much of his strength, but he was getting increasingly concerned about his wounds—that he might lose his right arm to gangrene. We were fortunate to have some food and a ready source of water. No one got sick, and we quietly urinated into a small bottle and then poured it into an urn full of rice. The room was small, about four feet by six feet, but being together kept our spirits up.

Throughout the next few days, we saw no other people. We only heard sporadic firing nearby. Frequently we would hear a loud gun go off, followed by automatic fire. The firing would build in intensity and then gradually taper off. I wasn't sure if it was antiaircraft fire or other defensive fires. Often this firing sequence was preceded by a whip-poorwill-like birdcall, to the point where I thought it might be a signal. Then again, I thought to myself that perhaps I'd been watching too many war movies where people would use birdcalls as recognition signals. To this day, I do not know what if there was any significance to the birdcall, or if it were an actual birdcall.

Sergeant Vaughn was getting increasingly weaker. He lay under the bed, not making a sound. We knew that we could not move him, and the best bet was that friendly forces would recapture this part of the city and we would be able to medevac him. We were still confident that U.S. forces would win this area back. It was just a matter of time before they would, though whether it would be in time to save Vaughn was more in question. Thinking back, I cannot recall if he was conscious at any time during the last two days we were in the room. If we had to move quickly, the decision was made that we would hide Vaughn under the bed. If we tried to move him, he would surely die.

By the third day (2 February), we were wondering when the U.S. forces would recapture Hue. Where were they? Jim was getting increasingly nervous about his wounds. He feared they would become gangrenous and he would lose his arm. We were becoming desperate. We were thinking of crazy plans for escape. One plan had us find the aluminum wrapper from cigarette packs to fashion a mirror to signal friendly aircraft. Another plan had me pretend to be a VC and march the others at gunpoint toward a checkpoint and then rush the guards and blast our way through. We had been watching too many movies, and we realized that the chances for success were slim to none.

Amidst this reverie, we heard a commotion outside our door. We quickly bolted the door and listened as a number of NVA soldiers entered our building and interrogated a local Vietnamese, just outside our room. There was a lot of yelling, screaming, crying, and an occasional shot. It was confusion. The best we could make out was that the NVA found Sergeant Vaughn's blood-stained clothes, which we had stripped off him when we first came into the building. The only barrier between us and the NVA was a seven-foot-high concrete wall, open at the top, and a flimsy wood-and-tin door held shut by a small bolt lock. We knew it was a simple matter for the NVA to kick down our door or throw a grenade over the wall.

We made hand signs as to who would do what. We quieted our breathing, and the sweat was streaming off our faces. Suddenly, someone tried our door. It was obvious that the door was locked from the inside, and we were certain someone would kick the door in. We readied ourselves to blast our way out. We waited for what seemed like forever, but nothing happened, and just as suddenly, the NVA left. We all let out a huge sigh of relief. We could never figure out what brought them to our house and why they suddenly left, but we were grateful that we did not have a firefight in such close quarters.

The relief of that close call was still with us the next morning. Someone had found a can of sweetened evaporated milk, and we were trying to figure out how to open it when we heard footsteps. This was about 11:00 a.m. A number of NVA marched into the house, straight to our door, and kicked it down. Bob Hubbard rushed to the door and

sprayed the room with his Swedish-K. After a couple seconds, he pulled back, saying he was out of ammo. I jumped into the doorway with an AK-47 and fired one round. I thought that I had placed the AK on full automatic, but much to my surprise, it was on semi-auto. I stood there white knuckled, and only one round came out. I quickly realized my mistake and pulled the trigger in rapid succession. The two NVA soldiers who barged in were lying on the floor, but we did not wait around to see who else was there, so we bolted out the door.

We ran to the corner of the compound and climbed over, through what I believe was the Montagunard Center. It wasn't until later that we learned that an NVA Regiment had made it their headquarters. We skirted the compound, climbed over another wall, and into a garage. It was then that I realized that, in the heat of the firefight, we had left Sergeant Vaughn behind. A couple of us were ready to go back, but after a brief discussion, we figured we would never be able to get him out alive and that his best chance was to remain hidden under the bed in the house. (We were convinced that the NVA couldn't hold the city much longer and our side would recapture the city soon.) We weren't even sure he was still alive. He had not made a sound for the last couple days. To this day, I am haunted by the question whether we did the right thing.

We left the garage and slowly made our way, half submerged, down a water-filled canal. We quietly passed a woman cooking in her backyard. I can remember thinking that she could not help but have noticed us, or she purposely avoided looking at us.…The canal came up to a rusted barbwire fence. On the other side was a road—and our way out. We broke a hole through the fence and slithered through. I ended up at a culvert in the road. I quickly slid into the culvert. As I crawled forward, I could see mosquitoes on the water and thought to myself, "Oh shit, after all this, now I am going to get bitten and die of malaria." But that thought was quickly pushed from my mind as the culvert narrowed and I found my nose under water. I quickly turned over on my back so my nose would be out of the water as I squeezed out the other end. Good thing I was all of about 125 pounds and could get through. Being exposed on the side of the road, I ran forward, hid in a ditch, and waited for the others.

Unbeknownst to me, they had decided that they would never get through the culvert and had run across the road and south toward the Phu Cam district, expecting me to catch up. I, however, got turned around and found myself headed back toward the city. I recognized a compound that was just down the road from our house. It was the public works department for the city. The roads were empty, though I could still hear gunfire in the distance. As soon as I heard a break in the shooting, I pushed up, ran across the road into the compound, and climbed up into a concrete water tower.

There I felt I was safe and could dry off. I was soaked from crawling through the canal, and I was shivering as the temperatures dropped. I stripped off my clothes and laid them out to dry, just sitting in the dry water tower in my underwear. No sooner did I strip down than it started to rain, so reluctantly I put back on my wet clothes. I was cold, miserable, and hungry, so I decided to approach the Vietnamese in the compound. I had no better ideas.

I jumped down and started to run but thought better of it, so I slowed to a walk and walked across the compound to a Vietnamese woman. Using my scant Vietnamese, I explained that I was an American and that I wanted to know what the situation was. The woman ushered me into her house and told me that the NVA had overrun all of Hue and Phu Bai. She gave me some rice mixed with some red sauce, and I wolfed it down. I never found out what the red sauce was, but at the time, it tasted great. I wasn't sure what I would do, but I wanted to get out of the wet clothes, so I asked for something dry to wear. They gave me a white shirt and a pair of blue schoolboy trousers and a pair of shower

shoes. Nervously, they took my clothes and buried them in the yard, but not until I retrieved my wallet and dog tags. As I started to leave, they told me that I could not leave the compound since the NVA were everywhere and I would be killed or captured for sure. Instead, they led me to a small pen that best I could tell was an old pigsty. They motioned that I should hide there.

The pigsty was low, and I could not stand up, so I sat leaning against a wooden side. The next couple days were uneventful. The family brought me food twice a day, and I occupied myself doing isometric exercises to keep from cramping up. At other times, I looked for things to keep me occupied. Once I found some wire and spent time sewing the buttons back on my shirt. On the second day, the husband came over to me and handed me a rusty knife blade. He explained that during the night, the NVA had come to him and asked if they could cut through to the next compound, through where I was hiding. Wanting to give me something to defend myself, he gave me this knife. I took one look and thought it would be useless. It was rusted and dull, and I couldn't even use it to cut my own throat, if it came to that. But I thanked him nonetheless.

Sitting in the pigsty, I continued to hear sporadic gunfire throughout the city, along with the staccato of automatic fire. Increasingly, I could hear artillery rounds going overhead, which I assumed were from Phu Bai.

By the second day, my existence was turning into routine. I was trying to keep myself entertained when an artillery shell exploded less than 30 feet from me. All I could remember was that everything turned to slow motion, and I could see the fireball and the billowing cloud of red brick dust move toward me. The force knocked me over, and all I could think of was,"Oh shit, it's going to break my leg!" The walls of the pigsty and the overhead corrugated roofing collapsed on top of me. I pushed off the ground and back into an upright sitting position, only to see another fireball, almost at precisely the same spot, and another wave of red brick dust knocked me over again.

As I pushed back upright again, I checked myself and noticed that I was still in one piece—no broken leg. I did have a small wound on my head, probably from the falling roof and timbers, but the building fell in such a way as to create a small lean-to—very much like a 1950s nuclear bomb shelter—and I was lying in this lean-to. I checked around and noticed gouges in the cinder blocks next to me. I did not recall seeing them before the blasts, but I couldn't say for sure that they were caused by the blasts. If the latter, that I survived was a miracle. As it was, it was a miracle anyway.

That day, for the first time, the Vietnamese family did not bring any food to me. I fashioned a drinking cup from a discarded C-rations tin and caught rain water dripping from the corrugated roofing for drinking water. I would simply collect the water, allow for sediment to settle to the bottom of the tin, and sip the "clean" water off the top. It worked well, especially since the weather cooperated with a light drizzle all day. It wasn't until the next day that someone from the Vietnamese family came around looking for some roofing material that they realized that I had not died in the explosions. When I waved to them, the person blanched, looked as if he'd seen a ghost, and scurried away. He soon returned with a bandage and some food, which was greatly welcomed. Later that day, they brought me food again.

I continued to "live" in my makeshift shelter. My only concern now was the threat of rats, and I wrapped the mosquito net that the family had given me tightly around my body to ward off any rat attacks, as well as to keep warm. No rats came. They were probably too smart to venture out during this fighting. I only mention it because it reflects my state of mind—I may survive the fighting, but something else would do me in, like malaria or rats, or something else.

On 7 February, the firefights grew in in-

tensity, and I could hear American English on the other side of the wall. It was the Marines, and I would hear, "Don't worry, the Marines are here," "U.S. Marines," and other such phrases, occasionally punctuated with gunfire. A lot sounded like so much bravado, but to me it was a welcome sound and hope. It was now only a matter of minutes, I thought. It turned out to be a couple hours before the Marines came through the hole in the wall made by the two artillery shells. Now my concern was how do I come out without being mistaken for a VC and get shot. I got out my dog tags and my military ID and held them in my hand. When I could actually see them, I called, "Hey Marines, Captain Lau, U.S. embassy. I'm coming out."

A voice called back, "Come on out. We've been looking for you." Holding my military ID card and my dog tags, I crawled out of my shelter and introduced myself to Captain J.T. Irons of the Marine ITT team, resplendent in his handlebar moustache. He was ugly, but a most beautiful sight.

Shortly thereafter, Captain Irons escorted me back to the MACV compound. I must have been quite a sight—an eight-day growth on my face, a white shirt and blue schoolboy trousers, and shower shoes. The guard at the MACV compound called out to us as we entered, "Hey, he can't go in there!" Capt. Irons yelled back, "He's okay. He's a Marine captain." We continued walking, and soon I was greeted by my chief, Billy G. Melton. He greeted me with a big smile and a pat on the back. It was great to see him.

That day, several others were to make it back to friendly lines. Dave Harper and John Coffey walked in. They had a similar harrowing story to tell, but that's their story. I also learned that Jim Harris had made it down to Phu Bai and had been medevaced to the U.S. Bob Ennis took refuge at the Voice of America Station just south of Hue, was safe, and would later be exfiltrated out of the area. Sadly, Bob Hubbard had been killed about three days earlier as they crossed the bridge to Phu Cam District. He had been shot at close range and likely died instantly.

Over the next couple days, I identified the bodies of Tom Gompertz, Tom Krause, and Jeff Lundstedt as their bodies were brought in. A Marine was driving one of the USAID Ford Scouts and would come screeching around the corner to the MACV compound, horn blaring, and I would go down to ID the bodies. I got to dread the sound of the horn since I knew it meant bodies. But I thought it was the least I could do, to help get their bodies back to their families. I would have wanted them to do that for me if the roles were reversed.

For the next month or more, we tracked others who were missing, and I brought back the bodies of Sergeant Howard Vaughn and a USAID officer, Steve Miller. I found Sergeant Vaughn's body in a ditch outside the building where we were hiding. I looked, but I did not see any more wounds than those he had suffered that first day. All told, 10 people from the embassy team in Hue were killed during or as a result of the fighting in Hue—Bob Hubbard, Howard Vaughn, Tom Gompertz, Tom Krause, Jeff Lundstedt, Steve Miller, and four others. Gene Weaver was captured and ended up as a POW in North Vietnam for seven years. Tom Ragsdale was captured but died of dysentery along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Sol Godwin and Steve Haukness were never found or their whereabouts never determined. They will all be remembered by me as long as I live.[29]

Ray Lau left the Marine Corps and went on to a distinguished career with the CIA.

Sergeant Rodney H. Pupuhi: I Corps, Post-Tet 1968

Sergeant Rodney H. Pupuhi, a native of Hawaii, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1954 and served until 1957 when he left the active Marine Corps and joined the Marine Corps Reserve. In 1962, his reserve infantry unit was reorganized as the 6th Force Reconnaissance Company, and he began several years of intensive training in parachuting, scuba diving, and other reconnaissance skills.

Photo courtesy of GySgt Rodney H. Pupuhi

Sergeant Rodney H. Pupuhi, second on the left in civilian clothes, with unit leaders of Quang Nam Provincial Reconnaissance Unit during his tour in 1968.

As a highly trained reconnaissance Marine with a strong urge to test his skills in combat, Sergeant Pupuhi decided to rejoin the active Marine Corps in 1965 and volunteer to go to Vietnam. He served in a detachment of the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion assigned to the 5th Marines in I Corps. When the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion deployed to Vietnam, Sergeant Pupuhi joined the battalion at Chu Lai. In March 1968 he received orders to report to the PRU as the replacement for Sergeant William A. Polchow, the Marine PRU advisor in Hoi An, Quang Nam Province, who was killed in action near Hoi An on 23 January 1968, just a few days prior to the Tet Offensive.

Pupuhi's introduction to the PRU started with a jeep ride from the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion's base at Camp Reasoner on the eastern slope of Hill 327 west of Da Nang City to a meeting with his "CIA contact." The CIA officer drove "an old beat-up 4x4 Ford Bronco, wore a shoulder holster, and was dressed in civilian clothes." He drove Pupuhi to the embassy house in Da Nang City, which Pupuhi remembered as "a villa surrounded by barbwire with four guard towers at each corner of the compound and manned by Vietnamese guards in camouflage uniforms." Inside the villa, he was introduced to a U.S. Marine "Colonel Moon,"[30] who welcomed him aboard and gave him strict instructions about who he was to take orders from and what he could and could not do while assigned to the PRU.

Sergeant Pupuhi was quickly processed into the program. He had his picture taken for a Vietnamese police ID and was told the ID identified him as an officer, not an enlisted man. The ID was signed by a South Vietnamese general, whom he believed was the senior Vietnamese officer in Quang Nam Province. He was assigned a Mitsubishi Jeep and sent to the CIA armory to sign for his personal weapons, a Swedish K submachine gun, a Browning 9-millimeter automatic pistol, and a 25-caliber

Berretta pistol. He was also issued a case of ammunition for each weapon.

Pupuhi was given $200 to buy civilian clothes at the Freedom Hill PX and then, after a few days, he was flown to Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base on an Air America flight from the Da Nang air base. In Saigon, he was briefed by a CIA officer called John in one of the upper floors of the American embassy, then he was driven to the MACV headquarters, where he was briefed by a woman Marine major who was in charge of the section that would take care of his personal records and pay.

While in Saigon, Sergeant Pupuhi was given a room at the Duc Hotel, which was leased to the CIA for the agency's exclusive use. He, along with three other new PRU advisors, received two weeks of training from a CORDS instructor who seemed to go out of his way to stress the danger awaiting them. Pupuhi also spent a few days at the CIA training facility at Vung Tau before he was sent north to take over his PRU teams in Hoi An. His instruction at Vung Tau was cut short because of the necessity to replace the PRU advisor in Hoi An, Sergeant Pulchow, who had been killed during a combined PRU-Vietnamese Navy operation against the VCI. When he left Vung Tau, he was told that his immediate mission was "to restore the unit at Hoi An."

In Hoi An, Pupuhi lived in what was called "the little embassy," a very large white one-story villa with an adjacent warehouse in which were stored "uniforms, web gear, boots, weapons, and anything else needed for war." Twenty Chinese Nung guards protected the house, with four of them on duty at all times. In addition to Pupui, there were three other Americans living in the villa. They were the POIC, who was a retired U.S.Air Force colonel, and two Marine lieutenants, one of whom was in charge of the Rural Development Program.

The POIC had several Vietnamese working for him, but they did not live in the house; they only worked there doing administrative jobs. According to Pupuhi, these Vietnamese workers "were very dependable and loyal" and appeared to enjoy the complete trust of the POIC since they often typed classified letters and reports for him.

Pupuhi's right-hand man was his interpreter, Bu Than Ming, whom Pupuhi described as "a tall, lanky Vietnamese man who wore an Air Force baseball cap, soft-type flak jacket, skin tight trousers, and pilot's sunglasses." Ming had worked as an interpreter for the U.S.Air Force before coming to the PRU, and he spoke English fluently. Ming worked with Pupuhi to resurrect the Quang Nam PRU from a force of only seven members to over 100 in just a few short weeks. He helped Pupuhi to create the personnel folders for each PRU recruit, to have them receive their initial medical exams at the German hospital in Hoi An, and to make sure the new recruits were fed and clothed properly and their families cared for.

Since the PRU was newly formed—or more

Sergeant Pupuhi on the right with a Swedish K submachine gun. On the left is his interpreter, Mr. Ming. Taken in Quang Nam Province in 1968.
Photo courtesy of GySgt Rodney H. Pupuhi

accurately, reformed—Pupuhi spent a lot of time training his new recruits so they would be able to begin patrolling and conducting counter-VCI missions. This included a lot of time teaching them the proper care and cleaning of their individual and crew-served weapons, scouting and patrolling techniques, land navigation, marksmanship, first aid, and communications. His PRU was equipped with M-16 rifles, M-79 grenade launchers, 45-caliber Colt automatic pistols, and M-60 machine guns. He conducted a weapons inspection every morning before training. They also had two 4x4 Honda trucks, which were inadequate for all the PRU members to ride in at one time. This resulted in the vehicles often being "packed like sardines with standing room only" when they were used to transport the PRU on a mission.

Most PRU missions involved night ambushes near or in VC-controlled villages.

Pupuhi recalled that only once did they encounter a VC effort to penetrate the Quang Nam PRU. A VC had married into the family of a PRU member and used this family connection to enlist in the PRU. However, since the PRU had several former VC among their ranks, they soon became suspicious of this individual and began an internal investigation into his background. His family members provided information that cast doubt on his loyalty, and objects were found among his personal effects that proved he was in contact with the VC.

A few days later, the PRU took the VC spy on a patrol near Hoi An. When the patrol returned, they informed Pupui that the spy had been killed in a contact with the enemy and they had buried him in a shallow grave approximately a mile from the PRU compound. The spy's family was informed that he had died while on patrol, and they were given the normal death gratuity that all the families of PRU members killed in action were given. Pupuhi was suspicious about the death of the VC spy and cautioned the PRU members that in the future, they were never to take summary action against any person, regardless of the evidence. Pupuhi reported the incident to the province chief for his action but never heard anything further regarding it.[31]

Sergeant Pupuhi retired from the Marine Corps in 1973 with the rank of gunnery sergeant and went on to complete a second career with the Hawaii State Sheriff's Office.

First Lieutenant Douglas P. Ryan: I Corps, 1968-69

Douglas P. Ryan was a first lieutenant serving in Vietnam as the S-2 of 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, when he received orders to report to Da Nang City to take over as officer in charge (OIC) of the five provincial PRU teams in I Corps. He served with the PRU in several capacities from October 1968 until August 1969. The following are excerpts from an e-mail sent to the author by Ryan that relate his experiences with the PRU:

Initially I was based in Da Nang City and placed in charge of the five provincial PRU units in I Corps which were commanded by Marine NCOs and SNCOs. These provinces were stretched from the Demilitarized Zone to the beginning of the Central Highlands in the south. From north to south, they were: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai. After a month in this job, the "powers that be" raised the rank level of the PRU advisors in I Corps. I was replaced by U.S. Army Major Raupach, and the enlisted province PRU advisors were replaced by officers. As a result, I was sent to Tam Ky to take over the PRU unit for Quang Tin Province. I spent eight months in Quang Tin, and then during the last two months of my tour, I was sent north to replace a U.S. Army officer in Quang Tri Province as the PRU advisor for that province.

We had about 110 PRU members in Quang Tin Province, and they came from many sources. Some came from the PRU predecessor unit, the Counter Terrorist Team, while others were hired from workers who had been involved in the construction of the U.S. Marine base at Chu Lai. They had varied backgrounds and education levels. I don't think we had any former VC or criminals in

the unit, an "urban legend" that often was ascribed to the PRU. The Quang Tri PRU was much larger than the Quang Tin PRU, but I am not sure of the exact numbers because they were disbursed throughout the province. My guess is they had approximately 150 men.

I lived in the "embassy houses" in both Tam Ky and Quang Tri, which I shared with my POICs and assorted contractors who advised the Provincial Interrogation Center, the Police Special Branch, and the Census Grievance Program. While I was in Tam Ky, I had a deputy PRU advisor assigned with me, Gunnery Sergeant Sean Kennedy. The PRU in Quang Tri did not have a second American assigned to the PRU as deputy advisor.

When I am asked the question, "Was your unit effective in their mission of rooting out the VCI?" I can only reply that we may never know the answer to that question. I say this because the first thing I needed to do when I took over my PRU was to transition the unit from serving a dual role of gathering military intelligence and VCI intelligence to focusing on targeting VCI for capture. We had very little PIOCC help because the Phoenix family of intelligence gathers kept their information to themselves and did not share operational leads with the PRU as they were supposed to. We had good success in capturing several significant VCI, but it was done using PRU intelligence assets exclusively.

We often found that our small three-man cells had to fight their way in to get VCI because the VCI were normally protected by party security cadre and VC guerrillas. I think we were effective because we were focused. The lingering question is whether or not the targeting was accurate and not just score-settling or non-political activity, such as debt collection, "blue on blue" political feuding between the VNQDD and the Dai Vet, or simply factional fighting within these political parties.

The PRU was much better when it was concentrated than when it was farmed out to the districts to fend for themselves. We were encouraged to do this while I was there, but it did not work for us, primarily because of command and control problems and logistics difficulties. Some of the districts were in "Indian Country," particularly Tien Phouc district in Quang Tin and the districts in western Quang Tri, so it was much better when we were concentrated in central compounds in Tam Ky and Quang Tri.

I think the main strengths of the PRU were courage, focus, and agility. Their weaknesses involved marksmanship and tactical training. We spent a lot of time training to overcome these two weaknesses. We also concentrated our training on helicopter raids, the use of supporting arms, communications, and fire control. While I was there, we developed a corps of local hospital-trained PRU corpsmen, greatly improved our communications capabilities, and worked on fire and maneuver tactics. They had outstanding movement skills and got the job done. They were especially adept at conducting a raid and consolidating an objective once it was taken. Several PRU cells received outstanding training at the PRU National Training Center at Vung Tau. Operationally, we did much better when we operated alone rather than with U.S. or other Vietnamese forces.

As far as what were the best and worse intelligence sources for my PRU, I can only say that my strong suit was infantry operations and not intelligence gathering. I never had a handle on intelligence sourcing. I do know that the PRU developed their own intelligence on targets, and it must have been good because we had a very good track record of VCI captures and kills. Our best intelligence was intelligence acted upon within hours of receiving it.

I got along well with the province chief in Quang Tin, and so did the PRU. He needed us for perimeter security because we shared the provincial compound with him. I had access to him and cleared some of our operations with him, but I never fully trusted him. I don't believe the PRU

chief had any relationship with him.

Our most successful operation involved one that was supported by the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division. They provided a five-helicopter package for us, which included two Huey transports, two gunships, and an observation helicopter. Responding to excellent intelligence, we surrounded a village and picked up a number of middle-level VCI and captured several local guerrillas and weapons. We also killed 29 VC that day.

Some of our more creative operations were not successful, such as night raids on VC political meetings where we disrupted the meeting but were unable to secure any prisoners. On one operation we had precise information on the location of a VCI cadre—the bed he would be sleeping in—but when we walked into the village at night and approached his house, we were noticed and had to retreat under fire to a CIDG Special Forces camp using preplanned single-shot artillery fire behind us so as to deter the pursuing VC.

On another occasion, we went after 20 reported district-level VCI, but when we approached the target, we found ourselves in the middle of a local battalion-sized VC unit, and it took us all day and a lot of air support to get our PRU out. We lost eight PRU killed in action on this operation and did not come back with any prisoners.

The lesson we learned from these operations was the VCI tended to work and sleep with sizeable protection forces, and this often made it very difficult to capture VCI with a small PRU force.[32]

After leaving active duty in 1969, Lieutenant Ryan worked for the CIA from 1972 to 1980 and with the United States Foreign Service from 1980 through 2003. He continues to work part time for the State Department's Political-Military Bureau.

Captain Frederick J. Vogel: I Corps, 1969

A 1965 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Frederick J. (Fred) Vogel served from February to September 1969 as the PRU advisor in Hoi An, Quang Nam Province, I Corps. The following are comments derived from two e-mail interviews he provided to the author:

I was self-recruited for the PRU. I had heard about the PRU from another officer and went to Da Nang to the PRU Regional Office to check on available assignments. There were none at the time, but when I returned from extension leave (a voluntary six-month extension to my normal 13-month tour of duty in Vietnam), a position had opened up. I learned later that the former PRU advisor in Hoi An had been reassigned rather suddenly because of a conflict with the ROIC.

Historically, the Quang Nam PRU was the "bad boy" of the PRU Program. It was originally created at the same time as the country-wide program, but in about 1967 or 1968, it was disbanded and not reconstituted for about a year or so. This was all before my time, but the story of its demise and resurrection was described to me in detail by U.S. officials but never mentioned by the Vietnamese.

The problem for the PRU—and for Quang Nam Province in general—was the often violent power struggle between the Dai Vet and the VNQDD political parties for control of the province. These two political parties probably spent more time fighting each other than they did the Lao Dong Party and its VC minions. The provincial capital, Hoi An, was in a constant state of turmoil as a result. The PRU were naturally involved, and there were rifts within the unit itself along party lines. In fact, the day I arrived in Hoi An to take over the unit, we had to medevac a PRU member who had just been seriously wounded in a barracks firefight.

To go back further in time, at some point in the mid-1960s, the internal conflict had become so serious, and the PRU so badly diverted from its stated mission, that the PRU Program management in Saigon decided to disband the Quang Nam unit entirely. By

this time, the Quang Nam PRU was conducting more operations against the various legal South Vietnamese parties than against the VCI. This included assassinations. The POIC at the time, in a moment of colossal bad judgment, actually called for a formation of the PRU in the POIC compound, told them they were a bunch of thugs and malcontents, and then fired the lot of them on the spot. This did not go over well at all. A firefight erupted in the compound with the former PRU trying heroically to make one more assassination—of the POIC himself! The hapless fellow did manage to extricate himself, but that was the end of the Quang Nam PRU. The POIC was transferred out of the province, replaced, and Quang Nam went for one or two years without a PRU. When it was once again established, it was put under the leadership of a RD cadre lieutenant and staffed with all new members, and many if not most had little combat experience.

The reconstituted PRU had an uphill struggle to regain any momentum in the fight against the VCI. Although there was very little coordination with or overt control over the PRU by the province chief, clearly everything the PRU did was cleared at province headquarters level. Unfortunately, it was a one-way street, with no real guidance or direction by the province and no intelligence provided by the Vietnamese side. The atmosphere was one of the provinces trying to rein in the activities of the Dai Vet and the VNQDD, as they might have been exercised through the PRU. As a result, the PRU were somewhat passive and had to be constantly pressured by me to be more proactive in developing actionable intelligence and launching operations against the VCI.

I wish I could say something more positive about the support we received from the POIC. Although he and his staff were very supportive, they really did not relate to combat operations as such. I do not recall a single intelligence lead developed by the POIC that resulted in a PRU operation. It was virtually entirely up to me to ferret out the sources of actionable intelligence. For the most part, this came from the interrogation of POWs who were held at province level or had been captured by the U.S. military.

I was criticized at times for relying too much on the U.S. operations, but this did seem to work for the otherwise directionless PRU. Our services were often called upon by the American military for support, but just as often they attempted to use the PRU for police-type missions. Once I had corrected the misapprehension of the American officers, they were amenable to allowing the PRU to operate more or less independently when a military operation penetrated VC territory. This was not always a good thing. I recall one such operation on Go Noi Island south of Da Nang when we were totally cut off and effectively abandoned by elements of the U.S. Americal Division. We ended up in a running gunfight with VC main-force units as we made our way back to safety across the sand dunes. We inflicted a good number of casualties on the VC and captured a few, with no losses to ourselves, but it was a bit tight for a while.

One other source of intelligence served us well, and it was developed by the PRU themselves. About midway through my PRU tour, two young male students came to our compound in Hoi An and volunteered information about a VCI effort to suborn their village in central Quang Nam Province. They were very concerned and volunteered to accompany us on an operation to eliminate the VC threat to their village.

My Gunny, Gunnery Sergeant Richard Henrickson, who had come to the PRU from the infantry, later described this operation as the best he had witnessed in two tours of duty in Vietnam. We first enlisted the aid of the U.S. Marine battalion in the area of the village and then we set up a cordon of the village. Under the cover of darkness, we entered the village. At first light we sprang our trap. There was a bit of fighting at first, but for the most part, the VCI attempted to simply lay low and hope to wait out the operation.

With our two students, however, we were

able to identify virtually every VCI cadre in the village, and soon we had arrested all of them and began to interrogate them on the spot. The captured VCI were surprisingly cooperative. They gave us everything we wanted to know. We were able to exploit the leads these captives, gave us and they led to further captures. We offered to reward the two young students, but they refused, saying they only wanted to protect their village. I heard later that they went to Saigon to further their studies.

As my tour with the PRU came to an end, we made some changes in the PRU leadership. I was allowed to approach the province chief and ask him to return the PRU chief to the RD Program and to have his deputy take over the unit. The new PRU chief was a much more aggressive combat leader, but I departed before I could assess any results of his new leadership style. I can only surmise that it was more effective than under the old chief. [33]

After leaving the active Marine Corps, Captain Vogel joined the Marine Corps Reserve, where he attained the rank of colonel. As a civilian, he went on to a distinguished career with both the CIA and the U.S. Department of State.

A Typical Operational Scenario: Tay Ninh, 1970

Although it would be difficult to characterize PRU operations as "typical" in any respect, the following scenario is based on the author's own experience as a PRU advisor in Tay Ninh Province in III Corps and is taken from a monthly report filed with the PRU Headquarters in Saigon in early 1970 just before the invasion of Cambodia. It describes how the Phoenix program and the PRUs functioned in the latter stages of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War just a few months before MACV removed its military advisors from the PRU Program:

My operations officer, Mr. Tho, came to the embassy house next to the MACV Advisory Compound in Tay Ninh City for his usual 0900 morning meeting with me. As was our daily custom, Mr. Tho was escorted from the front gate to the front porch of the embassy house by one of our Nung guards, and then we began to review the results of the previous day's activities and discuss any future plans. We met on the porch of our house because it was cool in the shade there, we could share a cup of coffee, and it was secure.

Photo courtesy of Col Andrew R. Finlayson

Capt Andrew R. Finlayson, left, with members of the Tay Ninh Provincial Reconnaissance Unit near Nui Ba Den Mountain in 1969.

Our security officer never allowed any Vietnamese or American visitors inside the embassy house unless they possessed a security clearance and were cleared for entry in advance of their visit. The CIA officers in Tay Ninh Province—The Provincial Officer in Charge (POIC), the Police Special Branch (PSB) Advisor, the Provincial Interrogation Center (PIC) Advisor, and the PRU advisor—all had their offices in the house, and many

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highly classified subjects were discussed there. In addition, classified working documents were frequently on desks in the embassy house offices during the working day so it was important for access to the villa to be tightly restricted. The embassy house had an annex behind the villa in which several Vietnamese workers had their offices. These annex offices were used by our Vietnamese financial manager and his clerk, our radio

operator, and our two interpreters during the work day.

Mr. Tho informed me that a PRU source, the family member of a PRU soldier, had reported to him that a commo-liaison cadre (secret courier used to transport VC documents) working for the Tay Ninh Provincial Party Committee would be traveling to the An Tan Border Station on the Cambodian border the next day. He further stated that this commo-liaison agent could well be carrying documents for the enemy's Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN). Mr. Tho, who had an extensive knowledge of the VCI from many years as a PRU operative, thought these documents would likely be turned over to another courier in the An Tan free market for ultimate delivery to COSVN, which at the time was thought to be located near the Cambodian town of Kratie.

The only person who could identify this commo-liaison cadre was the source since he had actually been introduced to her previously by a village VC security cadre. The source only knew the party name of the commo-liaison cadre, not her real name, but he felt confident he could identify her if he saw her again. He described her as dark-complected, of average height and weight, approximately 45 years old, with her hair tied in a knot at the back of her neck. He thought she lived in a village on the southern border of Tay Ninh Province.

Considering the short time we had to act on this information, I took the arrest order that Mr. Tho had already drafted into the embassy house so I could show it to the POIC. The POIC, Charles O. Stainback, was an extremely intelligent and seasoned CIA veteran having spent many years in Afghanistan prior to coming to South Vietnam. He asked me only two questions. First, did I trust the

Capt Finlayson on the left with other Vietnamese and American members of the Tay Ninh Provincial reconnaissance Unit in garrison, in this case for the presentation of awards for bravery while supporting the U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division.

Photo courtesy of Col Andrew R. Finlayson

source of the information; and second, was I sure the source could identify the commo-liaison cadre if he saw her again? I told him Mr. Tho had confidence in the source since the source had provided valuable and accurate information in the past. I also told him that the source had stated he could identify the VCI in question because he had met her previously. This was good enough for the POIC, and he initialed the arrest order and instructed me to take it to the province chief immediately for his authorization to arrest this VCI courier.

As we turned to go, Mr. Stainback asked me how the PRU intended to arrest this commo-liaison cadre. I told him that it would not be a good idea to arrest her at her home, given that we probably could not locate her home in time, and besides, we needed to capture her with the enemy documents in her possession if we wanted to obtain any worthwhile intelligence and a conviction in court. I felt it was highly unlikely she would have the documents in her possession at her home. Mr. Tho had told me that Mr. Chinh, the chief of the Tay Ninh PRU, wanted to intercept this woman while she was actually traveling from her village to the An Tan Border Station and to use the source to identify her to a PRU capture team. The POIC agreed to this plan and instructed us to get the arrest order approved as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tho and I immediately drove my Toyota Jeep to the provincial headquarters in Tay Ninh City, a short five-minute ride from the embassy house, and walked into the outer office of the province chief, Colonel Thien, who we knew well and respected for his honesty and administrative ability. The province chief was very supportive of the PRU, but we all knew he took his job seriously, and he would not sign our arrest order unless we had our facts in order. If we failed to produce solid reasoning or evidence for an arrest, the province chief would likely disapprove the arrest order.

When we arrived at the provincial headquarters, we were ushered into Colonel Thien's office, where we quickly briefed him. We did not reveal the source of our information to him, and he did not want to know anyway. Instead, he asked us if we had evidence that this woman was indeed a VC commo-liaison cadre, and were we confident we could capture her without causing any harm to either her or any civilians in the immediate area of her capture. We stated that our source could provide definitive identification of the courier since he had met her before. We also told him that commo-liaison cadre seldom traveled with armed guerrillas as security, unlike other VCI, so we felt confident that we could capture her without violence of any kind.

At the Tay Ninh West Airbase prior to the launch of Operation Cliff Dweller II in November 1969. From left to right: Deputy PRU Chief Mr. Ngiem, Deputy PRU Advisor Sergeant First Class Robert Smith, USA, PRU Chief Mr. Chinh, and Captain Finlayson.
Photo courtesy of Col Andrew R. Finlayson

Mr. Tho stated that the PRU would take the source to a small drink shop near a bridge leading to the An Tan Border station, and when the source saw the commo-liaison cadre cross the bridge, he would signal the PRU by taking a towel from around his neck and putting it on his lap. A three-man PRU cell would be seated at another table in the drink shop or at an adjacent vegetable stall so they could easily see the source's signal yet not arouse suspicion. The PRU had borrowed a taxicab from a PRU family member, and they planned to use this cab to rapidly transport the prisoner once the arrest was made. Since the commo-liaison cadre had to walk across this small bridge to get to her final destination, the PRU felt very confident that she would not escape once she was identified. A second three-man PRU cell, also in civilian clothes and with hidden weapons, would be stationed at the intersection of Route 22 and the dirt road leading west to the An Tan Border Station to act as a security backup if the arrest did not go as planned and to help escort the prisoner after she was captured.

With the province chief's signature on the arrest order, we left the provincial headquarters and walked to the PRU headquarters and barracks located inside the same compound. There we met with Mr. Chinh and his deputy, Mr. Ngiem, and together we went over the plan for the capture of the commo-liaison cadre. Mr. Chinh planned to capture the VCI cadre using cells from the Tay Ninh City PRU team instead of the PRU Hieu Thien District team. Although the An Thanh Border Station was in Hieu Thien District and the PRU in that district knew the area quite well, he felt it would make for better operational security if PRU cells from outside the district were used since the capture team would be in place for several hours and most people in Hieu Thien, including the VC, knew the identities of the PRU in that district. He did not want anyone to recognize the members of the PRU cell making the arrest and possibly give warning to the VCI cadre before she crossed the bridge.

He also stressed the need to make the arrest at the bridge since it was a natural choke point and it was located in an area surrounded by rice paddies with few people in the vicinity aside from those people in a few shops near the bridge's west side. He ruled out any attempt to capture the VCI cadre at the An Tan Border Station because he knew that location was astride the Vietnamese-Cambodian border and a favorite meeting place of VC and NVA agents. They could quite easily hinder the arrest or attack the PRU cell before the prisoner could be transported to a safe location.

Once the plan was finalized, Mr. Chinh directed that the two PRU cells that were to conduct the operation be placed in isolation, meaning they would remain at the PRU headquarters until the operation was launched and would have no contact with anyone outside the PRU barracks, even family members. This was done to avoid any chance of the VC being tipped off by a possible penetration of the PRU. It was standard operating procedure for the Tay Ninh PRU to isolate teams before they were sent on a mission. They trusted their troops, but they made sure their operations were not compromised in any way.

Mr. Tho also took the arrest order to the Provincial Intelligence Operations Coordinating Committee (PIOCC) and briefed them that a PRU operation would be conducted the next day. He gave the PIOCC members the time and place of the operation so friendly forces would not interfere with its execution. The DIOCC in Hieu Thien district was also notified, and the Hieu Thien PRU team was alerted to stand by to assist the PRU cells from the city team if called upon.

Coordination with American and South Vietnamese units was essential to preclude friendly fire casualties, but it was also risky since we never knew if any of these friendly units had been penetrated by enemy agents. By launching our operations very shortly after notifying these units, we hoped that any enemy agents in these units would not have enough time to warn their colleagues.

All of the above actions were completed in just five hours on the day the target was identified. This rapid planning and approval process for a PRU operation was achieved because the Phoenix program was highly organized in Tay Ninh Province—each district maintained a fully operational DIOCC—and the PRU enjoyed the cooperation and support of the province chief. This cooperation was further aided by the positive reputation of the PRU among the Cao Dai religious community, which made up the bulk of the province's population and from which the majority of the Tay Ninh PRU members were drawn. Speed was a necessity because the Tay Ninh PRU knew from experience that intelligence was a very perishable commodity, and successful exploitation within 24 hours of receiving the intelligence was a major factor in a fruitful operation. Any longer than that and the intelligence often was of little use.

Early the next morning, before first light, the PRU capture cell left their barracks dressed in civilian clothes with their weapons hidden inside the taxicab. The source was picked up on the way to the operating area. The second PRU security cell and a radio operator drove a PRU Toyota three-quarter- ton truck south from the city to the intersection of Route 22 and the road leading west to the An Tan Border Station. My interpreter, Mr. Nguyen Hoang Lam, and I drove to the PRU compound at the headquarters of Hieu Thien District at Go Dau Ha to coordinate the operation with that district's DIOCC and to arrange for a PRU rapid reaction force if the capture operation went bad.

At approximately 1145, I received a radio call from the PRU security cell informing me that they had arrested the prisoner and all PRU members were on the way to the district headquarters. Thirty minutes later, the taxicab and the PRU truck drove into the district compound with the prisoner and a bag of oranges she had been carrying when she was captured. Rather than interrogating her at the district compound, we decided to immediately take her to the Provincial Interrogation Center (PIC) in Tay Ninh City for questioning.

At the PIC, she did not cooperate and stuck to her story that she was simply traveling to the An Tan Border Station free market to sell her oranges. She denied that she was a commo-liaison cadre or knew anything about the VC. The interrogation was conducted by a Vietnamese Special Branch interrogator assigned to the PIC with the American CIA PIC Advisor observing. Her story began to come apart when she was informed that she was positively identified by a witness and she could not explain the small scraps of coded paper she had secreted into two of the oranges she was carrying. She insisted the oranges came from her own trees and she had not inserted anything into them. She continued to be uncooperative, despite the evidence against her, and she was handed over to the Vietnamese National Police for trial. She later was convicted and sentenced to two years in jail. The documents she carried were sent to Saigon for decoding and exploitation.[34]

Conclusions

Without exception, every person interviewed for this book stated that they considered the PRU highly effective in defeating the VCI. The statistics for VCI captured and killed by the PRU are still classified by the CIA. Probably the most accurate open-source estimate of VCI killed and captured by the PRU from 1967 and 1972 is the figure cited in Mark Moyar's book, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, which places the number between 700 and 1,500 per month for each month during those years.[35]

The author's experience in Tay Ninh Province during 1969 and 1970 tends to support Dr. Moyar's figures. During the eight months the author was a PRU advisor in Tay Ninh Province, his PRU killed or captured approximately 12 VCI per month. If extrapolated nationwide, this produces a figure of over 500 VCI eliminated per month by the PRU during the same eight months. Of course, aggregate

numbers of VCI killed or captured were not necessarily the best indicator of "success" unless the aggregated losses far exceeded the ability of the enemy to replace his losses. We now know that the North Vietnamese were unable to replace the trained and experienced Southern VCI cadre at a rate that made up for the losses inflicted upon them by American and South Vietnamese forces. It was this inability to find suitable replacements for the VCI after Tet 1968 that convinced the North Vietnamese that they needed to change their strategy to one that did not rely on VC forces to achieve their objective of unifying all of Vietnam under their control. They recognized the pacification programs of the South Vietnamese were proving to be successful and any strategy that called for a "General Uprising" under the leadership of the southern wing of the Lao Dong Party was doomed to failure since both the number and quality of the VCI needed to accomplish this uprising were being systematically eroded by the Phoenix program. There was no more cogent proof of this than the actions taken by the North Vietnamese when they finally came to power in South Vietnam in 1975. In many provinces, the North Vietnamese victors found that too few VCI remained who could effectively administer the captured provinces. They had to resort to using sizeable numbers of Communist cadre sent to South Vietnam from North Vietnam just to provide basic governmental services.[36]

When the author asked the CIA and U.S. Marine advisors why they thought the PRU were so effective, they gave the following reasons:

- The PRU were ***locally recruited*** and, therefore, they had an intimate knowledge of their area of operations, the people living there, and the enemy they were fighting. As a local, the typical PRU soldier had years of experience in the province where he was employed, and he had a heightened sense of his surroundings that an outsider would not possess. Local knowledge made it easy for them to move at night and to move rapidly. It also facilitated the development of their organic intelligence system.

- The PRU had ***strong leadership and discipline***. While not all PRUs had exceptional leaders for their chiefs and team leaders, most did, and this paid off handsomely in terms of unit cohesion, sustained personnel stability, and combat effectiveness. Most PRU chiefs and their team leaders were local men who enjoyed reputations for integrity, maturity, toughness, and intelligence. The Marine advisors often spoke highly of their PRU chiefs, their team leaders, and their interpreters and compared them favorably with the best combat leaders they had ever known. It follows that the recruitment of leaders for PRU-like units and their selection for advancement must be conducted with great care and consideration.

- PRU members were highly motivated due to the many VC atrocities they had witnessed and by the VCI attacks against their families. Many PRU members had experienced terrible crimes against their families by VC assassination squads, and these atrocities engendered in the PRU members a visceral hatred for the VCI. It is safe to say that the PRU were "true believers" who had clearly come to the conclusion that their very survival depended upon their ability to defeat the VCI completely. Efforts by the enemy to proselytize the PRU failed miserably.

- The PRU had ***excellent organic intelligence systems***. Because of the problems with cooperation and coordination among the various U.S. and Vietnamese agencies involved with counter-VCI operations, the PRUs developed their own intelligence-gathering apparatus. The PRU undercover agents were usually unpaid informants, often family members, and, importantly, typically old women. They relied primarily on agents who did not have a financial interest in spying, but had a strong family or religious commitment to the PRU leadership and the defeat of the Communists.

Older women were more effective than any other PRU agent since they were able to move around their provinces more easily than men and could develop plausible stories for why they were in a certain area and asking questions.

Although most PRU operational leads were developed by their own organic intelligence system, they could on occasion benefit from other sources. Another very good source of intelligence for the PRU was information gleaned from the interrogation of VCI prisoners and VC who rallied to the government—the Hoi Chanhs. Many PRU were adept at recruiting former VC to provide information about the VCI in their villages, and some were even able to convince these former VC to return to their villages and spy on their former colleagues.

A third good source of operational leads, albeit one that required a great deal of labor-intensive data mining, was the maps created by the Census Grievance cadre, which identified the houses in each village by their political loyalty to the GVN. These color-coded maps that had houses marked in red as pro-VC or anti-GVN could, with much effort, produce valuable information on the VCI and their families. If the information on these Census Grievance maps had been digitized, they probably would have played a larger role in developing operational leads, but the amount of time-consuming research needed to analyze these maps made it less effective than it should have been.

Of course, had all of the DIOCCs functioned more effectively and had all the U.S. and Vietnamese entities involved with the fight against the VC cooperated and shared intelligence more freely, the need for the organic PRU intelligence systems would not have existed.

• The PRU network was very ***difficult for the enemy to penetrate*** or recruit as spies because the PRU members had strong family, religious, and civic affiliations that were decidedly anti-Communist. Captured VCI and Hoi Chanhs confirmed the difficulty the enemy had penetrating the PRU during the Vietnam War, and they attributed this difficulty to the "political and social attitude" of the PRU members.

• There was little doubt in the minds of the Marine PRU advisors interviewed for this book that a very important element in the PRU's success was the fact that the PRUs were ***organized, equipped, supplied, paid, and controlled by the CIA*** and not the U.S. military. Before their assignment to the PRU, the U.S. advisors were used to the cumbersome command and control mechanisms used by the U.S. military to plan and launch operations. They were amazed when they were assigned to the CIA and saw how quickly decisions could by made by on-scene POICs for PRU operations. They were also used to the very paperwork-intensive and slow-moving logistics system that served the military in Vietnam, so they were equally amazed by the flexibility of the CIA's logistics system and the rapid way it responded to field requests by the PRUs for everything from transportation and uniforms to construction materials and ammunition.

The CIA way of doing business allowed the PRU advisors to concentrate on planning and conducting anti-VCI operations and not on tiresome and slow bureaucratic actions. PRU advisors enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and were left to use their own initiative in the field. They were not subject to having to report via radio to higher headquarters what their situation was or to file lengthy reports on every operation. In short, they were freed from the burdens that many other U.S. military personnel were subjected to, and this had a dramatic and positive impact on their ability to do their jobs properly.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, many writers, few of them with any firsthand knowledge of the PRU or the Phoenix program, have made outrageous claims about both. Most of these claims have been exposed as fraudulent, often made by people who were never assigned to the Phoenix program but claimed they were.[37] In fact, in the research done on this book, the author encountered one such person who claimed he had been a Marine advisor with the PRU when he clearly had not been.

The most pernicious claim has been that the Phoenix program was an out-of-control assassination program that killed innocent Vietnamese civilians in a profligate and indiscriminate manner. While there is no objective evidence to support such claims, they continue to persist, casting a dark cloud over the program and those associated with it. The U.S. PRU advisors and CIA officers who were interviewed by the author were asked directly if they were ever given a written or verbal order to assassinate anyone, VCI or otherwise, while they were assigned to the PRU. In every case, these former PRU advisors and CIA case officers were categorical in their denial that they had ever received such orders, with many adding that if they had, they would not have carried them out. They did receive orders to capture VCI, and often these attempts to capture VCI led to firefights and VCI deaths. Since most VCI traveled with armed guards or lived in VC-controlled or contested villages where VC guerrilla units provided protection to the VCI, it was highly likely that operations mounted to capture VCI would lead to violence and casualties on both sides.

In such cases, the PRU were well equipped and trained to handle such violent resistance. It is instructive to note that the Marines interviewed mentioned that most of their PRU casualties were the result of combined U.S. and joint ARVN military operations where the PRU were employed in a purely military role. It is also important to note that the Marine PRU advisors stated that they captured more VCI than they killed. U.S. PRU advisors and CIA officers were emphatic that the primary intent of the PRU anti-VCI operations was the capture of VCI so they could be interrogated and the intelligence gained from these interrogations exploited. Dead VCI were of no intelligence value to the PRU or the CIA, while every captured VCI was a potential double agent to be turned against the enemy or a source of valuable political intelligence.

Finally, the Marine PRU advisors stated that they received explicit instructions from Saigon that they were never to take any action that was in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and to report immediately any violation of the UCMJ by the PRU or any other unit they observed.[38] While it is impossible to say that no PRU member ever committed a violation of the UCMJ or the GVN laws concerning the rules of war, it can be stated emphatically that the policy of the MACV leadership and the CIA was abundantly clear on this issue: the PRUs and their U.S. advisors would take no action in violation of the UCMJ.

Lessons Learned

U.S. Marines have been involved in counterinsurgency operations throughout their history. From Central America, the Caribbean, and Vietnam in the 20th century to Iraq and Afghanistan in the 21st, the Marine Corps has been involved in combat against insurgents. One of the questions asked by the author in his interviews with the Marines who were PRU advisors was, "If you were confronted with an insurgency today, what lessons learned from your experiences with the PRU Program in Vietnam would you want to pass on to those who are assigned the difficult mission of defeating an insurgency?" The following lessons learned are a composite of their answers in terms of forming an organization similar to the PRU:

- **The units should be imbued with both a professional and civic ethos, one that makes them accountable to the people for their actions.** They should not be used by political leaders for partisan reasons, such as harassing local politicians from legally established

political parties or providing assistance to further the interests of local commercial entities. They should be focused on one mission only—the defeat of the insurgency's political infrastructure.

• **They should be equipped and trained to a high level of professionalism.** One way to accomplish this is to establish organic logistics and training capabilities. The PRU had an excellent logistics system in the form of the CIA in-country logistics system, which the PRU advisors identified as superior to their own military logistics systems, especially in terms of rapid delivery of needed items and the lack of a cumbersome administrative and approval process. The mission of PRU-type units requires specialized training, so best results will be achieved if they have a training program specifically tailored to their needs.

• **They should be well paid and rewarded for tangible results.** The PRU were paid a salary each month, and they were also paid for captured weapons. Additionally, they received special monetary awards for high-level VCI captures. The fact that they were regularly paid and rewarded for superior results contributed in a very significant way to their very low desertion rates and the inability of the VCI to penetrate or proselytize them.

• **They should be organized into small, tightly knit teams whose ranks are filled with members from the communities they serve.** The fact that most PRU members were locally recruited was a key factor in their success. They knew the people and terrain in their area, and this local knowledge allowed them to move about freely and to develop an effective intelligence-gathering system. It also meant that their families often had well-established ties to the commercial and civic organizations in their provinces, a fact that contributed to their loyalty and dedication to their communities, as well as unit cohesion.

• **They should be subject to effective judicial and political oversight and not free to conduct missions without orders from a competent legal authority.** PRU-like units can be misused by corrupt government officials, so it is essential that mechanisms to ensure their proper employment are in place and rigorously imposed. Having the CIA in control of the PRU greatly diminished the capacity for corrupt South Vietnamese officials to misuse them.

• **They should not be given responsibility for the interrogation of captured prisoners beyond seeking perishable tactical information and holding them until transfer can be arranged.** Interrogations are far more effective when conducted by professional interrogators in facilities such as the Provincial and National Interrogation Centers that the CIA maintained during the Vietnam War. Untrained interrogators are often counterproductive, and the product of their interrogations can often result in false leads and unreliable intelligence.

• **There should be a clear separation between the PRU-type units and other police units, especially those involved in criminal investigations and arrests.** Using the specially trained units like the PRU for routine police work is a waste of a valuable asset and diminishes the high level of training required to execute PRU-like missions. PRU assets should never be diverted to other roles they are not trained or equipped for, such as military, executive protection, or static security missions.

• **The PRU-type units and their families must be protected from retribution and given assurances that their identities will not be revealed to the press or any other unauthorized source.** To do so makes them

highly vulnerable to retribution by the enemy and causes them to worry about the safety of their families more than their mission. Consideration should be given to housing family members in secure compounds or locating them outside of the area where PRU-type units are stationed.

• **They should be provided with the highest level of professional and ethical leadership.** The PRU advisors were unanimous in their belief that there was a strong correlation between the leadership abilities of the Vietnamese PRU chiefs and team leaders and the effectiveness of the overall PRU program in their province. This means that the selection process for leadership positions must be based on an objective analysis of the character and abilities of the personnel selected for leadership positions, and this selection process should not be viewed as arbitrary by the rank and file.

• **They should be provided with full access to pertinent targeting intelligence through some mechanism similar to the South Vietnamese DIOCCs.** Most PRU advisors interviewed for this book stressed that their PRU was required to generate most operational leads through their own organic intelligence-gathering system and that the agencies represented on their respective DIOCCs did not regularly share operational leads worthy of exploitation. This is a key point when considering any counterinsurgency program. There must be cooperation and coordination between all the agencies involved in the counterinsurgency effort. No matter how good the organizational structure for combating the insurgency is, it will fail or be manifestly less effective unless there is acceptance at every level for the need to cooperate and coordinate.

• If U.S. military advisors are to be assigned to a PRU-like unit, they should possess the following characteristics and experience:

Rank. Since maturity and experience are needed for such duty, the PRU advisors and their CIA colleagues felt the optimum rank for an enlisted advisor should be that of E-7 (USMC gunnery sergeant) and for an officer 03 (USMC captain). In many cultures, the ability to interact effectively with your counterparts is determined by rank, so careful consideration should be given to this fact, if it applies.

Experience. PRU advisors were emphatic about the skill sets necessary for their jobs, and they identified experience in the infantry, ground reconnaissance, and intelligence fields as the most valuable.

Language Proficiency. Although most PRU advisors were not fluent in Vietnamese, they all stated that their jobs would have been much easier if they had possessed at least a basic fluency in that language, such as a score of 3/3 on the Department of Defense Language Proficiency Test. All too often, the PRU advisors were at the mercy of their interpreters, and this situation sometimes militated against their ability to exercise strong leadership and influence over their PRU counterparts. It was also a problem when PRU advisors went on operations with their units and the instantaneous response to orders was impeded by the need to have an interpreter translate orders and directions in a combat venue.

Cultural and Political Sensitivity. Simply possessing the military skills necessary to advise a PRU-like unit is often not enough. CIA officers felt PRU advisors needed to be culturally sensitive and politically knowledgeable in order to be fully effective. It helped if the PRU advisor understood the underlying dynamics of the people in his province, such as their history, religion, and civic relationships. Many PRU advisors had difficulty understanding the political influences in their provinces, and this sometimes led

to misunderstandings about the proper role of their PRU teams. Some political sophistication on the part of the PRU advisor helped him bridge the gap between American and local perceptions about the proper way to pursue counterinsurgency goals and to find ways to avoid conflicts stemming from local political activity.

Training. The USMC advisors interviewed by the author had differing opinions on the training status of their respective PRU teams. Most considered their PRU team "well trained," and they spoke highly of the training that the PRU teams received at the CIA Vung Tau Training Facility in III Corps on the South China Sea.

Some advisors, however, identified serious training deficiencies in their units, especially in the areas of marksmanship, communications, and the use of supporting arms. Most USMC PRU advisors instituted local training programs to correct deficiencies and to maintain critical skills. They recommended that PRU-like units receive training in the following areas: marksmanship, small-unit tactics, raids, intelligence operations, staff planning, coordination of artillery and air support, first aid, scouting and patrolling, communications, military ethics, and the handling of prisoners to include field interrogation techniques. Since training was viewed as a critically important facet of the PRU's success, the advisors strongly recommended that all advisors have practical experience with these military skills or have formal training in the subjects before they are assigned to PRU-like duty.

Although not all U.S. Marine PRU advisors came from a reconnaissance background, the advisors felt Marines with ground reconnaissance experience were best suited for assignment to units similar to the PRU. The former PRU advisors also suggested that training for PRU-like units should be done at a national-level facility devoted entirely to the subject matter needed for these specialized units. For security reasons and for continuity of effort, they felt all indigenous personnel assigned to operational units should be required to attend a basic course in the subjects mentioned above. They also recommended the creation of mobile training teams, which would be used for refresher training. This would free the advisor to concentrate on intelligence management and operational planning, instead of training.

Staff Planning. The duties of a PRU advisor required a demanding level of planning and coordination with friendly units. Since so many PRU operations involved raids, the PRU advisors felt a high level of competency in planning and rehearsing raids should be a requisite skill for any advisor. Although many PRU operations were conducted in a very short time after identifying a target, some took days or even weeks to plan and rehearse. In this regard, advisors should know how to prepare written orders for their operations and to ensure that these orders are coordinated with friendly units so as to avoid casualties from friendly fire. With this in mind, every PRU advisor should possess the knowledge of the rudimentary steps in staff planning and the ability to write clear and concise operational orders.

Personality Traits. As stated earlier, PRU advisors were often given a degree of autonomy by their CIA leaders that they would not normally be given in their military units. At times they were free to exercise their initiative with little supervision because their CIA bosses respected their expertise and judgment. "Special trust and confidence" was a term that was given great credence by the CIA POICs in their dealings with their Department of Defense assignees. Given the nature of their work and the level of autonomy granted them by their CIA

bosses, the PRU advisors identified several character traits that should be considered when assigning military personnel to a PRU-like unit. They recommended that only personnel with maturity, patience, integrity, aggressiveness, and moral leadership be assigned to the independent duty of an advisor with a PRU-like unit.

Sources

In writing this work, the author wanted to rely as much as possible on primary sources—people with firsthand knowledge of the Marine Corps' contribution to the CIA's Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Program. The individuals listed below were either USMC PRU advisors or CIA officers who worked closely with the PRUs during the Vietnam War. Interviews were conducted by the author via numerous telephone calls and e-mails between January 2007 and June 2008 as additional questions were developed, points of clarification required, and memories strengthened. These interviews involved individuals who represented every level of PRU association, from the province level to the national level. Several former Vietnamese PRU members, now residing in the United States, were also interviewed by the author, but they wished to remain anonymous and the author respected their wishes.

Terence M. Allen

William Cervenak

Rudy Enders

Raymond R. Lau

Ronald J. Lauzon

Warren H. Milberg

Rodney H. Pupuhi

Douglas P. Ryan

Hank Ryan

Charles O. Stainback

Wayne W. Thompson

Frederick J. Vogel

Paul C. Whitlock

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---------, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future." *Military Review*, March-April 2006, 9-23.

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Appendix
U.S. Marine Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Advisors

This is a tentative list compiled by the author from documents, from information supplied by surviving PRU Marines, and from names provided by Dr. Mark Moyar and Mr. Steve Sherman. As far as the author can determine, the last U.S. military PRU advisors left the program in early 1970.*

Allen, Terence M., Lieutenant Colonel, 20 February 1968 to 1 March 1970, National PRU Headquarters, Saigon

Below, Jack W., Staff Sergeant, 17 July 1967 to 13 January 1968, Regional Headquarters, I Corps, Da Nang, and Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Brause, Bernard B., Jr., Lieutenant Colonel, October 1968 to October 1969, Regional Headquarters, III Corps, Bein Hoa

Bright, Robert B., III, Sergeant, October 1966 to March 1967, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Burlem, Ernest F. J., Gunnery Sergeant, September 1968 to May 1969, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps

Castaneda, Eugene, Sergeant, 17 July 1967 to 12 August 1967, Quang Tri Province, I Corps (Killed in Action)

Clark, James A., Captain, 3 November 1968 to 1 June 1969, Quang Tin Province, I Corps

Costa, John H., Gunnery Sergeant, January 1969 to August 1969, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Coyle, Eugene R., Staff Sergeant, September 1969 to June 1970, Kien Tuong Province, IV Corps

Cox, George B., Jr., Staff Sergeant, September 1968 to May 1969, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Croxton, Hoyt J., Jr., Staff Sergeant, May 1969 to February 1970, Rung Sat Special Zone

Davis, Bruce E., Captain, January 1969 to October 1969, Regional Headquarters, I Corps, Da Nang

Finlayson, Andrew R., Captain, October 1969 to June 1970, Tay Ninh Province, III Corps

*Felix Rodriguez was in charge of the PRU operations in III Corps in 1971. He did this largely by himself since the PRU advisors assigned by MACV were just about all gone by then and only a handful of contract CIA officers were assigned. He used U.S. military advisors to help him run his operations in III Corps, but these advisors were not PRU advisors and were not assigned to the CIA in any capacity.

Gardner, Joel R., First Lieutenant, 1967-1968, Khanh Hoa Province, II Corps
(Wounded in Action, evacuated)

Gray, James K., Staff Sergeant, September 1969 to April 1970, Binh Long Province,
III Corps

Gum, William E., Staff Sergeant, February 1969 to April 1969, Rung Sat Special Zone
(Wounded in Action, evacuated)

Harmon, Clyde E., Staff Sergeant, October 1968 to July 1969, Quang Ngai Province,
I Corps

Henrickson, Richard, Gunnery Sergeant, November 1968 to January 1970, Quang Nam
Province, I Corps

Hyslop, Kenneth D., Major, August 1969 to 20 September 1970, National PRU
Headquarters, Saigon

Jansen, Laurens J., Second Lieutenant, 9 July 1967 to October 1968, Regional Headquarters,
I Corps, Da Nang

Jarboe, Edmond J., Gunnery Sergeant, September 1969 to May 1970, Long An Province,
III Corps

Jones, Jack W., Staff Sergeant, June 1969 to December 1969, Vung Tau Training Center,
III Corps

Karkos, Norman, Sergeant, September 1968 to December 1968, Vung Tau Training Center,
III Corps

Kennedy, John V., Gunnery Sergeant, October 1968 to July 1969, Quang Tin Province,
I Corps

Kingrey, Robert N., Captain, August 1969 to October 1969, Quang Nam Province,
I Corps

Lauzon, Ronald J., Sergeant, 24 March 1967 to 8 October 1967, Thua Thien Province,
I Corps

Leach, Harold W., First Lieutenant, May 1968 to May 1969, Regional Headquarter,
I Corps, Da Nang

McAllister, Carlisle J., Gunnery Sergeant, June 1969 to July 1970, Kiang Giang Province,
IV Corps

Maher, Vincent F., Captain, October 1968 to August 1969, Binh Duong Province,
III Corps

Martin, William L., Staff Sergeant, 5 October 1968 to 24 June 1969, Quang Tin Province,
I Corps

Mayo, George O., Gunnery Sergeant, 7 May 1969 to 22 May 1969, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps (Killed in Action)

Meeker, Thomas H., Captain, 3 November 1968 to 3 August 1969, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Molnar, Ronald F., Sergeant, 18 March 1968 to 18 December 1968, Quang Nam Province, I Corps

Necaise, Gerald I., Gunnery Sergeant, May 1969 to July 1969, Quang Tin Province, I Corps

Perice, Carl D., Sergeant, 16 March 1968 to 20 December 1968, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Polchow, William A., Sergeant, unknown start to 23 January 1968, Quang Nam Province, I Corps (Killed in Action)

Prater, Gerald W., Staff Sergeant, September 1969 to January 1970, Quang Tin Province, I Corps

Pupuhi, Rodney H., Sergeant, 11 March 1968 to 16 December 1968, Quang Nam Province, I Corps

Purlem, Ernest F., Gunnery Sergeant, 13 September 1968 to 24 May 1969, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps

Rich, James D., Sergeant, 6 July 1967 to 14 November 1967, Thua Thien Province, I Corps

Robinson, Leland M., Sergeant, 28 February 1968 to 28 September 1968, Quang Tin Province, I Corps

Ryan, Douglas P., First Lieutenant, 13 October 1968 to 30 July 1969, Regional Headquarters, I Corps, Da Nang; Quang Tin and Quang Tri Provinces, I Corps

Shields, Rodney P., Corporal, 15 January 1968 to 20 November 1968, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps

Stepro, Allen D., Staff Sergeant, 30 October 1968 to 8 July 1969, Bien Hoa Province, III Corps (Wounded in Action, evacuated)

Tafaoa, Fitu, Staff Sergeant, November 1968 to May 1969, Quang Nam Province, I Corps, and Vung Tau Training Center, III Corps

Thompson, Wayne W., Staff Sergeant, 9 July 1967 to March 1968, Quang Tin Province, I Corps

Vaughn, Howard G., Sergeant, 1967 to 3 February 1968, Thua Thien Province, I Corps (Killed in Action)

Vialpando, Herman P., Staff Sergeant, 9 July 1967 to August 1967, (no province indicated on orders), IV Corps (Wounded in Action, evacuated)

Vogel, Frederick J., Captain, February 1969 to September 1969, Quang Nam Province, I Corps

Watkins, Lee H., Staff Sergeant, 8 July 1967 to 1 January 1968, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps

Whitlock, Paul C., Staff Sergeant, December 1966 to June 1967, Quang Tri Province, I Corps

Williams, Roderick D., Gunnery Sergeant, April 1969 to October 1969, Quang Ngai Province, I Corps

Yorck, David C., Captain, August 1969 to September 1970, Regional Headquarters, Bein Hoa, III Corps

Endnotes

1. Mark Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 346-65; see also Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990), 185-88; John F. Sullivan, *Of Spies and Lies: A CIA Lie Detector Remembers Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 118-21.

2. Throughout this book, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) personnel assigned to the PRU Program are called "advisors," but this is technically incorrect, especially for those Americans assigned before November 1969, when Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Headquarters changed the title of the U.S. military assigned to the PRU from "commander" to "advisor." At this same time, MACV ordered these American military personnel to no longer accompany the PRU teams on operations. Despite this change in policy, there was no doubt in the minds of the PRU teams who their commander was. There was no doubt who gave the orders, who paid them, and who equipped them—it was the American assigned to them. Unlike other American advisors to South Vietnamese military forces, the Americans assigned to the PRUs were both doctrinally and factually in command of their units.

3. Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1999); Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1981); Andrew R. Finlayson, "Vietnam Strategies," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 1988, 90-94.

4. Rudy Enders, e-mail to author, 11 July 2008.

5. Mark Moyar, "Vietnam: Historians at War," *Academic Questions* 21 (March 2008): 40-43.

6. Larry Berman, *Perfect Spy: The Incredible Double Life of Pham Xuan An,* Time *Magazine Reporter and Vietnamese Communist Agent* (New York: Smithsonian/Collins, 2007), 137. For additional sources on Communist verification of the effectiveness of the Phoenix program, see Dale Andrade and James H. Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," *Military Review*, March-April 2006, 21.

7. Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 166-67.

8. Felix I. Rodriguez and John Weisman, *Shadow Warrior* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 189-93; David Corn, *Blond Ghost: Ted Shackley and the CIA's Crusades* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 291.

9. Terence M. Allen, telephone interview with author, 26 June 2008.

10. Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes*, 87-88; Andrew R. Finlayson, "The Tay Ninh Provincial Reconnaissance Unit and Its Role in the Phoenix Program, 1969-70," *Studies in Intelligence* 51-2 (2007): 66-67.

11. Rudy Enders, unpublished manuscript, 3-4.

12. Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 167.

13. Ibid., 167-69; Valentine, *Phoenix Program*, 167.

14. Finlayson, "Tay Ninh PRU," 66.

15. Warren H. Milberg, e-mail to author, 19 July 2008. Milberg, a CIA officer, was assigned to Quang Tri Province in 1967 and was the senior CIA official there. He was responsible for bilateral intelligence operations with the South Vietnamese in that province and, as part of that assignment, he was the supervisor of the USMC military PRU advisor.

16. Rodney Pupuhi, letter to author, 12 February 2008, author's possession.

17. The tactical advantages that accrued to PRU teams on operations when they were wearing enemy uniforms and using enemy weapons was cited by Ronald J. Lauzon and Rodney Pupuhi in telephone interviews with the author on 15 January and 7 February 2008, respectively.

18. John L. Plaster, *SOG: The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam* (New York: Onyx, 1997), 133-37; Warren H. Milberg, e-mail to author, 19 July 2008.

19. During telephonic interviews and in e-mails, Ronald J. Lauzon, Paul C. Whitlock, Rodney H. Pupuhi, and Frederick J. Vogel mentioned the varied use of public and private means of transportation by the PRU for operations in their provinces.

20. The author believed having the signature of the province chief on each arrest order, as well as that of the provincial magistrate, gave his PRU the political and legal protection needed for the PRU to make a capture. Without these signatures on the arrest order, the PRU could later be accused of making an arbitrary capture.

21. Rudy Enders, e-mail to author, 20 June 2008.

22. Paul Whitlock, e-mails to author, 20 and 28 June 2008.

23. Rudy Enders, e-mail to author, 5 July 2008.

24. William R. Redel was a CIA officer who wore a Marine colonel's uniform. Valentine, *Phoenix Program*, 166-67.

25. Ronald Lauzon, letter to author, 7 February 2008, author's possession.

26. Wayne Thompson, interview with author, 28 July 2008.

27. Joel Gardner, e-mail to author, 17 November 2008.

28. Terence M. Allen, letter to author, 11 July 2008, author's possession.

29. Ray Lau, "The TET Offensive" (typescript, 2002).

30. This individual was probably CIA officer William Redel who often introduced himself as a Marine colonel and wore a Marine colonel's uniform.

31. Rodney Pupuhi, letter to author, 7 February 2007, author's possession.

32. Douglas P. Ryan, e-mail to author, 19 April 2008.

33. Frederick Vogel, e-mail to author, 18 April 2008.

34. Author's notes and memory, drawing from PRU Monthly Activity Report, March 1970, in author's possession.

35. Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 173.

36. Author interviews conducted in 1985 with two former Tay Ninh PRU who had escaped from Vietnam in 1983 and relocated to the United States. There is probably no stronger confirmation of the success of the Phoenix program than the statements made by the foremost Viet Cong spy, Pham Xuan An, to journalist Thomas A. Bass in 2007, in which he noted the efficiency of the Phoenix program in neutralizing the opposition in the South after the Tet Offensive. Thomas A. Bass, *The Spy Who Loved Us: The Vietnam War and Pham Xuan An's Dangerous Game* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 253.

37. Rudy Enders, e-mail to author, 18 April 2008. For a comprehensive and devastating critique of these fraudulent claims, see B. G. Burkett and Donna Whitley, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History* (Dallas, Verity Press, 1998).

38. The author received verbal orders to comply with the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war on two separate occasions. The first was during his initial briefing at the PRU Headquarters in Saigon with Lieutenant Colonel Terence

M.Allen in late September 1969. The second was during a staff visit by Major Kenneth D. Hyslop, USMC, in Tay Ninh City in early October 1969. He was also told by Charles O. Stainback, the Tay Ninh POIC, to obtain written concurrence with this policy from the chief of the Tay Ninh PRU, Mr. Chinh, and to cosign this document on 30 October 1969. All PRU chiefs and their advisors were required to sign these concurrence documents.

Front Cover: The Tay Ninh Provincial Reconnaissance Unit near Nui Ba Den Mountain in 1969. Then-Captain Andrew R. Finlayson, the author of this book, is on the bottom left.

Back Cover: The logotype reproduced on the back cover has as its major element the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points, the device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.


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