

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE
APO San Francisco 96250

AVBE-DBC

SUBJECT: Pacification

12 April 1969

SEE DISTRIBUTION

*Reggraded Unclassified By
Cdr. J. G. Martin, Jr. on 16 Sep 71
173d Airborne Brigade*

Our Brigade will soon be engaged in pacification. As battalion commanders you play the essential role in that you are the principal point of contact between district and ARVN forces and are responsible for integrating and coordinating your battalion's effort with theirs in order to achieve our common goal. How well you do this will in large measure determine the success of the Brigade pacification mission, a mission that is in reality the primary mission of the IFFV. If we succeed in this then I sincerely believe that the great enterprise which we have embarked upon in Vietnam can be successfully concluded.

The following are random suggestions, drawn from my experience as a battalion commander with a pacification mission in the Saigon area. These observations are certainly not complete and may in some cases not even be valid for your districts. They are simply some ideas that may help in pointing us all in the same general direction:

MENTAL ATTITUDE: Airborne soldiers, sometimes including airborne battalion commanders, frequently turn-off and drop-out when the word pacification is mentioned. The principal reason for this is in oversimplified and general terms a lack of real understanding of what pacification is, plus the related notion that anything less than fighting a conventional war against main force units is undesirable and only to be endured for temporary periods until the real business of fighting can be renewed. From commander to rifleman there is a strong desire to use fire and maneuver to close with and destroy a recognizable enemy. This kind of war is easy to understand as success is easily measured and this is what we have been trained for.

It is only because of the free world forces' success on the battlefield that we

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED

AVBE-DEC
SUBJECT: Pacification

12 April 1969

are now able to enter into a pacification phase. We can enter into pacification with reservations and simply go through the motions or go into it with the same enthusiasm and wholehearted support that this Brigade has demonstrated in its more conventional combat operations. I am confident that we will do the latter.

Simply stated, pacification means for us to provide security to designated hamlets on a 24 hour basis. VC within the hamlets will be rooted out and destroyed in coordinated actions with district forces, RD cadre and district officials. NVA/VC will be totally denied access in and out of the hamlets which will permit the RD cadre and district officials to control and work in the hamlets. Our primary mission is therefore to keep the enemy out of the hamlets and convince the people that we can and intend to do this. This is a military problem which you all understand and is what we can do well. There is no need to dwell on it further. Unless we do it and equally important, convince the hamlet inhabitants that we can and will secure them, pacification will not work. In effect we must totally isolate any form of communication between the target hamlets and the enemy.

Next, pacification means improving the military efficiency of ARVN as well as RF and PF forces. This entails joint operations and coordination, training and some limited material support.

Finally, we must assist all agencies of the GVN within our districts where we can. Good judgment and good-will will dictate this. Obviously there are some things that we can not do, but there is more we can do. The Commanding General is counting on your imagination and dedication to find these areas.

The above three notions are easy to understand and must be communicated to your troops. I intend to spend the majority of my time doing just this. Once our soldiers really understand the what and why of what we are trying to do and believe in it, we are well on the way. This means face-to-face, two sided dialogues at all levels and in specific not general terms, i.e., exactly what role the soldier, his squad and platoon plays and why it is important. A few cursory phrases about hearts and minds won't hack it. You are missionaries with something of value to sell.

I am struck by the success we have had with our Hawk Concept using the same method. In December it was basically a concept and many of our junior leaders did not believe in it and consequently were not doing it. By continuous dialogue and emphasis at all levels the idea was finally sold and the results speak for themselves. It wasn't done by one commander's conference and several poop sheets. It was done by constant and continuous give and take from general to private. We must all be true believers if we are to succeed.

AVBE-DBO

12 April 1969

SUBJECT: Pacification

are now able to enter into a pacification phase. We can enter into pacification with reservations and simply go through the motions or go into it with the same enthusiasm and wholehearted support that this Brigade has demonstrated in its more conventional combat operations. I am confident that we will do the latter.

Simply stated, pacification means for us to provide security to designated hamlets on a 24 hour basis. VC within the hamlets will be rooted out and destroyed in coordinated actions with district forces, RD cadre and district officials. NVA VC will be totally denied access in and out of the hamlets which will permit the RD cadre and district officials to control and work in the hamlets. Our primary mission is therefore to keep the enemy out of the hamlets and convince the people that we can and intend to do this. This is a military problem which you all understand and is what we can do well. There is no need to dwell on it further. Unless we do it and equally important, convince the hamlet inhabitants that we can and will secure them, pacification will not work. In effect we must totally isolate any form of communication between the target hamlets and the enemy.

Next, pacification means improving the military efficiency of ARVN as well as RF and PF forces. This entails joint operations and coordination, training and some limited material support.

Finally, we must assist all agencies of the GVN within our districts where we can. Good judgment and good-will will dictate this. Obviously there are some things that we can not do, but there is more we can do. The Commanding General is counting on your imagination and dedication to find these areas.

The above three notions are easy to understand and must be communicated to your troops. I intend to spend the majority of my time doing just this. Once our soldiers really understand the what and why of what we are trying to do and believe in it, we are well on the way. This means face-to-face, two sided dialogues at all levels and in specific not general terms, i. e., exactly what role the soldier, his squad and platoon plays and why it is important. A few cursory phrases about hearts and minds won't hack it. You are missionaries with something of value to sell.

I am struck by the success we have had with our Hawk Concept using the same method. In December it was basically a concept and many of our junior leaders did not believe in it and consequently were not doing it. By continuous dialogue and emphasis at all levels the idea was finally sold and the results speak for themselves. It wasn't done by one commander's conference and several poop sheets. It was done by constant and continuous give and take from general to private. We must all be true believers if we are to succeed.

AVBE-DBC
SUBJECT: Pacification

12 April 1969

POWER RELATIONS: Get to know who are the doers and non-doers in the district; this applies to US as well as ARVN. Your initial contact will be with the district chief and his advisors. Habitually you should work closely with the district senior advisor. However, if good rapport is established with the district chief, don't hesitate to deal directly with him. This is basically a matter of judgment and human relations. It may be that a subordinate commander or staff officer establishes a special rapport with the district chief and his subordinates. If so, use this relationship productively and don't worry about rank or organizational lines.

In some districts you may have one man, US or ARVN, with whom all coordination for operations and other matters can be handled. This is common in US units, but not always in your district. You will find this out quickly, probably after a joint operation doesn't go too well, either after someone doesn't show up or do what you thought was agreed upon. The answer is not to get angry, but find out what happened and work it out for the next time. You may wind-up frequently coordinating with district officials, advisors, PF's, RF's and police individually to insure successful operations.

Just be aware that lines of authority, responsibility and coordination are sometimes vague, but they do exist. It is primarily a question of getting to know people, what they can do and what they are supposed to do.

PATIENCE: The Commanding General stressed this as a guiding virtue at the last Commander's Conference. Your subordinate commanders and troops will become upset when operations fail to go as anticipated or when they judge their effectiveness by US standards. An example of this is US troops moving after midnight to cordon a hamlet and then having to wait until noon for Vietnamese who were supposed to show up at first light to search, interrogate and classify the people. Another example is that Vietnamese officials in their dealings with hamlet dwellers may occasionally give the impression that they never heard of hearts and minds.

Be extremely careful in interfering with the Vietnamese. An exception is when Vietnamese are maltreated: we should disassociate ourselves with this and tactfully work to get it stopped. We can help the Vietnamese officials only by tactful suggestions, indirect pressure and by setting a good example. Heavy handed methods can only fail. Remember that they know their own people, traditions and values far better than we. It will always be easy to find areas to criticize, but less easy to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions.

AVBE-CG
SUBJECT: Pacification

12 April 1969

MILITARY OPERATIONS: The Vietnamese will look to you as experts and will be inclined to follow your advice in this field. Joint operations will be mutually advantageous as a result and should be sought wherever possible. The PF's are frequently handicapped by lack of trained leadership, material and apparent motivation. I believe you will find, however, that they will respond well to your efforts to work with them and that they are good soldiers. You will soon be able to tell which are the good and reliable units and those of lesser efficiency. Your companies will also, and generally after a period of time and adjustment ours and their units work well together if sufficient desire exists to want to work together effectively.

A major problem will be at night when both your hawks and Vietnamese units are not always where they are supposed to be. PF's and RF's may sometimes fire over your units just to let them know they are near by. They occasionally fire for no apparent reason at all. Our troops must maintain strict fire discipline to avoid tragic incidents. Basically, they must positively identify someone as enemy before they shoot. When this is first explained there is considerable opposition from our troops as they feel that this puts them at a major disadvantage, as well as exposing them to unnecessary danger. In practice the dire predictions rarely materialize and it can be done. Granted we may lose some VC occasionally, but it is more than compensated for by the friendly lives saved. This will initially require continuous emphasis and supervision until our troops become acclimated.

You must develop early a method for knowing where all the friendlies are and obtaining and disseminating changes in dispositions from those agreed upon. This entails close coordination with advisors as well as careful placing of liaison personnel. Joint CP's at all levels, joint patrols and clearly defined and recognizable operational areas can alleviate this problem.

CONDUCT WITH CIVILIANS: Your troops will be continuously exposed to and among the hamlet population. As a result their conduct and appearance is extremely important for obvious reasons. Any acts by our troops against the people must be severely disciplined. Simple thievery is the most common practice and can not be tolerated in any form. Our troops can not be permitted to take anything for any reason from anybody.

Troops should rest, feed and bivouac near the hamlets, but not in them. Troops in the hamlets are exposed to disease as well as temptations. They also become

AVBE-CG

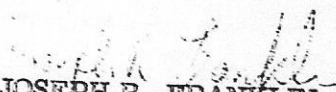
SUBJECT: Pacification

12 April 1969

sloppy and control is more difficult when mixed with local inhabitants. Keep them apart when possible and attempt to prevent vendors and "coke girls" in US areas. Troops should be cautioned on eating nothing other than that provided through US channels. Police will be a major problem as our troops will stay for an extended period in the same area. Garbage and trash must be buried or burned, for sanitary reasons and to keep the VC from getting it.

A great deal obviously remains to be said on the subject of pacification. There is no shortage of written material on pacification, much of which is familiar to you. Basically you have the mission and the resources to do the job. Insure that you and your troops understand the mission. You will have to translate it into specific, concrete terms. This can be difficult, but it is essential. Also insure that you understand what the district chief wants to do, which should become what you want to do. You are supporting him, not the other way around.

At Brigade level we can only give you resources and broad guidance. You will pretty well run your own show. Patience, imagination and enthusiasm for the mission will carry you through. I am confident that you will all do your usual outstanding job.


JOSEPH R. FRANKLIN
Colonel, Infantry
Deputy Brigade Commander

DISTRIBUTION:

A

UNIT AWARDS

(63-69)