

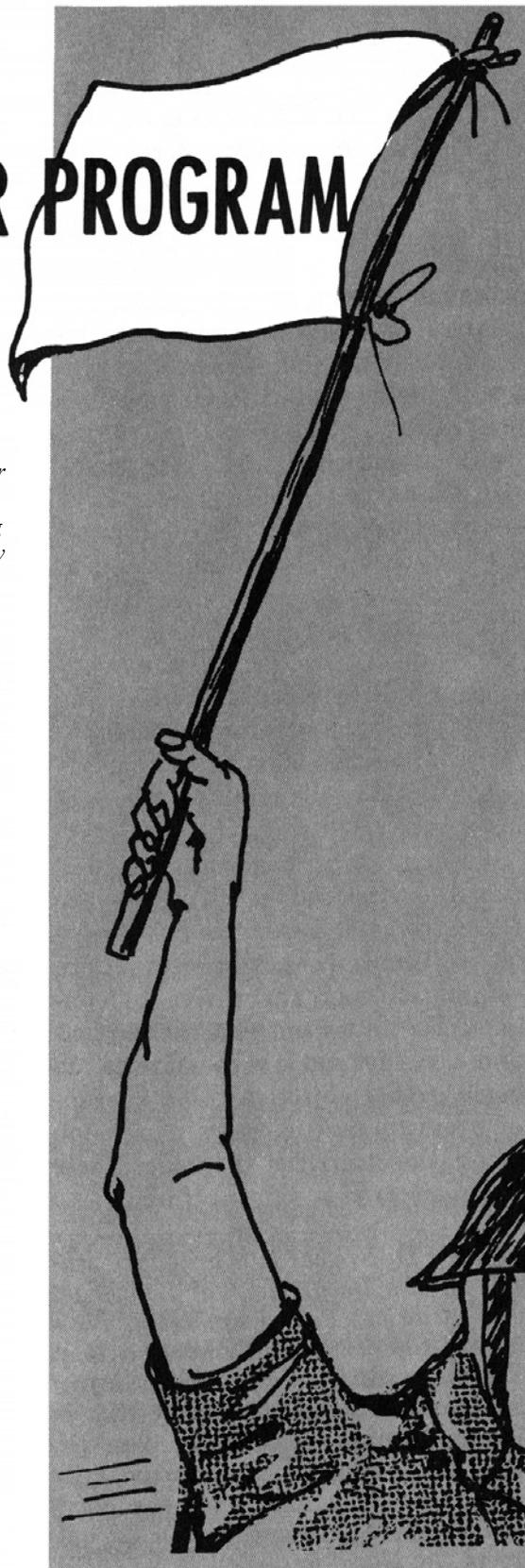
THE SURRENDER PROGRAM

Garry D. Brewer

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article from the Vietnam era is particularly relevant to resolving the insurgencies we are now encountering in Iraq and elsewhere. Amnesty is an emotionally charged issue: the anger and hatred generated by war are hard to forgive. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the Malayan Emergency, the El Salvador and Nicaragua conflicts of the 1970s–80s, and even our own Civil War, “wiping the slate clean” is essential for bringing a long, bitter conflict to an end. This article describes two key elements of the slate-cleaning process: offering amnesty to insurgents, and developing a government ministry specifically to manage a national campaign of reconciliation. The reader is invited to note that the Chieu Hoi organization eventually had branch offices in every province of South Vietnam. Its sole mission was to facilitate the repatriation of former enemies and their reintegration into society, economically and politically, to give them a stake in supporting the state.

THE experiences of the post-World War II years in the Philippines, Malaya, and Algeria have provided many instructive insights into the essential components of “revolutionary” warfare. These experiences have given present-day planners in Vietnam some minimum background upon which the surrender program (*Chieu Hoi*) might be developed. *Chieu Hoi* has been interpreted as “open arms.” The literal meaning of the term is “welcome return.” The entire program has been called *Chieu Hoi* to indicate the spirit or attitude that the government is supposed to hold with respect to the returnee or *Hoi Chanh*.

The worth of surrender programs has been demonstrated in the Philippines to a significant extent. The British in Malaya had successes with their program, but these undertakings never achieved the magnitude nor did they have the dramatic appeal of President



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Ramon Magsaysay's various efforts in the Philippines. The French experience in Algeria was a contrast with the Malayan and Philippine cases and was, in effect, an entirely different approach to the general problem. Each instance is unique in time, environment, cause, and general operation.

Conceptual Framework

Surrender programs commonly make use of three types of appeal:

- Bribery, where the insurgent is "bought."

- Fear-inducing, where the counterinsurgent government forces have such complete control of the situation that they can afford to adopt a firm policy toward the insurgent of either unconditional surrender or death.

- Benevolent, where the individual insurgents are offered absolution for returning to the government side.

It is the combination of these characteristics that distinguishes the various efforts.

Surrender programs usually include measures designed to estrange the people from the guerrillas by demonstrating that the government offers the guerrilla an alternative to continued hostilities and that the government cares for and is responsive to the people. Other objectives of a surrender program seek to create dissension among the guerrillas to reduce their effectiveness as a fighting force.

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During the Hukbalahap insurrection in the Philippines, the program of the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) of the Philippine Army showed the government's concern for all of its people. This program guaranteed land and initial capital for surrendered and captured Huks, if they demonstrated their loyalty to the government. In the EDCOR resettlement villages, the returned Huks were usually mixed with several retired and active duty soldiers who could observe them and act as a stabilizing factor in the farm community.

In conjunction with these resettlement projects, EDCOR undertook the rehabilitation of the ex-guerrillas. Vocational training as well as political reindoctrination were accomplished either in the resettlement villages or in special centers.

Psychological Impact

The resettlement and retraining program was also effective for its psychological impact on still active guerrillas and on the population in general. Former Huks were quite persuasive when they talked of their experiences before and since surrender.

Tactical psychological warfare was also used, including leaflets; loudspeaker, radio, and press appeals; and rumor and whisper campaigns. Many reward circulars were issued against the Huks, ostensibly because they had committed crimes, not because they were Huks. The individual, common-criminal approach to the treatment of the Huks was designed to destroy what popular appeal and sympathy the movement had been able to generate over the years.

Government propaganda emphasized the point that the movement could not be excused; however, the guerrilla, as an individual, was told in

every conceivable way the means by which he could cast off the cause.

The returnees would have to face civil charges for whatever crimes they had committed, but they were not penalized because they had held the Huk ideology. Giving complete pardons to the guerrilla would have been a mistake. By not doing so, the people were made to view the guerrilla as a com-

their former brethren. Often, the SEP was leading British troops back into his old units within minutes of his defection, thereby making the best of his tactical knowledge. SEP's prepared leaflets and taped broadcasts for pinpoint employment. They also appealed indirectly to the guerrillas through their families and friends.

Bribery was used extensively by the



US Army

Propaganda teams, armed with rifles and literature, contact families and friends of known Viet Cong

mon criminal instead of as a dedicated soldier. The guerrilla "image" was thus the target of this practice.

In Malaya, besides the standard psychological warfare techniques, the British successfully used returned guerrillas as members of the counter-guerrilla security forces. Part of this process was the classification of prisoners as either captured enemy personnel (CEP) or surrendered enemy personnel (SEP).

SEP's could be screened, retrained, and then sent back into action against

British, with the scale of rewards being a major topic of the propaganda message. One British practice rewarded those returnees who brought evidence that they had disposed of their officer or leader before making their defection.

In Algeria, the French undertook psychological warfare campaigns that ranged from loudspeaker appeals to intense individual reeducation. There were three main objectives:

- Destruction of guerrilla communications.

- Destruction of the guerrilla (fear inducement).

- Reeducation of the captured guerrillas.

In Vietnam, the *Chieu Hoi* surrender program was inaugurated by President Ngo-dinh-Diem in his Lunar New Year message of January 1963. The basic elements of the program included rehabilitation and resettlement of the Viet Cong who surrendered, political indoctrination, vocational training, and civil court action for civil crimes.

Create Dissension

As the program has evolved, one important objective has been to create dissension among the Viet Cong. This has been accomplished by the use of *Hoi Chanh* stories of their escape, and treatment by the government since their escape. These accounts have been taped and printed for loudspeaker and leaflet distribution.

The intelligence gathered from the returnees also has been used in many instances to discover arms caches, to locate guerrilla forces, and to identify leadership elements within the Viet Cong. The relocation and retraining phases of the program were specifically designed to create a more benevolent image of the government.

Until the Nguyen Cao Ky government came to power in June 1965, the *Chieu Hoi* program suffered from frequent changes of leadership and from a general lack of high-level interest. This was exemplified in the agency's "burial" within other ministries that had other basic functions and interests. In spite of its status, *Chieu Hoi* accounted for some 11,000 returnees in 1963, 5,400 in 1964, and 3,000 through the first five months of 1965.

In the summer of 1965, additional psychological warfare and informa-

tion assistance to Vietnam was made available from the newly created Joint United States Public Affairs Office. This agency has been instrumental in helping the government of Vietnam revitalize the *Chieu Hoi* program. The turning point came sometime during mid-1965. Since then, the flow of defectors has increased markedly for a total of 11,000 in 1965, 20,200 in 1966, and nearly 11,000 for the first four months of this year.

The Vietnamese Information and Open Arms organization has been made a separate ministry of the government, and the former head of the agency, Dinh Trinh Chinh, has been named to the Central Executive Committee as a special assistant to Air Vice-Marshal Ky. The functions of *Chieu Hoi* are carried out by its various bureaus, particularly the intelligence, armed propaganda, and reception bureaus.

The intelligence bureau has the responsibility for detailed interrogation, classification, and analysis of the *Hoi Chanh*. In an effort to make pinpoint leaflet and loudspeaker appeals, it is essential that a thorough and up-to-date enemy order of battle be maintained.

Family Contact

In addition to the usual information sought by conventional intelligence, *Chieu Hoi's* intelligence operation attempts to trace kinship patterns and relationships so that direct, personal contact can be made not only with a defector's old unit and former comrades, but also with the families of known Viet Cong. It is through the family contact by members of the armed propaganda teams that a significant number of defectors are attracted.

Armed propaganda teams utilizing

Hoi Chanh are employed to contact the families and friends of known Viet Cong to discuss the *Chieu Hoi* program and the treatment afforded them by the government since their defection. Armed propaganda teams are assigned to local province chiefs and are used at their discretion with the

the local centers, the *Hoi Chanh* is treated well.

The provincial *Chieu Hoi* centers form the heart of the program. The returnee is identified, interrogated, vocationally assisted, politically retrained, and eventually resettled—all within the purview of the provincial



Army News Features

A Vietnamese psywar team member and a US advisor prepare to run a taped broadcast from a helicopter

assistance of the local *Chieu Hoi* and Vietnamese Information Service personnel who actually maintain operational control.

The reception bureau, through the chief of *Chieu Hoi* on each province chief's staff, is responsible for keeping the low-level channels of entrance into the program open and available to potential defectors. This bureau is also responsible for seeing that, once in

center. This decentralized operation permits rapid tactical exploitation of information provided by the returnees. In addition, many *Hoi Chanh* are from the immediate area or region and are best handled at this level.

Motivational research involving thorough interrogation of *Hoi Chanh* has developed salient psychological warfare themes and techniques for use at the local tactical level.

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A Viet Cong local force platoon leader who had defected in Dinh Tuong Province stated that the most effective means of causing defections were appeals from families and Viet Cong leaders who had defected, coupled with an assurance of safe conduct.

Leaflet appeals are increasingly employing pictures and handwritten letters from the defector to members of his unit. Taped loudspeaker broadcasts from airplanes, trucks, and small boats include messages from the *Hoi Chanh* and relatives.

Face-to-face persuasion and immediate action messages appear to be the most effective. Attempts to develop abstract ideological concepts are becoming less frequent. It is obvious that the principal considerations are the immediate and the personal. *Chieu Hoi* is grassroots and fundamental in its approach and execution.

Given the continuous and fundamental indoctrination administered by Viet Cong political cadre to even their lowest level organizations, when a man defects, there is a need for an effective and substantial political retraining program.

The standardized course that has been developed is initially three weeks long and is composed of six, 4-hour days each week. About three-fourths of the course has been developed at the national level, leaving the

composition of the remainder to the discretion of the province chief and his staff.

Retraining is intended to be completed in the provincial *Chieu Hoi* centers and may progress well beyond this required three-week minimum. The objectives of this retraining are to discuss the Viet Cong operations, methods, and results; to acknowledge the past difficulties experienced by the government of Vietnam, while at the same time establishing respect for the accomplishments and aspirations of the republic; and to develop the history and politics of Vietnam in an effort to explain constructively the origins and growth of Vietnamese nationalism.

While the trend of defections over the last year is encouraging, with very few exceptions these *Hoi Chanh* have not been high-ranking leaders. Securing the defection of a village guerrilla of little political sophistication and little desire for fighting is one matter; encouraging a well-indoctrinated and disciplined officer to defect is an entirely different one. A crucial turning point will have been reached when and if these high-ranking cadre begin to defect in significant numbers. It is to this very task that many of the best Vietnamese and American minds are presently addressing themselves.