logic* and the conditions for handing off responsibilities from the JTF to COMCMOTF. We coordinated with SOCSOUTH, JTF-Panama, and JTF-C during June and July and, we believed, successfully resolved any conflicts among the several plans. We also reconsidered our assumptions, particularly those relating to a Presidential Selected Reserve Call-up (PSRC) and developed two contingencies for executing *Blind Logic* without a PSRC. Then, on 20 July, Washington announced that General Woerner would retire on 30 September and be replaced by General Maxwell R. Thurman. The result was that whatever had been coordinated with the corps as JTF-C was no longer operable from their point of view—something that we, in SOUTHCOM did not know.

The critical lesson here is the importance of the emphasis that the CINC placed on *Blind Logic*, both in terms of his personal interest and control in the event of execution. If General Woerner had not taken such personal interest in postconflict operations, there is no way that the staff elements responsible for *Blue Spoon* would have devoted any time to the necessary coordination with *Blind Logic*. Even more critical was that his command emphasis forced coordination with the Corps when it was brought on board as execution planner for *Blue Spoon*. As we found

out later, the moment Woerner's retirement was announced, the corps planners lost all interest in *Blind Logic*.

Issue: Divorce of Phase III (*Blue Spoon*) from Phase IV (*Blind Logic*)

In a previous section I discussed the issue of the alleged linear bias in phased planning. In this section, I want to comment on the other side of the coin—what happened when the joint staff, in an apparent effort to counter linear bias, directed that *Elaborate Maze* be broken down into a family of individual plans.

As long as General Woerner remained the CINC, the change from a phased plan to the *Prayerbook* family was merely cosmetic. Woerner did not accept that his phased plan had a linear bias and had taken steps in his guidance to the planners to make sure that such bias did not creep in. As that guidance was reiterated many times directing that each phase—and later each plan—be capable of execution independently, simultaneously, or sequentially with any other phase/plan, there was little danger that the planners would succumb to any linear bias.

Unfortunately for the concept for the execution of *Blue Spoon* and *Blind Logic*, General Woerner was forced to retire. From the end of July until 17 December 1989, the planners from the corps and the new CINC focused almost exclusively on the combat plan, *Blue Spoon*. This focus by General Thurman played a role in the fact that he was never briefed on his postconflict plan, *Blind Logic*.³ The consequences of this combat emphasis in the planning escalated over the six months from July to December.

General Thurman and the corps changed *Blue Spoon* from a plan that relied on the deliberate buildup of massed forces and their planned commitment against major PDF targets in sequence to one that relied on the surprise and shock of hitting the 27 PDF targets simultaneously. This change should have had the effect of causing changes in *Blind Logic* that clearly would have affected the “handoff” from the corps to COMCMOTF. At the very least, coordination with the *Blind Logic* planners would have raised a warning flag that what had previously been deconflicted might, once again, be in conflict. The revised *Blue Spoon*, however, was never coordinated with the *Blind Logic* planners with predictable results.

On 17 December 1989, when President Bush directed DOD to remove General Noriega from power, it triggered an execute order from the secretary of defense through the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to General Thurman for *Blue Spoon* (renamed Operation JUST CAUSE). At that point the SOUTHCOM staff “discovered” *Blind Logic*. For two days there was frantic activity to coordinate and deconflict *Blind Logic* and *Blue Spoon*. The joint staff formally approved *Blind Logic* (renamed Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY) on 20 December, several hours

after General Thurman ordered its execution by the SOUTHCOM J5 as COMC-MOTF.

It is important to note that the execution of *Blind Logic*, while it involved much improvisation, was made significantly easier because the plan existed in a form that could be modified under the changed circumstances. Nevertheless, the fact that it had not been coordinated at all with the revised *Blue Spoon* before President Bush made his decision resulted in serious disconnects between the two concurrent operations and the organizations carrying them out. Thus, this issue, as the previous ones, highlights the criticality of command interest and control of postconflict planning. That General Woerner had left his successor workable post-conflict plans was a gift that General Thurman appears to have appreciated after the fact. The direction to change from a phased plan to a “family” of independent plans, when coupled with the change of command, left SOUTHCOM scrambling to coordinate what should have been subject to continuous coordination and modification all the while *Blue Spoon* was being revised.

Issue: Manifestations of Instability During Regime Change Operations

From the moment SOUTHCOM began planning for postconflict operations in March 1988, analysis focused on the conditions in Panama City in the wake of combat operations. From General Woerner to the most junior planner in the 361st Civil Affairs Brigade, all concerned were well aware that the 18,000-member PDF was primarily a group of police forces, not an army. Thus the primary assumption of the planners was that, as a result of combat operations against the 3,500 soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen of the regime, the remaining 14,500 cops would simply go home and wait to see what transpired. The outcome would be a security vacuum that would be characterized by looting, riots, and chaos in the streets.

Central to the planning at both the SOUTHCOM and COMCMOTF levels in 1988 and 1989 was the effort to address the anticipated security vacuum. Throughout the 1988, planning both *Blue Spoon* and *Blind Logic* anticipated US military government of Panama for a period of about 30 days followed by a reconstitution of Panamanian government institutions including a purged and reformed PDF. The congruence between *Blue Spoon* and *Blind Logic* was stronger in 1988 than it would be a year later and significantly more so before JTF-C was activated. As noted in the previous section, when the change of command was announced in late July 1989, *Blind Logic* disappeared from the corps’ coordination radar scope.

What began to happen with *Blue Spoon* planning in the summer of 1989 (about the time that revision of *Blind Logic* was being completed) was the change from sequential to simultaneous combat operations. Although this change began under Woerner and was greatly accelerated by General Thurman. Neither Thurman nor

his J3, Brigadier General William Harzog (who was responsible for *Blue Spoon*), gave much thought to the impact the changes would have on the postcombat environment. Of course, as noted above, there was no coordination of any of this with the *Blind Logic* planners before 17 December.

General Woerner's plan for sequential combat operations was to have begun with an assault on the PDF headquarters in downtown Panama City with operations flowing eastward toward the airport through the major commercial and residential areas of the city. Thus combat operations would have provided security throughout the city in a way that would have made the handoff to the forces responsible for postconflict operations (*Blind Logic*) appear relatively seamless. Simultaneous strikes against 27 separate PDF targets, on the other hand, meant that major areas of the city would be left unoccupied by any forces, and therefore, without security. Compounding this geographical vacuum was the fact that Noriega's paramilitary militia—the so-called Dignity Battalions—would be left to fill some of the unoccupied spaces. The result was the predicted looting, riot, and chaos in the streets.

There are several lessons to be learned with respect to this issue. First, in the wake of combat there will most likely be a security vacuum. If the victorious forces do not fill it, then looters, rioters, criminals, and paramilitary militias will. In some cases this will happen spontaneously; in others it will happen in accordance with planned resistance. In Panama it was primarily spontaneous. In Iraq, while the looting and rioting were initially spontaneous, the resistance became more planned than improvised over time. In both cases, the power vacuum was filled, initially at least, by forces inimical to the goals of the United States. Thus, the plan for Phase IV operations needs to be inextricably linked to that for Phase III—combat. This had been the case under *Elaborate Maze* as well as the *Prayerbook*—so long as General Woerner was CINC. This, of course, leads to the second lesson.

As with the previous issues, command interest and control of postcombat operations planning is essential for success. In planning for conflict in Panama, General Thurman, unlike General Woerner, did not take ownership of *Blind Logic* until he was directed to execute *Blue Spoon* as Operation JUST CAUSE. Thurman's failure to take ownership of *Blind Logic* until the last minute greatly increased the emerging disconnects between combat and postconflict planning.

What largely saved the situation in Panama and limited the damage to the security situation resulting from looting, rioting, and Dignity Battalion activities, was the existence of *Blind Logic* as plans at both the SOUTHCOM and COMCMOTF levels. The SOUTHCOM plan provided alternative blueprints for force structure and command and control of post-conflict operations. The COMCMOTF plan provided checklists of things that would need to be done by those forces to restore

a functioning government to Panama. This is not to say that either plan could be executed without modification (after all, as the old saying goes, no plan survives the line of departure), but rather that there existed plans and checklists that could be and were modified to meet the developing situation. The mere existence of the *Blind Logic* plans was not what made for ultimate success. Rather, it was the fact that General Thurman embraced them and ordered their execution *on his authority* essentially concurrent with the execution of *Blue Spoon*. That is, he did not wait for the CJCS to execute the order but executed when he felt it was necessary. Thurman took the advice that is often attributed to him, “When in charge, take charge.”

Conclusion: Applicability of Panama Lessons to Iraq

One common theme appears throughout the issues addressed in this essay—the criticality of command interest and emphasis on postconflict operations. The lesson of Panama, in this regard, is that the commander’s ownership of *all* phases of the plan—especially the postconflict phase—is essential to mission, operational, and strategic success. CINC emphasis clearly overcame any linear bias of phased planning with General Woerner’s specific execution guidance. Changing to a “family” of plans made no difference as long as Woerner was CINC. It did impact on the issue when General Thurman took command and focused exclusively on the combat plan for three months. In retrospect, Thurman understood the importance of postconflict planning when he said that he should have been more focused on *his* postconflict plan.

How relevant are these lessons to what happened in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM? In an article that appeared in the *Washington Post* on Christmas Day 2004, Thomas Ricks quotes a paper by US Army Major Isaiah Wilson III as saying, “‘There was no Phase IV plan’ for occupying Iraq after the combat phase...”²⁴ At the panel where I presented an early version of this essay, I argued in a similar vein that I could find no evidence that a Phase IV plan had been developed by the US Central Command (CENTCOM). My fellow panelist, Colonel Kevin Benson, who had been responsible for Phase IV planning at the CFLCC, indicated that the CENTCOM plans shop was very much engaged in Phase IV planning.

If he was correct, and I have every reason to believe he was, then what had gone wrong to make it appear that there was no Phase IV plan? In addition, we all knew that there had been a great deal of effort focused on postconflict planning in the US government, especially in the State Department and retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner’s Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) within DOD. However late in the game ORHA was created, it was well ahead of the last-minute resurrection of *Blind Logic* on 17 December 1989! Indeed, ORHA appears to have learned lessons from the Kuwait task force created for Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM in that it was in constant coordination with CENTCOM,

according to General Tommy Franks.⁵

Again, what went wrong? A review of the Phase IV planning indicates that it was taking place in State Department, ORHA, CENTCOM, and CFLCC. Moreover, there was coordination among ORHA, CENTCOM, and CFLCC. But which plan took precedence? Which plan drove the others? Who was in charge of Phase IV at the operational level? In his book, General Franks comments on a memo he sent to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz that bears quoting in some detail:

My concern was prompted in part by America's recent warfighting history. During the Vietnam War, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and his Whiz Kids had repeatedly picked individual bombing targets and approved battalion-sized maneuvers. That was not going to happen in Iraq. I knew the President and Don Rumsfeld would back me up, so I felt free to pass the message along to the bureaucracy beneath them: *You pay attention to the day after and I'll pay attention to the day of* (emphasis in original).⁶

The italicized portion provides the answer to these questions. General Franks did not accept ownership of Phase IV; he sought to make certain that the OSD bureaucracy, especially ORHA for execution, owned Phase IV.

The lesson of Panama not learned by the commanders was that there is only one place for Phase IV *directive* planning and that is in the regional combatant command. This is implicit in the chain of command and command relationships prescribed by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Unfortunately, it is a lesson that has been only partly learned.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, this and all other references are to my study, *The Fog of Peace: Planning and Executing the Restoration of Panama*, SSI, USAWC, (Carlisle, PA, April 1992) and reprinted in a slightly revised manner in my *Civil Military Operations in the New World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).
2. Plans, between 1987 and 1989, migrated from the J5 to the J3 and back. Meanwhile, at the end of 1988 the CA section moved from J5 to J3, where it remained throughout the crisis and Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY.
3. I do not mean to suggest here that General Thurman bears all, or even most, of the blame for this omission. As the principal planner, I should have tried much harder to get on his calendar, as should my superiors, the deputy J5 and the J5 himself. There is plenty of blame to go around. To his immense credit, General Thurman accepted responsibility for this omission. In an interview, he told me that he should have put much more emphasis on his postconflict plan, *Blind Logic*.
4. Thomas E. Ricks, "Army Historian Cites lack of Postwar Plan," *Washington Post*, (December 25): 2004, A01.
5. General Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).
6. *Ibid*, 441.

“Phase IV” CFLCC Stability Operations Planning

Kevin C.M. Benson

This paper is drawn from my memory of the opening period of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM when I served as the CFLCC, C5. I kept a journal of that time, as well as sending a daily report to the Commanding General. I drew on these sources in the development of both my presentation for the Combat Studies Institute symposium and this paper. Any errors in fact and certainly the opinion contained herein are solely my own and in no way represent any official position of the US Army.

The Combined Force Land Component Command, CFLCC, planners began serious work on the post-hostilities phase of the central command (CENTCOM) campaign plan in July 2002. Initially, this effort was focused on refining the already articulated Phase IV portion of the major operations plan then being developed. The CFLCC C5, Colonel Kevin Benson, directed that three officers from within the C5 staff element begin framing at least the skeleton of a broader plan for the reconstruction of Iraq and the restoration of basic security in that country.¹ At this time the focus of main effort at both CFLCC and CENTCOM was the crafting of the CENTCOM campaign plan and the supporting CFLCC major operations plan for the opening phases of the war.²

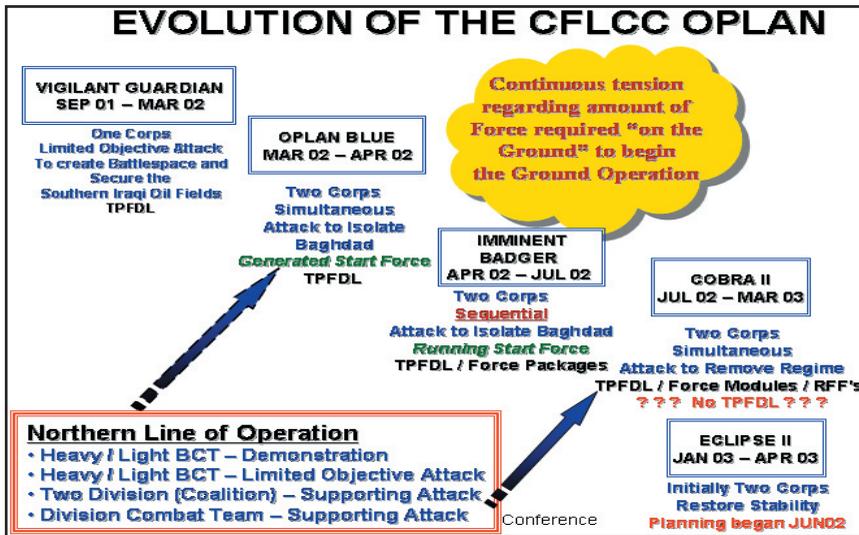


Figure 1

The development of the CFLCC major operations plan was done in parallel with the CENTCOM campaign plan, 1003V. The planning effort consisted of five major efforts on essentially five different plans over the course of 18 months (see Figure 1).³ The planning effort was initially held at the Top-Secret level as a compartmented

effort.⁴ In June 2002 the planning effort was downgraded from Top Secret to SECRET/originator controlled. This kept a close rein on access to the overall plan, but did make it somewhat more of an inclusive effort. The effort on educating higher headquarters and decision makers in Washington about the requirements for a total campaign remained focused on what combat power would be necessary to start the campaign and defeat the existing Iraqi armed forces.

Given this focus, it was difficult to retain the attention of decision makers on how we would conclude the campaign. This is not a criticism; it is a statement of fact and one that planners and operators in the future will have to come to grips with as we move toward the way of war that places much emphasis on a very violent and short lethal operations portion of the campaign. This fact of our way of war means that the conclusion portion of future campaigns will have to be crafted to deal with putting countries back together and establishing a secure enough environment for the people of the country to determine their new path in the community of nations. This demands that future planners expand their understanding of the country in which they will conduct war, popularly called cultural awareness now, but much more than that in reality. An example of this cultural preparation of the battlefield is knowing the demographics of the country in which you will fight.

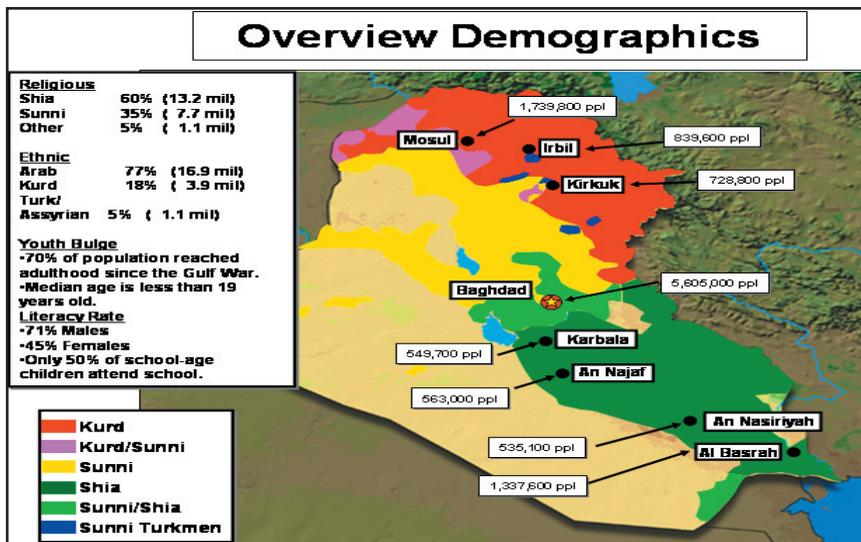


Figure 2

The major point all planners took to heart, and one with implications for PH IV planning, was the realization that the bulk of Iraq's male population came to young manhood after the first Gulf War (see Figure 2). This means that the youth of Iraq,

by and large, believe what Saddam and the Baathists told them, that Saddam had won the first war. He was, after all, still in power. It also means that success depended upon getting angry young men to work quickly. This realization drove a great deal of our effort at CFLCC and within LTG (Ret) Garner's Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) as we all tried to develop guidance for programs that would employ these "angry young men." The CFLCC efforts, though, were focused on a transition from the CFLCC to a follow-on headquarters, one that would have the mission of concluding the campaign.

The CFLCC mission statement remained the same from September 2002 until May 03, when COBRA II was completed and ECLIPSE II began. The CFLCC mission was derived from the staff and commander's interpretation of the CENTCOM tasks given to CFLCC in the CENTCOM campaign plan, 1003V. The campaign plan stated that there would be a relief in place after some period of time in campaign plan PH IV wherein CFLCC would be relieved of responsibility for operations in Iraq by a successor headquarters, initially unnamed, then in succession CJTF-IV (for PH IV) and finally CJTF-7.

The CFLCC Mission

When directed, CFLCC attacks to defeat Iraqi forces, to control the zone of action and to secure and exploit designated sites, and removes the current Iraqi regime. On order, CFLCC conducts post-hostilities stability and support operations; transitions to CJTF-4.

Lieutenant General McKiernan's intent statement for the major operation, COBRA II, remained the same as well. This materially aided understanding of the plan and what was important. It was also the first guidance for the PH IV planning team regarding the "rolling transition" to PH IV.

CFLCC Commander's Intent

Purpose: Overthrow Saddam's regime.

Key Tasks: (1) Control/isolate the regime (Baghdad is the center of gravity for the regime) by fracturing Saddam Hussein's ability to C3 (author note: C3 is command, control, communicate) his sources of power, by defeating military that chooses to fight the coalition (influencing neutrality or capitulation of remainder of RA/RGFC forces), and by controlling the civilian population to not impede our attacks. Focus kinetic and non-kinetic effects on regime targets located in Baghdad early and continuously to maintain constant pressure on the regime.

(2) Simultaneous, multidirectional, continuous effects using combined-arms maneuver, operational fires, and information operations that are synchronized with CFSOCC, CFACC, and OGA effects. Exploit tactical and operation success at every

opportunity. The high tempo of operations will require mitigating actions for the single greatest concern of operational risk—CSS supportability over extended LOCs, both north and south. Logistics must support the depth and momentum of operational maneuver.

(3) Control as we go (LOCs, SSE, formations, infrastructure, and population). Conduct a “rolling” transition to post-hostility stability and support operations, initially in southern Iraq even while combat operations continue in central Iraq/ Baghdad. Balance effects of control (population) and destruction (military support to regime’s defense).

Endstate: Operational endstate is removal of key regime leadership, coalition forces physically controlling Iraq, RA/RGFC forces defeated or capitulated, and vital infrastructure to provide life support to the Iraqi population sustained. Expect SSE to continue well after cessation of hostilities. Conditions established to effect CFLCC battle handover to CJTF-4.⁵

CFLCC Concept of Stability Operations

COBRA II included stability tasks to V Corps and I MEF. The rolling or blurred transition to PH IV post-hostilities tasks demanded that CFLCC forces control the zone of advance. The best way to do that was the simultaneous execution of combat and stability tasks. The plan also envisioned a possible branch called regime collapse. Regardless of the outcome, the stability tasks remained the same during all PH III operations. These were:

- Unity of military command.
- Unity of effort with Coalition Government Agencies (CGAs)/IOs/NGOs through HOC/HACC/CMOC structure.
- Utilization of existing Iraqi organizations and administration.
- Before Regime collapse V Corps and I MEF exercise military authority in the wake of combat operations. MSCs engage with and utilize existing Iraqi Provincial administration.
- Following Regime collapse an interim authority is established that interfaces with Iraqi Ministries.
- Initially, stability operations are conducted within CFLCC zones. After Regime removal, the battlespace is reorganized to include the whole of Iraq.

Phase III Endstate

Figure 3 represents the CFLCC situation at the end of April 2003. CFLCC Phase III was complete when Baghdad was isolated. The CENTCOM Phase III transition to PH IV was to occur at the completion of the removal of the Saddam

regime. CFLCC chose to end its Phase III when Baghdad was isolated. The CFLCC appreciation of the regime was all the means of control emanated from Baghdad. Once the city and thus the regime apparatus were isolated in the city, transition to PH IV could begin throughout the country, with a major task being completion of regime removal.

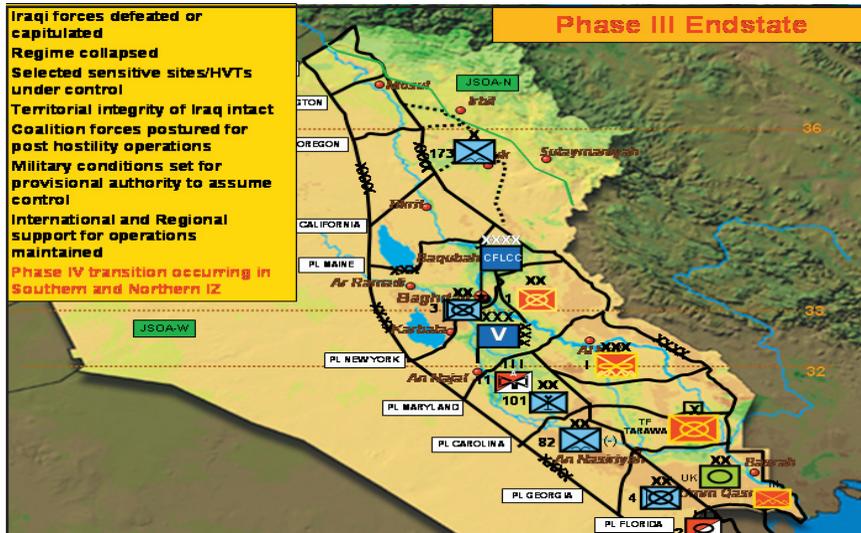


Figure 3

Phase IV Challenges and Assumptions

The CFLCC PH IV planning team derived the challenges listed below that had to be addressed during the totality of PH IV in the campaign plan and supporting major operations plan.

- EPW (repatriation/reintegration)
- WMD (site control, removal, transport)
- Dislocated civilians (internal and external)
- Iraqi military (demobilize and control)
- Oil infrastructure triage (refineries, pipelines, and storage)
- Separatist intentions
- Lawlessness
- Humanitarian Assistance
- Force Protection

During this effort the planning team came to the conclusion that PH IV of COBRA II was growing in complexity to the point where we needed to write a separate plan as opposed to a continuation of COBRA II. This was true even if the

endstate of CFLCC operations was the establishment of a secure enough situation with critical repairs done on vital civilian infrastructure that would lead to the hand-over of the mission to the yet-to-be-named CJTF-4. On 17 March 2003, the C5 went to the CFLCC CG and recommended that in light of the growing complexity of PH IV, based on wargaming, that PH IV be considered a sequel planning effort to the CENTCOM 1003v. CFLCC C5 would need to write an entire new plan for PH IV. The planning team recognized that there would be internal and external threats to both coalition forces and to the new Iraqi regime. Figure 4 is a representation of these threats and one used to inform the CFLCC command group. Since there was a need for a new plan, the planning team also developed new assumptions that would assist in the planning.

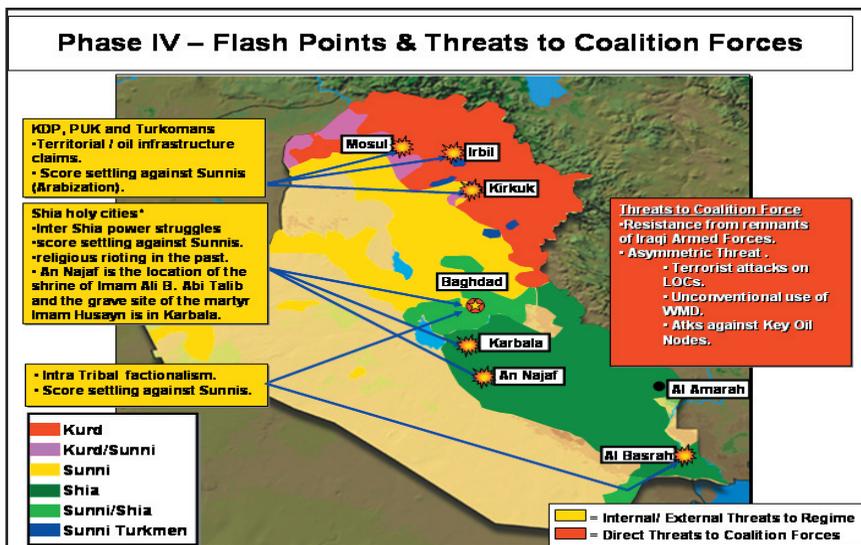


Figure 4

The assumptions the planning team made were hotly debated, both within the team and within the leadership of CFLCC. The assumptions listed below were also shown to the Army G3 and VCSA and the JCS J3, J5. The CFLCC C5 wanted to state the first assumption up front to ensure everyone knew CFLCC understood that policy guidance would change over time with a corresponding effect on coalition forces in theater.

- Policy guidance and endstate will evolve.
- Asymmetric threats to CFLCC forces will exist in PH IV.
- Non-DoD agencies (DoE, DoJ, DoS) will contribute to Iraq recovery operations.
- Some essential infrastructure (rail, airports, power generation, bridges) will

be damaged due to combat operations.

- IO/NGO will request CFLCC support with at least force protection, CSS, and HA supply distribution.
- Coalition will participate in PH IV.
- The TPFDL flow (modified) will continue until completion.
- IO/NGO is already operating in IZ, but some will cease activities by A-day.

The only assumption that did not hold true was the RFFs stopped flowing shortly after 1 May. CFLCC C5 and CENTCOM J5 planners argued strongly for a continuation of the force flow and for the position that no one goes home until 1 September. We argued this to keep the pressure on the enemy. Our cases were made to our respective command groups and received well. Subsequent decisions made later on in April and May 2003 concerning the battle handover and the stopping of the flow of combat forces were made based on information other than that which was provided by either the CFLCC C5 or the CENTCOM J5.

CFLCC Mission for ECLIPSE II

The CFLCC mission statement for ECLIPSE II was developed based on a continuing analysis of the expected situation coalition forces would encounter in PH IV. Our focus was on security and stability as necessary preconditions for battle handover to a follow-on headquarters. At the time we did not think this headquarters would be Third US Army and then almost immediately V Corps. The mission statement, as seen below, was simple and direct:

When directed, CFLCC controls Iraq through stability and support operations to establish conditions for mission transition to CJTF-7.

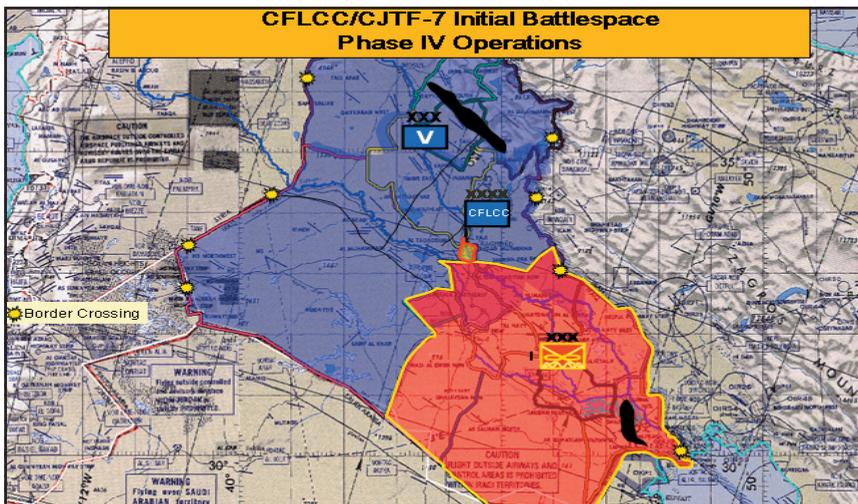


Figure 5

Figure 5 outlines our initial proposal for corps zones of operation. Over time the MEF zone was taken over by two multi-national divisions, one led by the British and the other by the Poles. Following regime removal and the isolation of Baghdad, the V Corps and I MEF expanded their areas of operation to encompass all of Iraq with V Corps repositioned in northern Iraq and I MEF repositioned in southern Iraq. CFLCC C5 also recommended that the forward CFLCC headquarters move to a position inside Baghdad and that the responsibility for Baghdad province be given to a separate combat element under CFLCC control. This recommendation was made to maintain a special focus on the city and its importance to the overall perception of success in the campaign.

CFLCC PH IV Objectives

Since the initial focus of ECLIPSE II was on ensuring stability to meet CENTCOM PH IV conditions, these were the CFLCC objectives stated in ECLIPSE II:

- Establish and sustain the conditions for mission handover to CJTF-7.
- Conduct/transition CMO activities to IO/NGO/HN.
- Ensure WMD capabilities are destroyed, removed, or transitioned to competent authority.
- Detain terrorists and war criminals and free individuals unjustly detained under the IZ regime.
- Refine CFLCC force structure for PH IV operations as required.
- Maintain law and order.
- Complete capitulation of IZ military.
- Protect coalition forces and IO/NGO.

The commander, CENTCOM and his staff derived a series of decision points, (DPs), which would be informed by CFLCC to begin reorganization of the battlefield framework and the transition of command and control (C2), from CFLCC to CJTF-IRAQ or CJTF-7. Events accelerated these DPs and associated decisions being made. In May of 2003 the commander, CENTCOM decided to name CFLCC as CJTF-7 and put CFLCC in control of operations in all of Iraq. The main effort of operations in country at this time was stabilization and critical infrastructure repair, along with the defeat of remaining regime elements.

Iraq is a country bigger than California. The task of establishing a secure enough environment for the series of transitions envisioned in the CENTCOM campaign plan was daunting, but from the middle of May through the end of June it appeared feasible throughout the country. The CFLCC/CJTF-7 C5 did a “troop to task analysis,” a standard effort involved in military planning as a means of continuing the analysis of the mission CFLCC set for itself in OPLAN ECLIPSE II. This troop to task analysis was done to identify a minimum level of forces needed

to exert some control over the populated areas of the country. Based on the planning groups collective peace-keeping/peace enforcement operations experience in Bosnia and Haiti we decided to use a standard reference for “troops” as a start point for analysis.

Our start point was equating the number of troops to the number of police and security forces in California. The planning group used open source information from web searches on the state of California’s web sites, along with the major cities in California. The result of our analysis is shown in Figure 6.⁶ We chose to focus on the cities due to the limited number of troops available to CJTF-7 as the bulk of the population of Iraq lived in the cities listed. Secure cities would begin to establish the conditions for a return to normality throughout Iraq, and gain the time needed for a series of battle handovers from US forces to coalition forces entering Iraq, the British-led Multinational Division, South and the Polish-led Multinational Division Center-South.

PHASE IV – TROOP TO TASK ANALYSIS				
MINIMUM UNITS REQUIRED				
PRIORITY	GOVERNANCE	POPULATION	UNIT REQD	COMMENT
1	BAGHDAD	6.2m	6 BDE	Score Settling, Capital of Iraq, Large Population, SSE
2	AL BASRAH/MAYSAN	2.4m	2 BDE	Rumalia Oil Field, Score Settling, Border Crossing with Iran, SCIRI
3	AT TA'MIM/ARBIL	2.1m	3 BDE	Kirkuk Oil Field, KDP/PUK Intentions, Border Crossing with Iran
4	SALAH AD DIN	1.1m	2 BDE	Tikrit, SSE sites
5	NINAWA	2.4m	1 BDE	Mosul, KDP/PUK Intentions, Border Crossings with Syria
6	AS SULAYMANIYAH	1.4m	1 BDE	Al-Qaida enclave, Al, PUK
7	AL ANBAR	1.2m	1 BDE	Border Crossing with Jordan/ Syria, SSE sites, LSA COPPERHEAD
8	BABIL	1.7m	2 BN	Population merge with Baghdad, SSE sites
9	AN NAJAF	900k	3 BN	Shia Holy City, LSA BUSHMASTER
10	KARBALA	700k	2 BN	Shia Holy City
11	DHI QAR	1.4m	1 BDE	An-Nasiriyah, SCIRI, LSA ADDER
12	WASIT	860k	2 BN	MEK, Border Crossing with Iran
13	DIYALA	1.4m	1 BN	MEK, Border Crossing with Iran, SSE Sites
14	DAHUK	450k	1 BN	Border Crossing with Turkey
15	AL QADISIYAH	850k	1 BN	
16	AL MUTHANN	490k	-	
TOTAL	-	25.5m	20 BDE	

Figure 6

CFLCC Endstate Conditions

The CENTCOM campaign plan envisioned a number of transitions within Phase IV of the campaign, based on the wargaming done between the CENTCOM and component staffs. Shown in Figure 7 are the endstate conditions that were derived from war gaming and formed the conditions for a CFLCC and CENTCOM decision point to end PH IV and begin battle handover to a successor HQ. The decision to name CFLCC CJTF-7 materially changed the plan as no transition was needed since the headquarters that developed ECLIPSE II was remaining in Iraq.

The challenge was then handing over the mantle of CJTF-7 to V US Corps. This was done on 15 June 2003.

CFLCC ENDSTATE CONDITIONS	
Lines of Operation	Handover Conditions
ACHIEVE IRAQI, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT – Integrate and leverage Coalition efforts to establish a secure and stable environment within a self sufficient Iraqi nation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Iraqi people tolerate the interim administration. Neighboring countries do not actively oppose the Coalition effort to establish a new Iraqi government.
SECURITY Establish a secure and stable environment for CFLCC transition to CJTF-7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pockets of organized resistance are defeated. Territorial integrity of Iraq is intact. SSE operations transitioned to follow on forces. Security is established for LOGCAP personnel. Initiate use of Iraqi military for stability operations. Establish confinement facility inside Iraq
RULE OF LAW – Exercise control through the existing legal system and operate in accordance with international law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil order is maintained. Functioning police force exist.
INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY Initiate restoration of Iraqi self-sufficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairs of damaged essential civil and economic infrastructure are underway.
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND ASSISTANCE – Mitigate human suffering.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency HA is provided by the civilian sector and IOs/NGOs. Support is provided to IO/NGO for Sustainment HA.
GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION Exercise military authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary military authority is established at National level and in all 18 provinces.

Figure 7

CFLCC used Figure 8 as a means of communicating the existing conditions on 15 June 2003. This chart, among many others, was shown to the assembled V Corps commanders and principal staff officers during the handover presentation. The CFLCC C5 briefed the chart to LTG Sanchez and his commanders.⁷

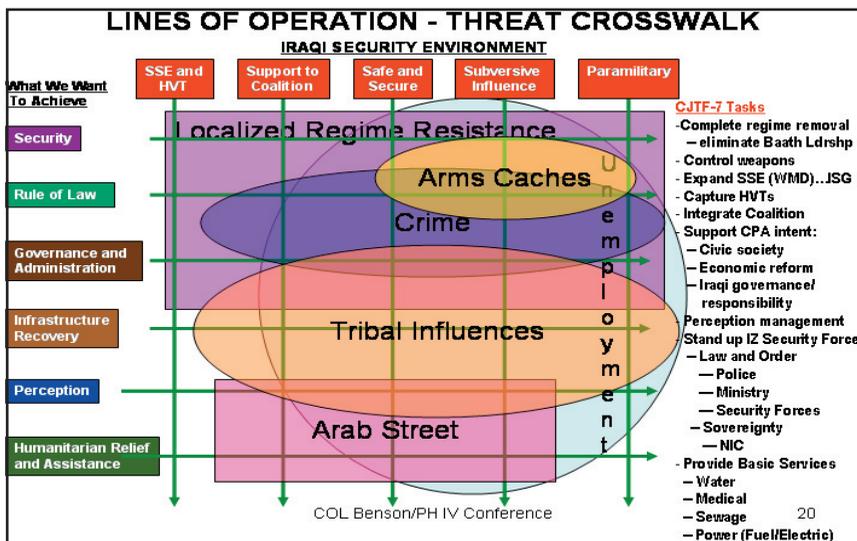


Figure 8

In the aftermath of the handover of responsibility for operations in Iraq, have been many questions and assertions about the state of planning for PH IV or post-hostility operations, stability and support operations. In this paper I attempt to put to rest the question of whether or not there was a post-campaign plan to deal with lawlessness, guerrilla operations, and the general security situation. The CFLCC C5, along with the planning staffs of V US Corps and I MEF and guided by input from the command group of CFLCC, developed a plan called ECLIPSE II that was a sequel to COBRA II. ECLIPSE II outlined operations to conduct stability and security operations. In the course of the development of ECLIPSE II, the CFLCC planning staff talked about an insurgency as one of the potential enemy courses of action but did not rate it very likely. The consensus of opinion, based on our analysis of available intelligence, was that it was more likely there would be continued resistance from former regime loyalists as they had everything to lose with Saddam gone from power. The CFLCC planning group also developed ECLIPSE II with the assumption that we would be allowed to recall the Iraqi regular army and certain lower level Baath-party members.

The CFLCC plan was developed in the same manner we developed COBRA II, through a series of meetings with the V Corps, I MEF, and CENTCOM planners conducted before and during the conduct of combat operations. We also included in the development process the people who worked for LTG (Ret) Garner's ORHA. ORHA expected to assume responsibility for operations in Iraq as the security situation improved and the coalition, in accord with a fledgling Iraqi government, moved toward complete handover of the country to Iraqi control.

War is a human endeavor. The first lesson any planner learns is that just as the coalition forces enter a war planning on being victorious so too does the enemy enter a war with the thought of victory, and will do just about anything to achieve victory. Did CFLCC expect the sort of opposition that has since arisen in the aftermath of the handover of Iraq operations? The answer is no; we felt there would be a continued resistance to our forces, but we also felt that the Iraqi army would be recalled, the Iraqi police would return to duty, and coalition forces could begin a withdrawal from the country over some time schedule linked to the ability of the Iraqi army and security forces. The planning group figured there would be remnants of former regime loyalists who would be left with no option but to fight. We did consider an insurgency, but it was rated as less likely. We also expected that fanatics (al Qaeda, Ansar al Islam, Wahabi sects, etc.) would also try to come into Iraq to kill Americans. We could not have foreseen, in my mind, the depth of the resistance we face now. We expected to be able to recall the Iraqi army. Once CPA took the decision to disband the Iraqi army and start again, our assumptions for the plan became invalid.

Moltke the Elder stated that no plan could look with confidence beyond initial contact with the enemy's main body. This dictum remains true today. A great deal of planning took place before, during, and after the conclusion of Phase III of the CENTCOM campaign plan 1003V and CFLCC OPLAN COBRA II. War, as planners also know and understand, is an extension of policy by other means. The enemy gets a vote and policy will change as a result of that interaction with the enemy. War is and will remain a human endeavor. It is a contest of will. The side with the stronger will, as well as the best weapons for the task, will ultimately prevail.

Glossary

- A- Day = day air combat operations begin
- AO = area of operations
- BCT = Brigade Combat Team
- BDE = Brigade
- BN = Battalion
- C3 = command, control, communications
- CFC = Coalition Forces Command (also known as CENTCOM)
- CGAs = coalition government agencies
- CJTF = Combined Joint Task Force
- CMO = Civil Military Operations
- CMOC = Civil-Military Operations Center
- COMCENT = Commander, Central Command (GEN Franks)
- COMCFLCC = Commander, Combined Forces Land Component Command
- CPA = Coalition Provisional Authority
- CSS = Combat Service Support (supply & logistics)
- DC = Displaced Civilians, District of Columbia
- DoD = Department of Defense
- DoE = Department of Energy
- DoJ = Department of Justice
- DoS = Department of State
- DP = Decision Point
- EPW = Enemy Prisoner of War
- G-Day = Day ground combat operations begin
- HA = Humanitarian Assistance
- HACC = Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center
- HN = Host Nation
- HOC = Humanitarian Operations Center
- HOC-IZ = Humanitarian Operations Center – Iraq
- HVT = High Value Target
- IA-DART = Inter-Agency-Disaster Assistance Response Team
- IOs = international organizations or information operations
- ISG = Iraq Survey Group
- IZ = military short hand for Iraq, IR is Iran
- JSOA-N = Joint Special Operations Area – North
- KDP = Kurdish Democratic Party
- LOC = Line of Communication
- LOGCAP = Logistics Civil Augmentation Program
- LSA = Logistics Support Area

- MeK = Mujahadin e' Khalq, Iraqi backed anti Iranian group based in Iraq
- MSC = Major Subordinate Commands
- NBC = Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
- NGOs = non-governmental organizations
- NIC = New Iraqi Corps (the project to rebuild the Iraqi Army)
- OGA = Other Government Agencies
- OPLAN = Operations Plan
- PUK = Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
- RA = Regular Army (Iraqi)
- RFF = Request for forces
- RGFC = Republican Guard Forces Command (Iraqi ground forces)
- SCIRI = Supreme Committee for the Iranian Revolution in Iraq (Iranian backed Shia group that opposed Saddam)
- SF = Special Forces
- SOF = Special Operating Forces
- SRG = Special Republican Guard (elite unit of the Republican Guard with personal loyalty to Saddam)
- SSE = sensitive site exploitation
- SSO = Special Security Organization (Iraqi secret police)
- TPFDD = Time phased force deployment data
- TPFDL = Time phased force deployment list
- UXO = unexploded ordinance
- WMD = weapons of mass destruction

Notes

1. The initial team of officers focused on PH IV planning for CFLCC was Lieutenant Colonels Glen Patten and Winston Mann and Major Willie Davis. In January 2003 the team was reinforced with the addition of Majors Wayne Grieme, Bryan Sparling, and Bill Innocenti, and British Major Nick Elliott, MBE. In March 2003 Lieutenant General, LTG, Mckiernan, Commanding General of CFLCC, named British Major General Albert Whiteley, as the Deputy Commanding General for PH IV. From March 2003 until plan handover to the CFLCC C35, Future Operations in May 2003, the CFLCC C5 and plans group worked under the direction of MG Whiteley.

2. CFLCC planners chose the name ECLIPSE II because we wanted to link Third US Army history to our second reconstruction and PH IV campaign, the first being ECLIPSE in Germany in 1945. This was the same logic used to select the name COBRA II for our first major operations plan.

3. All figures used in this paper were presented during a Combat Studies Institute symposium, held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 14-16 September 2004. These figures were originally developed during the course of planning for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and were declassified by Central Command in 2003.

4. A compartmented effort at the Top-Secret level is the most difficult level for planning. No one in a headquarters, save those with a “need to know” are allowed to be “read on” to the compartment, which literally means people involved in planning must possess a Top-Secret clearance and sign off on papers acknowledging the vital security interest involved in the planning effort. The number of people allowed to be “read on” to any compartment is strictly controlled.

5. See the Glossary for a complete list of acronyms and what they mean.

6. There is acknowledged controversy over the number of troops a range of people felt were necessary to provide a secure environment in Iraq. This figure represents what the CFLCC C5 was asked to produce, the minimum number of troops, US, coalition, etc., we felt were needed to establish a secure environment for the restoration of Iraqi control and free operation of non-governmental organizations, the UN, etc. We had fewer troops than Governor Schwarzenegger has police.

7. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez assumed command of V US Corps on 14 June 2003 and became Commander, CJTF-7 on 15 June 2003. The CFLCC staff worked with the V Corps staff from 1-14 June 2003 on the handover of tasks to ensure as smooth a handover as possible. The CFLCC C2, under the direction of MG James Marks, prepared chart 19 as well as others in the intelligence situation portion of the handover briefing.

Fishel and Benson Question and Answer Session

Question: My question is for Colonel Benson. When you all were trying to determine the ethnic, tribal, and religious boundaries, what was your source of expertise? Were you just looking it up in the encyclopedia, or did you have somebody actually with good knowledge in your headquarters?

Answer Benson: Within our C-9, the civil-military affairs element, there was a level of regional expertise. Also, thank God for the Internet because we were actually doing the Google search to get as much information as we could. And there were other sources of information that we were able to draw from as well.

Question: It was mentioned briefly in the last session about the foreign area officer community. Cultural awareness, of course, is key to this. My question is, during all phases of this—your preplanning, the execution, etcetera—what were the lessons learned for policy makers, senior military leaders, and foreign officers on the use, non-use, and misuse of the foreign area officer community? This is for both of you.

Answer Fishel: The first thing I would say to you is that I'm obviously very much a partisan of General [Frederick] Woerner, who was the senior in the Army at the time and clearly had a sense of the culture of Panama and the entire region. His decision to put the post-conflict planning in the hands of the J-5 was predicated on the fact that that was where his foreign area officers (FAOs) were. It wasn't just that his civil affairs section was there, but it was the location of his entire FAO capability. When it came time to execute, that FAO community, the entire division of the J-5, became the nucleus of the civil-military operations task force until the civil affairs guys came down. The guys who did the planning in both 1988 and 1989 came from the unit that was regionally focused; it's now the 350th Civil Affairs Command. At the time, it was the 361st Civil Affairs Brigade. Some of its officers were also FAOs, as well as civil affairs officers. But, they were all regionally focused.

One of the best FAOs was not an FAO at all. The J-3 of SOUTHCOM, later the commander of US Army South (USARSO), then Brigadier General, Major General, finally Lieutenant General Marc Cisneros, probably had more cultural awareness in his little finger than half the Latin American FAOs in the business. So, merely the fact of training is not the only way you get that kind of experience. But the core of it was that we were FAOs. And that General Woerner was supportive of the FAO community. I can't speak to General [Max] Thurmond's views because he sent mixed signals about his feelings about FAOs. In some cases, he was very pro-FAO, and in other cases he was very opposed to what he perceived as the negatives. In the

end, however, he ended up relying on the expertise of that same FAO community, and relying on it, I think, in appropriate ways. So, the commander's sense of how to use them is obviously one of the critical factors.

Answer Benson: Marty Stanton is a very good friend of mine. He was our C9, and he had a tremendous understanding of the area, of the variety of the cultures. One of the guys was initially, very early in our planning process at least, my impression was that he wanted us to hold hands and sing Kumbaya. I was not interested in the subtle nuances of the Arabic culture. I wanted to know how to kill them more effectively. I wanted to know how to separate the insurgents from the people. I wanted to know what buttons to push to get the people to help us so our information operations would be more effective. If you can drive the handholding Kumbaya guys from the FAO corps, that would help because we're at war. That's a paid political announcement.

The FAOs we had were tremendous. They really helped us. Now, did we make mistakes? Sure. Were there things that we did not know, or things that were there that we just didn't recognize until too late? Of course, because we were under a lot of pressure to get a plan out, to refine it. General Franks says in his book that he was engaged in an education process with people in OSD. And it truly was that. Well, this has nothing to do with FAO, but those guys were involved. They were invaluable. And Marty was invaluable. I would wring their heads to get as much as I could. But our focus was on who do we have to kill to be successful. How do we send messages so the Iraqi army doesn't fight? How do we make sure those are successfully received and understood? That was the thrust of it for us. We have to be better at that. We have to be more sophisticated.

Question: Kevin, this question is for you. Knowing what we know now, seeing what we've seen now, and if you could keep this somewhat short, what would you do differently, either in organization or use of operational-planning design aspects?

Answer Benson: I would have made a much stronger case to my CG that he should have been more involved with Phase IV planning during Phase III execution. If I had it to do all over again, that's what I'd do differently. [Lieutenant] General [David] McKiernan, to his credit, recognized that he only had so much energy because we were all getting really tired. He felt he needed to get through Phase III before we got into Phase IV. He delegated responsibility, or authority, for Phase IV planning to another major general on the staff—Major General Albert Whitley of the UK army, with whom he'd had a good working relationship during Bosnia planning. And I made what I thought was a strong case that, "No boss, you can't shut me out. I've got to have access to you." He just said, "Look, I can't." If I had it to do all over again I'd have made a stronger case. Because I think there

were some things that we really screwed up.

Question: This is for Colonel Benson. I come from a community that, if they were looking at Phase IV, they wouldn't know to call it Phase IV. What they would say is there were riots and lootings in Baghdad. There have been constant attacks on American troops and on the Iraqis themselves by dissident groups or what have you. They would call what they don't know is Phase IV a failure. How would you answer that? At the time, was there a sense that we needed more troops for a successful Phase IV, which is what we're hearing constantly through the media.

Answer Benson: I'll start with what I knew at the time and then add a personal opinion. First of all, the looting that was going on, I saw that same guy carrying that same vase over and over and over again. The people weren't knocking down the walls to get to Jalid's store and loot the groceries and all the sundry items. They were looting Baath party headquarters and Saddam's palaces. Secret police headquarters, precision strikes. You may have heard on CNN *Inside the War Room*—one of the funnier lines attributed to General Whitley was it was “redistribution of wealth.” But, it wasn't until a lot later that some savvy Iraqis realized that the Americans would buy the copper from them to repair power lines and so, why don't we just go knock down the power lines and sell it back to the Americans. You know, that was kind of unconstrained capitalism as well.

The looting, you know everyone's beat us up about the looting, oh, the looting. Well, what do we do? Shoot them? We've been telling them in our information operations that we're not here to fight the Iraqi people. We're here to fight the Baath party and the Saddam regime. We may well have set the conditions for, “Hey, let's go loot the palace because the Americans won't care.” I don't know. That's pure conjecture. Now, I've been asked this question before. I would say that this is a human endeavor. This is war. The enemy always gets a vote. Did we make some mistakes? Did we not kill enough people. I don't know. It may have taken that. But that's all moot. Because it would be just conjecture. We used the people we had as best we could, the looting and the lawlessness, we recognized that there was going to be some of that. Mostly the lawlessness. We tried to articulate in looking at the country itself and the cities and the flashpoints of where we would get the most effect for use of the forces we had. And that's how we targeted the forces in the terms of the specified tasks we gave to the Corps and subsequently to the multinational divisions.

You know, there was probably a moment...now this is Benson's personal opinion...there was a moment where some of my Arab friends told me that if we'd have kept the lid on we probably wouldn't have had these problems. OK, conjecture. How do we keep the lid on? Well, we continue the force flow. We don't stop. We

leave everyone in place because there was a moment from about the middle of May until the middle of June where, last time I walked around Baghdad, I had my hard hat on and my flack vest. But the biggest problem we had was folks trying to sell us booze on the corner. There weren't people shooting at us there. There were some sullen looks by young guys, but we were kind of thinking, "We just kicked your ass, man, and you're scared of us." We probably needed to keep them scared a little longer. But, it's a human endeavor. The enemy's going to sense weakness, or perceive weakness, and come after us.

Question: Did we need more troops?

Answer Benson: I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't disagree with what General Schinseki said, because the number I came up with was pretty much what he said. Remember, I showed you my minimum "troop to task" analysis was 100,000 to 125,000 combat soldiers with attendant combat support and service support. It brought us to around 250,000 to 300,000 folks. But, you know, whether or not we needed more troops is an irrelevant argument. We're the soldiers of a republic. When the duly constituted constitutional and authorized leadership tells us this is what we have to do the job, if we have the opportunity to make our case and they listen to us and then they make decisions, we move out.

Question: But I suppose we're saying that they looked at your forces you thought you needed, turned you down, in essence, so their decision...maybe the staff work was impeccable, but their decision, then, was faulty because they did not provide you the forces you said you needed to maintain law and order in Phase IV Alpha.

Answer Benson: Remember where I was, too. We made our position known to Central Command. I was not present at any of those other decisions. So, I do not know. I do not know.

Answer Fishel: I don't know that the ... I obviously wasn't there, one of my colleagues at NDU was there and worked for Jay Garner. As best as I can discover, there was very little, if any, planning at the Central Command level for the Phase IV operations. You had planning going on in Washington, as you did in DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. You had planning going on at CFLCC, but there seems to be little at the level of the combatant commander. Please, somebody correct me if I'm wrong, but it struck me that this is the place where it has to be. This is the guy, whether his name is Franks or Abizaid or Thurman or Woerner or Paul David Miller, he owns it. It isn't as Colin Powell is alleged to have said and didn't say, "Mr. President, you own it." No, it's "Combatant Commander, you own it." Or whomever the President puts in charge.

Question: Kevin, it's probably going to go more to you. You mentioned that

Dave McKiernan said he didn't have time to look at Phase IV until Phase III was done. Phase IV is the goal, win the peace. Therefore, everything else ought to be backed up from that, you know, planning done backwards, and it's got to be intertwined and together. Did we mess it up by not making it all just planning, rather than Phase III planning, Phase IV planning, and separating it out?

Answer Benson: That's a great question. The year that I spent at MIT was very instructive. Before I left MIT, I had a chance to talk to Ken Pollock, who had just written a *Foreign Affairs* article, "Next Stop, Baghdad?" I had beat him up because he talked about the easy part, the combat. He didn't even touch what I knew to be Phase V [stabilization and retrograde operations]. See, I was out of touch from planning; the last time I'd been into seriously planning post-hostilities was Phase V. I didn't know we had dropped the whole phase from Joint doctrine. But, I beat him up about that. I said, "You know Ken, you just glossed over all the hard stuff. What do we do after the fact?" And with that seed provided by Ken's presentation, before I left MIT I talked to all those great political science professors that I had up there, I took advantage of those minds, specifically on Phase IV, post-hostilities operations.

There was also a post-hostilities planning effort going on that predated my arrival at CFLCC. I just fell in on it and gave it my attention because I was the new guy, I was fresh, I had all the energy. All these folks were nearing tracer burnout because they'd been going at it since September 2001. We knew the ultimate end-state was win—I didn't say win the peace. That was crap. It's win the war. How do you win the war? You win the war at the end of the campaign. What are the campaign end states? Keep those in mind. What do we do in Phase I, II and III that set us up for Phase IV? I mean, that is the approach that I took. That is what I told our operational planning group. That was the message we all took up to Central Command. And there were the two guys, there again, the two 50-pound brains that General Franks mentions in his book, Halverson and Fitzgerald. Even though they were deeply involved in the educational process that the CINC had going on with OSD, they also recognized that there had to be attention given to the question, What do we do posthostilities? And there really was a group of folks there in the long-range planning element—the first time I saw it was in April 2002—that was considering, What do we do? How do we articulate the totality of Phase IV of the campaign? Because I read their plan. Because we had to be linked in it. So, Clay, we did do that. At least, we made the best attempt I possibly could.

Question: It seems that one of the assumptions that was made—and I mean no disrespect to my fellow branch officers—that Armored Cavalry and Infantry and these types of people can jump right in and do disciplined law and order. And division MPs aren't equipped for that either. I'm sorry, post camp- and station-type,

disciplined law-and-order-type MPs, combined with civil affairs unit to make this Phase IV work. I'm sure you're aware of that. And I'm sure that they were included on your list. What happened to these support units that were supposed to have been up there with you? Because we never saw many MPs running around. This was a critical need for these people. At least, having spent a good part of my career as an MP, I can understand ... a commander's right hand.

Answer Benson: Actually, at one point every active component, almost every active component and about 75 percent of the reserve component Military Police were in Iraq. What we ran in to was the decision not to have a time phased forced deployment list where one decision is taken and all the forces flow, because that was viewed as archaic, something that was built for the big war in the central region of Europe that never happened. We had to go back to the Secretary with requests for forces that were separate packages. And then that got us into alert and mobilization, and then, in all candor, once we started to alert and mobilize some of these reserve component units, we found out that they had been lying on their readiness for years. Forces Command had to cobble together units to meet needs to provide the source. They had to take three to make one. But, with the "start and stop" that we went through with the request for forces process, it interrupted the way we'd been training guys for years. You're going to get alerted, you're going to get mobilized, you're going to go to a mobilization unit. You're going to train for a little while, then you're going to go.

I recognize the reason why we did the RFF (request for forces). I mean, the Secretary wanted to be more personally involved. And I really respect that. He wanted to know what was going on. Just that the downstream effects of that was the "stop and start." And then it compounded with who is really ready? How much is ready? Who do we need? When can they get here? What is realistic to expect? Then the other thing we came up against was, under what law were various Reserve component units mobilized? Some were mobilized under Presidential Selective Reserve Call-up, and I learned, to my chagrin, you could only keep guys on active duty for 270 days. The last 90 they had to be back getting ready to demobilize. I really did not know that. Those units mobilized under the partial mobilization, we could keep for two years.

But at the end of the two years, there was a period where they could not be recalled. So, now we got into, How long are we going to be here? What do we think? Who are we going to need downstream? Maybe we better not call these guys up. Maybe we better get those guys. I dived into that stinky end of the pool with all of our Reserve Component guys and really kind of hammered it through. We did have a lot of those folks there, it's just that they came later on because the other effect of the request for forces process we were bumping up against was, When do we

need these guys? Well, God, you know, some of them we wanted within ten days after we crossed the line of departure. Well, we can't get the reserve guys there that fast. OK, then we've got to go and pull active component and push the reserve component guys further downstream.

In the macro it made sense because, well, now we've got somewhat of a sustainable force flow, but like you said, the division MPs, those kind of MPs, the civil affairs guys . . . you know there's not that many active component civil affairs guys. And the other part was, all of those regional civil affairs guys had been called up for Afghanistan. They were coming up on the end of their 18 months of a two-year call up under the law. So, it's like, oh my God, let's go get some of those guys from Southeast Asia, bring them in because it's civil affairs. It was pretty amazing. It really was. It was an amazing process to go through. So, we did have a lot of those folks. It was just a matter of when they could come. There was a whole host of factors.

Question: Kevin, you mentioned during your presentation that you...(This question had to do with the decision to not recall the Iraqi regular army.)

Answer Benson: They weren't so tainted with the blood of ethnic groups because the Shia had fought in the regular Iraqi army against Shiite Iranians. So we felt that there would be great utility in being able to recall them. To that end, we devoted a lot of time to collecting arms and ammunition. I sent officers out to look at post camps and stations, as we would call them, that were not so damaged they couldn't be repaired by the Iraqi army with minimal trouble to be recalled. We even were engaged in discussions with Iraqi general officers. Now, were they Baathists? Sure they were. To make flag rank you had to be. Hell, to make field grade you had to be. But they were guys, insofar as we knew, who were vetted through processes with other government agencies, and they didn't have blood on their hands to the extent like some of the guys in the Special Republican Guard.

I gave a presentation to Mr. Walt Slocum who worked for Ambassador Bremer and the conclusion of my presentation was, "Sir, we're pretty confident we can do this. We can recall them and that would really help." And, as I said, we're the soldiers of a Republic. We got our say, and he said to me at the end, "Great presentation, Colonel. Thank you very much." Hey, this was supposed to be a decision briefing. Then the realization was, "Holy cow! I think a decision's been made." It may well have been. De-Baathification was the other one, too. That was the policy of the government. De-Baathification. Now, I was involved in discussions about what does that really mean? I mean, you know, none of us wanted to put General McKiernan in a position like in the Patton movie where, "Well, I guess they joined because it's like joining the Republican or the Democratic party." We didn't want to put him

in that position. What we tried to articulate was that there were concentric circles of bad guys around Saddam. There should be a limit. You know, the guy who's in the Baath party who runs the sewage treatment plant in Basra is probably not as bad as the number 5 guy in the deck of 52. So, we should be able to apply a little reason in our approach. But, de-Baathification is the policy of the government.

Question: Thank you for two great, very excellent presentations. It was both gratifying, but a little scary, to see the planning in both cases was very far along and very thoughtful and somehow didn't quite make it into fulfilling the promise of the plan. For John Fishel I wanted to ask a question. I wanted to ask if you could comment on the pace, in the Panama situation, with which we rehabilitated and drew upon police, civil servants, soldiers, etcetera from Panama to go back about their functions and get back in business, and how long it took to get them into play helping their own population? With Kevin, I'd like you to follow up on the comments you've already made. You've, kind of, half answered my question. Given the planning, could you address a little bit how you fit in and how resonant you felt your relationship was with CENTCOM? And then, at the second level, how well you fit in and how much you encountered when we went from [Lieutenant General (Ret.) Jay] Garner to [Ambassador Paul] Bremer in, I think it was May, and then when you went from whomever was before Garner to Garner in, I think it was January. How much turbulence did that create in your plan?

Answer Fishel: The PDF simply went home. They did the same thing the Iraqi's did. They went home. But the PDF, all 18,000 of them, most of them were cops of one kind or another. There were 3,500 guys in the PDF who were military. The rest of them were some kind of policeman. So, the issue was, what are you going to do with these people? If you let them stay home, they still have weapons, they still have training, and they have sort of a unit structure. They can be bad guys. We actually had a government in hand, in place, sort of. We inaugurated President Guillermo Endara, First Vice President Arias Calderón, and Second Vice President Billy Ford before the first troops went in. Sorry, the Panamanians did that. There was a Panamanian Justice of the Peace who came on Fort Clayton and did it. So, there was a government there. Calderón was dual hatted as the Minister of Government and Justice, which owned the police. And his right-hand man was a guy of Pakistani origin who ultimately became the first civilian director of the National Police Force ever in Panama.

After a series of discussions with the CINC and with State Department representation, the decision was made to invite the police to come back. The first call back and reporting for duty was actually, I believe, 22 December. The same day that you had the last attack of the die hards, literally on the station where the recruitment was taking place. So, they had police coming back in three days into

Operation JUST CAUSE. Then we discovered, surprisingly, that this really was the gang that couldn't shoot straight. The guy who is now my boss was the G3 of our US force liaison, which is now the Director of the Center for Atmospheric Defense Studies. At the time, he was a young major. He took the first group out to the firing range, and asked, "How many of you guys know how to shoot?" "Yeah, we know how to shoot." All of a sudden the bullets were flying in every direction except at the targets. So, he had to come up with a plan for what we called the "20-hour course" to train these guys, to make them safe to walk the streets.

In the meantime, by early February, we had the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) of the US Department of Justice on board, which was going to train everybody, the whole new police force, to do everything. By April, the entire police force had gone through the 20-hour course and ICITAP's basic training course for new policemen or old policemen wasn't in place for another year. A long answer, but we brought former PDF back in early and tried to make them safe to walk the streets. They did develop a very different attitude—the same guys showed a very different attitude under a quasi-democratically elected regime than they had under the not so democratic regime. A year later, I was able to go back and see something that I've never seen earlier, which was policemen actually talking to people in the streets. The old PDF cops, nobody would approach them, and they wouldn't talk to civilians. People were talking to the policemen. People were asking questions, and they were holding conversation. It was civilized. Kind of like you expect in the United States and rarely see.

Question: Was there a similar approach with the civil service?

Answer Fishel: Civil service, such as it was, was much less of a problem. It was still corrupt, but the civil servants were civil servants and they did their thing. The most solid institution in Panama was the PDF. It was the government, and it had it's hands in everything.

Answer Benson: The two-part question. The serendipity of the Army assignment process allowed me to fit in really well. Why do I say that? Because from 1996 to 1998 I had my second tour as a SAMs educated planner, where I was Chief of War Plans at 3d US Army. So, I had two years working with the Central Command staff in the subordinate component headquarters. When I came back in the summer of 2002, many of the guys and gals with whom I'd worked over the course of my career were also back there. I was General Franks' Chief of Plans when he was the 3d Army Commander. So, you know, he could tease me, make fun of me, say that I had more hair when I worked for him. You know, all that kind of stuff. But it helped, because there was recognition. It helped that all of the colonels and the lieutenant colonels and even some of the majors, we'd all worked together

before at various assignments. Even our Air Force, Navy, and Marine brothers and sisters, we'd seen them before, as well. Sometimes there were friction points, to put it kindly, with the other components, but we all had worked with each other before, or knew each other, or knew people who knew each other. So, among the group of planners and general staff officers, we fit in really well.

Pre-Garner to Garner to Bremer. Before ORHA, there was nothing. And the post-hostilities planning was being done at Central Command in the land component. I had heard rumblings that a group led by General Garner—I didn't know the name at the time—was being formed, and they were walking around and trying to go to conferences in December 2002. I first met their advance party in January 2003, but they were still trying to get organized. Frankly, they couldn't contribute an awful lot until they got organized. When we, the land component, did our internal plan handover from the planners to the operations section, then my folks shifted solely to Phase IV vice the simultaneous effort that we had been doing for Phases III and IV, and to force flow management. They, ORHA, were somewhat better organized. On D-day, I was actually at a planning effort with ORHA in their beach-side Hilton where they were living, in civilian clothes, and it was very surreal. I did not work with CPA when Ambassador Bremer took over, because that occurred at just about the time we did the battle hand over to the Vth Corps, and my focus then at the time, reverted back to different responsibilities—continuing the force flow, planning for OIF II, and then interaction with the Central Command J5 on post-Saddam theater engagement strategy.

Question: What was OIF II?

Answer Benson: OIF II was when the guys currently in theater were replaced, or did a relief in place. It was who follows, who replaces the 3d Division? Who relieves the Marines in place? So, I went to Warsaw to talk to the Poles and all that. That's the shorthand. OIF II is, you know, the second group of folks. OIF III is the third group of folks, etcetera.

Question: The question I have, we briefed General Garner's guy, well, Lieutenant General Ron Adams, in late January. At that time, he showed us his organizational chart for ORHA, and it was under the operational control of CFLCC. They weren't obviously very comfortable with that. Did that ever translate into anything on the ground? Were you guys actually in any control of what ORHA was doing?

Answer Benson: It was in our best interest to embrace General Garner's folks because their success meant that I could go home, but there was really a lot of friction. My personal impression, and I would tell this to General Garner, was that ORHA was a pretty top-heavy organization. I couldn't turn around without running into a retired brigadier, or a retired major general, or an ambassador. But there

weren't many Indians. I can't remember the guy's name, because they called him the ORHA Jedi. There was a SAMS educated officer who was their sole planner. They had a law firm of colonels who would love to think deep thoughts and give him all kinds of guidance. And that poor son of a gun was busy. I tried to help him. As for operational control? Well, hell, there were three retired Lieutenant Generals who were Lieutenant Generals when Lieutenant General McKiernan was a Brigadier or a Colonel. But they all knew each other. There was no friction there. General McKiernan said, "Look, this is the direction we want to go. Please work with Kevin. Kevin, work with them." So, I mean, General McKiernan didn't say, "Jay, I want you to do A, B, and C." It wasn't like that. It was discourse. I don't think there was friction there. What friction there was resulted, in my opinion, from General Garner not having enough stuff.

Question: As you well know, ideally there's supposed to be a well-organized interagency plan that gets together all the assets of government, which the military is a part of, to marshal the capabilities to solve Phase IV and beyond. I wonder if you could both comment on that.

Answer Fishel: We've come a long way. I mean, the environment is such that, at least the norm—unless somebody countermands the norm, which happens—is to talk to the other agencies. You don't hold things within...if it's something State or DOJ or somebody else is really going to be playing in, you need them on board, so you're going to talk to them, and they're going to talk to you. Obviously, there are personality factors, there are policy issues, there are times when people are going to say no. But, the SOP is different than it was when we were trying, when we were planning, and when I was being told not only no, but hell no, you can't. That was the norm then. The norm now is, you've got to try to get unity of effort. You can't do it if you don't talk to the other guys. They can't do it if they can't talk to you. We've got problems still, but I think we've come a long way. Part of that is what we saw in, at least the attempt to do it 10 years ago.

Answer Benson: Having been the lead planner for the XVIII Airborne Corps Haiti operations, and having served on that island, I have a different perspective. By way of anecdote, during the first presentation we made to people of ambassadorial rank on the Haiti plan, we took a break. And this guy came running down the hall with his cell phone, and I heard him say, "Jesus Christ, these military people are serious. They're going to go kill people." Now, I'm a prisoner of my experience and I admit that. And this is my personal opinion. I do not believe in this interagency thing. I have personally never seen it. I have worked with certain other governmental agencies for whom I have a great deal of respect and admiration because they were there with us. And if that is interagency, I believe in those acronymed agencies. But this broad Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, Department

of Health and Human Services, etcetera. If we, as military officers, think that we are going to get teams of specialists from all of these agencies who will come out and be planners with us, we should all do a urinalysis. I do not think that will ever happen. I believe in the country team, and when there is an ambassador and he has a team, because I've worked with very effective country teams. But this thing, interagency, it possibly exists inside the Beltway. Now, again, that's my personal opinion.

Answer Fishel: But he's right, you know. That was such an important question. Let me interject with ten years of DC experience. It is true that the Washington interagency generates a plan. The thing that's missed here, and the reason Kevin didn't see any of them, you've got to remember that the Washington interagency is a very effective organization at doing what it was designed to do within law, and what it is charged to do, which is to develop policy recommendations for the president. It operates at the grand strategy and strategy level and promulgates plans. The US government is organized to operate at that level and at the tactical level down in the ambassador's residence where they have the ambassador and a DCI and an attaché. That's how our government is organized. DoD is the only organization within the government that has an operational echelon. So, if you are a SAMs planner, or if you're a military organization at the operational echelon, you won't see any of them because they don't exist there. That is a fundamental problem with government organization, not really with military organization. One I hope you could all help us solve.