



US & SV.

NV.

Strategies - bombings.

- guerrilla warfare.

- search & destroy.

- peasant support

- Wham.

- predictable/conditional

~~the~~ South Vietnam became a battle ground for "opposing ~~struggling~~ social systems." Kolko. On one side was the ARVN (the South Vietnamese gov army) and the ~~the~~ United States and allies, and opposing them was the small but flexible NLF (National Liberation Fighters) "soldiers of the jungle. Soldiers in Vietnam utilized many tactics and strategies in order to try and advantage their respective sides, including guerrilla warfare, carpet bombings and stealth.

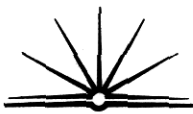
The United States army was superiorly equipped, with machine guns and



unlimited supplies of ammunition. However, their failure in Vietnam was due to their inability to match to the Viet Cong's methods of warfare. One American military official commented that the war in Vietnam was like "trying to build a house with a bulldozer and wrecking crane."

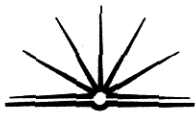
US soldiers, unaccustomed to fighting in dense humid jungles, ~~to~~ were also disadvantaged by their inflexibility in routines. Routine jungle patrols often gave the Viet Cong a chance to harass soldiers, often using psychological warfare, leading to low morale. The US Army have often been criticised of "trying to shoot a fly with a gun", in other words their attempts to fight a conventional war against unconventional enemies.

~~It~~ On the other hand, the Viet Cong



tactics were to fight with stealth and in discretion, as befitting a small broo army of approximately 150,000. Their tactics involved gaining the villagers support through by promising land reforms and liberation from poverty. In return, the villagers offered covert support and the Viet Cong cadres with a disguise. Inadvertently, this became a feature of psychological warfare itself as the US soldiers became so frustrated at having to fight an enemy who was never there. One marine describes it as commented "he's Charlie by night and peasant by day!"

In retribution, the ARVN and accompanying US troops ran bombing campaigns to try and defeat the Viet Cong. Bombing was, however not very helpful as it



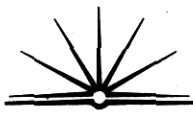
did not succeed in eradicating the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Statistics show that the majority of bombing raids occurred in South Vietnam, with the exception of Operation Linebacker towards the conclusion of the war. As a result, the US ~~gov~~ Army turned many peasants against them by bombing, and as historian Becker says "it was their dissatisfaction with the bombings that led them into the arms of the Viet Cong."

The introduction of helicopters also played a slight part in the favour of the South. However, the Viet Cong soon learned that they ~~can~~ could shoot into the propellers and bring the helicopters down.

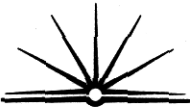
Additionally, the VC opted for relentless warfare, demoralising the US and ARVN

troops. The use of punji sticks, sticks covered with human excrement and hidden just above ground level maimed, rather than killed. Booby traps were in the jungle, all around, along with each soldier's fear of poisonous snakes. Even while walking through a field, one could find mines made out of ordinary household material. Thus, the employment of guerrilla techniques against the ARVN and company was highly successful in that succeeded in harassing the soldiers of ~~the~~ South Vietnam psychologically.

~~The~~ In response to the support that the Viet Cong were having from the peasants the government decided to put into action ~~the~~ the winning hearts and minds programme. This involved the use of strategic hamlets, fortified villages.



soldiers would go out on 'search and destroy missions' to find villages, evacuate the villagers, burn the village so no VC could find refuge and truck the villagers off to a strategic hamlet. Colonel Harsdale commented that "the Communists hide among the people. If you win the people over to your side the people have no where to hide!" However the WHAM program was a failure. ~~because of~~ this was due to the feeling of discontent among the resettled villagers. Often the hamlets were far from markets and the villagers could not crop, effectively destroying their one source of income. They were also often forced to work without pay, due to the corruption of officials and were mistreated in these hamlets. Thus, as Karpur says "they [the hamlets] were often a breeding ground for the Viet Cong" who infiltrated to spread



dissent. Soldiers were not inclined to befriend the peasants, as they became ~~in contrast~~ suspicious of all, as Viet Cong, and many did not wish to be in Vietnam fighting a battle.

Consequently, the WHAM program failed to reach its objective, and even achieved in amassing more support for the Viet Cong by alienating the peasants.

The Communists also planned long term to fight in Vietnam and so built dug a series of tunnels from the end of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to Saigon, a large part of it called the Cu Chi tunnels. Tactics of the Australian and New Zealand army differed.

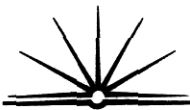
Instead of fighting, or attempting to fight a conventional war, they adapted and moved in flexible formations, and adapted to activities of the Viet Cong



at night. For instance 'tunnel rats' would climb into the tunnels with a pistol and torch, and seek to finish the enemy in that way. These tactics were quite effective, however, as the Australians and New Zealanders made up only a small portion of the forces, their efforts were not as ^{effective} successful overall.

Another strategy used by the Viet Cong was propaganda. Appealing to the US soldiers in emotive language that this was not their war, it often led off to further dissent in the ranks.

One ~~pos~~ leaflet entitled "US Blackmen" also appeals to their sense of justice and states that they don't want to be here, so go home. The ~~in~~ response, the ~~army~~ US army responded in like manner with propaganda leaflets,



often with a sexual emotive appeal, however, it can be seen that the methods of the Viet Cong were much more successful as they had a better reason to fight.

Thus it can be seen that the effectiveness ~~of~~ strategies of the Viet Cong were high as they adapted to Vietnam's rugged terrain as well as harnessed the power of the peasants. The ARVN and US ~~to~~ on the other hand, did not fare so well, as they attempted to fight the war in a conventional way, thus alienating much of their peasant support. It ~~can~~ however be seen that the primary reason for the success of the Viet Cong's tactics was due to "ingenuity and perseverance to fight until the end." Giap.