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SUMMARY

This report assesses the extent of communist efforts to establish and expand so-called "liberated" areas in MR4. It updates Can Tho A-116 of September 1973, which identified 15 such areas containing an estimated 99,500 persons living under exclusive VC/NVA control. A new survey carried out in April 1974 identifies 27 such areas containing an estimated 129,000 inhabitants, and provides additional details about the internal organization of "liberated" communities.

The principal findings of this report are as follows. The propagation and growth of "liberated" areas was steady but remarkably slow during the November 1973-April 1974 dry season, a time of relatively successful VC/NVA

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military action in the southern Delta. "Liberated" areas now account for only 1.8% of the population of MR4, a figure which implies that more forceful communist tactics are necessary if the VC/NVA wish to achieve faster growth. Economically, "liberated" areas parasitize the GVN economy through taxation in fringe areas and imports from GVN-controlled villages. Militarily, they are vulnerable to destruction by concerted GVN attack, as was demonstrated at Tri Phap in February-March 1974.

The growth of "liberated" areas is achieved by two processes--internally by the development and bureaucratic evolution of populated VC/NVA zones within or near base areas, externally by territorial expansion aimed at joining separate areas to form blocs. Factors contributing to VC/NVA success in their expansionist program during the 1973-1974 dry season were a high level of armed violence in disregard of the ceasefire and a slight shift of GVN-controlled populations toward rural areas. While VC/NVA territorial gains have not been matched by population gains, the presence of greater numbers of people in rural areas offers the communists more opportunity to tax and proselyte, strengthening their base.

This report concludes that, while trends since August 1973 have favored VC/NVA success, their rate of progress in expanding the "liberated" population has been extremely low. Most disappointing from their viewpoint has been the failure of the MR4 populace, given ample chance, to accept free lands and new lives under VC/NVA control. Communist frustration imposes a necessity to step up their activities, principally armed violence, to force political change.

1. Introduction

This report assesses the status of so-called VC/NVA "liberated" areas in MR4 as of May 1974. It is based on the initial assessment made in Can Tho A-116 of September 1973, a new Corps-wide survey carried out by USAID Province Representatives in April, and a collation of

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reports from intelligence sources. An attempt has been made to duplicate as little as possible the information presented in A-116, which remains the basic work on the subject and should be read first. The following paragraphs present additions to A-116, the results of the April survey, and our views on the significance of "liberated" areas. A map showing the locations of the areas is found in Appendix A and a description of each in Appendix B.

2. Definition

To avoid the ambiguity involved in trying to determine which side actually "controls" contested areas, A-116 limited the definition of a "liberated" zone to "those populated areas having no permanent GVN military or governmental presence in the form of outposts and offices and into which GVN troops do not venture while on operations, but which do have some type of Viet Cong and/or NVA static presence." Rallier debriefings have since suggested that "liberated" areas differ formally from other VC/NVA-populated areas by virtue of containing an administrative body called a People's Council. The April survey tested this formal distinction in hopes of tightening our definition of such areas. The results were mixed. People's Councils were confirmed in 13 of the 14 areas still surviving from the list identified in A-116. In the other case (Area 14), no new information concerning its internal administration was available, but there was no reason to doubt the opinion of A-116 regarding its "liberated" status. The survey likewise confirmed People's Council in 11 new areas meeting all other criteria, but not in two others termed "liberated" by official GVN sources. Contrarily, People's Councils were alleged to exist in communities where no other evidence of "liberation" was reported, or if reported was not persuasive.

It was decided, therefore, that the claimed existence of People's Councils should be weighed strongly in evaluating areas meeting other criteria, but should not be made an absolute test. The 24 areas meeting all criteria including People's Councils, and three other cases (Areas 14, 15, and 27), constitute the 27 "liberated" areas described in this report. Other suspect cases were placed in the category of "populated VC/NVA base areas" and excluded.

The weighting of People's Councils in the revised definition helped eliminate a minor problem with respect to "liberated" settlements hastily constructed by the VC/NVA in contested areas in hopes of demonstrating communist presence. News of such communities is rarer in 1974 than in 1973, perhaps because their survival record has been poor (as A-116 documents), but also perhaps because the failure of the ICCS to become a mobile organization capable of verifying their existence has made their creation for that purpose

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useless. Yet they crop up occasionally. Intelligence sources earlier this year reported a "liberated" cluster of dwellings made of plastic tarps strung under the cover of a tram forest in a contested area of Kien Giang Province, indicating that spurious efforts of this type have not totally died out. The definition used in this study allows us to omit them as unimportant. The "liberated" zones discussed here are without exception serious efforts undertaken in areas controlled by the VC/NVA.

Although there are reports of district-level People's Councils, no "liberated" district exists in the Delta. The communist title is presumptuous in this case. Where communist party (PRP) operatives exist in all or many villages of a contested district, the district Current Affairs Committee may call a meeting of district and village level party cadre for the purpose of electing a district-level People's Council. One such election reportedly took place in Cao Lanh District, Kien Phong Province, in late 1973; however, the source who gave the information, an ex-VCI, stated that only one of the district's ten villages was sufficiently consolidated to have a People's Council at the time--the remaining nine villages being contested. The existence of a district People's Council, we conclude, is evidence of revolutionary progress in a multi-village area but does not require or denote Viet Cong control of a district, much less its "liberation". It does establish the likelihood that the district contains one or more "liberated" pockets.

Finally, information from the new survey indicates that the security system of a "liberated" area does not prevent its being entered by GVN military operations. GVN multi-battalion sweeps supported by armor easily penetrated Areas 10 and 25 in the first quarter of 1974. Neither operation dismantled its target, however, and the VC-controlled population returned to both areas afterwards. In the case of Tri Phap (Area 14 in refair A-116), a multi-regiment ARVN task force not only overran the "liberated" zone in February, but destroyed its fortifications and has successfully occupied it since. (A description of Tri Phap with reference to this significant military action appears at the end of Appendix B.) We conclude that the VC/NVA will not sacrifice troops or civilians to overwhelming forces, but will evacuate "liberated" areas if necessary in hopes of returning. Our definition should reflect the fact that routine GVN operations avoid "liberated" areas, but special operations if large enough can overrun them and on rare occasions have done so.

### 3. Current "Liberated" Areas

The 27 areas in MR4 which qualify as "liberated" are outlined on the map in Appendix A, described in Appendix B, and listed in the following table with their estimated populations.

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<u>Area No.</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Estimated Population</u>
1	Kien Giang-An Xuyen	Kien An, Hieu Le, Thoi Binh, Song Ong Doc	35,000
2	Kien Giang-Chuong Thien	Kien An, Kien Long, Hieu Le	36,600
3	An Xuyen	Hai Yen, Song Ong Doc	5,000
4	An Xuyen	Dam Doi	8,220
5	Chuong Thien	Kien Thien	3,500
6	Chuong Thien	Kien Thien, Long My	5,780
7	Chuong Thien	Long My	2,980
8-9	Chuong Thien	Kien Thien, Long My	7,050
10	Chuong Thien	Kien Hung	1,700
11-12	Vinh Binh	Cang Long	4,000
13	Kien Phong	Hong Ngu	250
14	Kien Tuong	Tuyen Binh	2,000
15	An Xuyen	Nam Can	2,000
16	Chuong Thien	Duc Long	540
17	Kien Phong	Kien Van	500
18	Kien Phong	Kien Van	500
19	Vinh Binh	Long Toan	2,000
20	Vinh Binh	Long Toan	400
21-22	Vinh Binh	Tieu Can	2,000
23	Vinh Binh	Cau Xe, Tieu Can	4,500
24	Phong Dinh	Phung Hiep	1,000
25	Phong Dinh	Phung Hiep	2,000
26	Phong Dinh	Phong Thuan	500
27	Vinh Long	Tam Binh	1,000
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The official population of MR4 was 7,238,310 on March 31, 1974. The total "liberated" population estimated by A-116 in August 1973 was 99,500 or 1.4% of the Delta populace. Our new estimate thus shows an increase of approximately 30,000 persons in nine months. The April total, 129,020, equals 1.8% of the Delta populace.

4. The Question of Numbers

To avoid confusion arising from the number of "liberated" areas in the foregoing list, it must be pointed out that the recent survey, because it was carried out by many rather than few observers, increased the number of findings but does not thereby prove that the number of "liberated" areas is greater today than it was last year. Some of the smaller areas discovered in the April survey may have existed last August in a less obvious form. We view the process of "liberated" area development as a continuum in which VC-controlled areas progress from low states of maturity, as shelter zones or transient camps, through steps which yield base areas, then populated base areas, and eventually "liberated" areas. Since the chronological point at which a populated VC/NVA-controlled area becomes "liberated" may precede our knowledge of it by several months, our numbers cannot be taken as complete except as a record of our own awareness.

That these findings remain partial is evidenced by the fact that one of the Delta's most active provinces, Dinh Tuong, reports no "liberated" areas; nor do three others--Bac Lieu, Ba Xuyen and Kien Hoa. All four have witnessed hard fighting since the ceasefire. All contain populated VC/NVA base areas which, judged by their history and the pattern of RVNAF operations around them, have fulfilled for some time most or all of the preconditions for "liberated" status. The number of not quite verifiable areas is large. It includes, for example, Base Area 490 in Kien Hoa containing six "E-V"-rated hamlets; the so-called "20 July Area" in Dinh Tuong with a population exceeding 10,000; and heavily-infiltrated Tra On District in Vinh Long.

While the number 27 does not prove that "liberated" areas have multiplied since last August, it strongly suggests this finding. The expansionist evolution of the 15 cases (Tri Phap excepted) for which A-116 allows direct comparisons to be made implies that populated VC/NVA areas have similarly evolved, and that some which did not qualify earlier now warrant inclusion in the "liberated" category. GVN actions have halted the evolution of certain others, but not of most. Overall territorial security in MR4 has declined since August 1973, from which it must be concluded that on balance the VC/NVA-controlled areas have evolved in the communists' favor. That is not to say they have evolved very rapidly.

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On the positive side, it is noteworthy that An Giang, Sa Dec, Chau Doc, and Go Cong also reported no "liberated" areas--a finding that information presently available from other sources fully corroborates. In the last three provinces named, VC failure to consolidate any populated territory attests to a remarkable pacification achievement on the part of the GVN. An Giang, as is well known, owes its security mainly to the influence of the Hoa Hao religion.

5. Description of "Liberated" Areas

The general description of the "liberated" area provided in A-116 remains accurate as does the description of its consolidation in phases. New information has contributed the following additional details.

People's Councils - The People's Council is an overt front organization. It masks the so-called Current Affairs Committee, which is the covert administrative council in all villages, districts and provinces having a communist cell structure. The Current Affairs Committee exists first and derives its decision-making power from the fact that its members are the highest ranking communist party (PRP) cadre at the village, district, or province level. Each Committee executes policy on orders from and reports directly to the Committee at the level above its own.

At some point in the post-ceasefire development of a communist-held community, a decision is taken to create an overt twin of the Current Affairs Committee. The Committee then organizes a vote to elect a People's Council. Villagers are told that the new organization is their creation, but information from ralliers indicates that only PRP members of three years standing are qualified to vote in this election. Moreover, those qualified elect the Council from their own number in a vote largely predetermined by recommendation of the Current Affairs Committee. Village People's Councils are based on village and hamlet PRP cadre; district Councils are elected by district PRP cadre and qualified delegates from the villages. The ordinary villager is given to believe that the People's Council is "elected by the people."

The function of the People's Council is to represent an overt "PRC" administration to the local citizenry and to the international viewer. Once elected, the Council apparently controls the people, directs the establishment of services and conveniences, and encourages civilian organizations such as cooperatives. According to information from rallier Nguyen Van Thanh, an important proselyting task is to educate the people to understand that in the post-ceasefire era

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military units are subordinate to political administrators; units may not, as in 1972, select tactics and make independent decisions to attack or retreat. Ostensibly, the People's Council as representative of civilian as opposed to military authority commands them.

In fact, the system is not quite as it appears. Thanh disclosed that, although the transmission of decisions downward is through the hierarchy of People's Councils (where they exist), the transmission of reports upward--i.e., the monitoring function--is through the chain of Current Affairs Committees, just as it was before the Councils were elected. Furthermore, since no Corps-level People's Councils are known to exist, orders from COSVN to the district level perforce descend through the covert structure and then are lateraled to the overt side. What emerges is the continued primacy of the Committee structure vis-a-vis the People's Councils, which exist only at district and village level. Questioned on the process by which the People's Councils reach policy decisions, ralliers have stated that decisions are made by consensus and always jointly with the Current Affairs Committee. If there is disagreement, the chief of the Committee as the ranking ERP representative prevails. Thus, the Council has input to the decision and is allowed to disseminate it to subordinate Councils, but ultimately it is both guided and monitored by the Committee, which is to say, the party.

In this light, the People's Council can hardly be said to illustrate "PRG" independence. Practically speaking only a small degree of independence has been given it by the custodian ERP structure, and that only at the village and district levels. These are the levels at which local citizens can perceive the Council's overt functioning, and at which the "PRG" has had some success in getting international viewers, principally journalists, to perceive it. What these viewers have not questioned, in print at least, is whether the "PRG" has an independent existence between the district level and the level of the international diplomatic community. We know of no evidence that the "PRG" functions even on a dummy basis at the provincial or regional levels. At the national level, the "PRG" exists as a diplomatic entity whose actual administrative structure within South Vietnam is unrevealed and largely taken for granted. That people take it for granted is something of a propaganda success for the communist party; above the district level, one can legitimately question whether the "PRG" qualifies as a civic administration in any sense of the term.

Security - Security in "liberated" areas is based on a combination of military defense works, checkpoints, and a system known as "popular vigilance" or "people's intelligence." Conventional

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military means--chiefly minefields, booby traps and sniper fire--deny access through most of the perimeter. Warning signs alert civilians to the existence of this defensive belt, or "fire fence" (hang rao lua). Captured prisoners report that other defense belts protect headquarters buildings, military complexes and supply dumps within the "liberated" zone.

The fire fence restricts traffic to a few canals and footpaths monitored by VC/NVA checkpoints. Manned by formal security cadre, these points may be permanent or mobile. "Walking checkpoints" are common: they cannot easily be targetted and promote an image of informality. Checkpoints serve to prevent GVN officials or uniformed soldiers from entering the area, and they collect taxes on goods moving between sides. An excellent description of the latter function is available in FVA 4918. According to reports from ralliers and other sources, the degree of control exercised by checkpoints varies from lenient in the case of newly-hatched areas to strict in areas that have been thoroughly organized or contain important military installations. Tri Phap, which lay within Base Area 470, was an example of the latter. In contrast, the so-called "New Saigon" areas in Phong Dinh Province allow virtually free movement through checkpoints.

"People's intelligence" refers to the organization of all inhabitants to be alert to and report the presence of strangers in the area. Accounts indicate the system functions invisibly, leaving to formal security cadre the job of responding to the intrusion. Rallier Thanh described the case of a PSDF platoon which "people's intelligence" discovered trying to farm and fish inside the My Tho "liberated" area (Area 17). Security cadre brought to the scene determined there was no threat so long as the PSDF came unarmed. After establishing the accommodation by loudspeaker, they monitored the unit's activity daily but did not interfere.

This case does not appear unusual. Information consistently records that non-threatening intrusions are treated mildly and that personal familiarity is the bedrock of both "people's intelligence" and the checkpoint system. Visitors known to inhabitants, or who become familiar by custom, enter "liberated" areas without difficulty. Strangers entering through checkpoints are subject to formalities which often involve sponsorship by an insider.

A point of interest to security is that none of the "liberated" areas so far confirmed are served by roads which would allow a four-wheeled vehicle to move much faster than a man can run. Most have footpaths as the only land access. Ralliers indicate

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that one of the early tasks in consolidating a VC area is to eliminate land routes capable of rapid traffic. This step is no doubt mandatory in that the checkpoint system and "people's intelligence" cannot cope with vehicles moving faster than a water taxi. The relationship between the fate of roads in the Delta and the development of VC/NVA base and "liberated" areas is one that, to our knowledge, has never been systematically researched. We believe a strong connection might be demonstrated and that it would point to the conclusion that no "liberated" area could withstand the introduction of rapid overland access to the GVN road system.

Economic Parasitism - Traffic across the perimeters of "liberated" areas is an economic necessity. The smaller areas depend on GVN market sources for all civilian goods but the few--usually sweet potatoes, rice or vegetables--they are able to produce themselves. Larger areas, particularly those bordering the U Minh Forest (Areas 1-3), supply their own starches and carry on a large export trade. But since no "liberated" area, even those accessible by sea, can presently supply its requirements for POL, vehicles, motors, agricultural chemicals or medicines except from the GVN economy, the "self-sufficiency" goal writ large in VC propaganda is unrealistic. Evidence indicates it really means financial solvency rather than full self-reliance.

Before it was entered by ARVN forces, for example, the Tri Phap area tilled with John Deere and Ford tractors and processed its rice crops with Japanese mills purchased in adjacent GVN-controlled villages. Literal self-sufficiency would have meant demechanizing a highly-developed agriculture. As regards solvency, Tri Phap is known to have been a rice exporting area, shipping part of its crop to VC units in Cambodia and part to GVN villages in Dinh Tuong Province. Information is still lacking, however, on the degree to which it may have financed itself with taxes levied in GVN areas. Such taxes would, of course, be imports. Based on evidence that the VC/NVA tax base in GVN areas of the Delta is large, and reports that some "liberated" areas subsidize imports from GVN areas in order to sell them to their inhabitants at below the GVN price, we suspect that all "liberated" areas parasitize the GVN economy in one form or another. Cut off from GVN markets and their tax base in contested areas, they could survive only on a level which would offer little attraction to most Delta farmers. A cutoff is unlikely, however. To the contrary, GVN-controlled populations continue to trade with VC areas and to cultivate fringe areas from which they know the VC/NVA will take 50% of their crops as tax.

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6. Communist Military Tactics and GVN Population Trends

"Liberated" areas are a phenomenon only of the post-ceasefire period. A-116 emphasized the internal politics of the areas, for under conditions of relative peace their growth was seen to depend largely on the quality of government and the standard of living they could offer potential settlers. This report departs from that emphasis because the evolution of conditions in MR4 has not been toward sustained peace but toward renewed conflict. As a result, the future of "liberated" areas has come to depend increasingly upon external factors. Two of these, the level of fighting and the nature of population movements, are the subject of the following paragraphs.

a. It became clearer after August 1973 and is certain in May 1974 that the tempo of military action in MR4 compares with that of the pre-ceasefire war. This is particularly the case in the lower Delta, and Viet Cong documents suggest it is no accident. A VC notebook captured in February records a meeting of VC province and region level cadre at which "military means, capitalizing on the factor of violence" were advocated for the period September 1973-March 1974. The notebook records that a condition of "semi-war semi-peace now prevails in most parts of South Vietnam" but that "a state of total war exists in VC MR3 where fighting is going on at an even greater tempo and intensity than before the ceasefire" (DAOIR 6-918-5391-74). GVN casualty figures and daily incident reports confirm these high levels of activity.

A reading of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese directives reported in FVP 4623, FVP 4626, FVP 4656, FVP 4691, and elsewhere indicates that the revolutionary program to "consolidate liberated areas," "resist enemy encroachments," "eliminate GVN outposts," and "win the people's support" has as its aim the expansion of VC/NVA areas by military force. Before dismissing the conclusion as obvious it is worth noting what it implies--that the status quo of the "liberated" areas after several months of ceasefire was unacceptable to the other side. There are reasons to believe it is still unacceptable. On one hand the GVN, in its effort to frustrate the VC land grab offensive at the time of the ceasefire, installed a number of outposts in VC zones. Since these could not safely be tolerated, under the propaganda rubric of "forcing the GVN to seriously implement the Paris agreements" the VC have demolished many of them. Not all, however; a number survive near or within otherwise "liberated" areas. On the other hand, the post-ceasefire flow of population to VC-controlled areas was small. If one takes the estimate made in August 1973 of 99,500 and arbitrarily doubles it to allow for possible omissions, the resultant total of nearly 200,000 would have represented only 2.8% of the Delta population. We can assume such a figure falls short of VC hopes for at least two reasons--it is an electoral pittance, and aerial observation

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has shown that "liberated" areas contain more land than the VC have population to cultivate. We conclude, therefore, that the population under VC control was and remains unacceptably small.

In our view, continued VC quiescence in late 1973 would have doomed the "liberation" process to stagnation or, worse from their standpoint, might have allowed the GVN to seize the initiative in dismantling vulnerable areas. VC political and military objectives required and still require more than internal consolidation of the areas. As pointed out in A-116, the leopard spot dispersion of VC-controlled zones over the Delta handicaps "PRG" efforts to resemble a national government. Militarily, it hampers VC/NVA logistics and renders all but the largest of the spots untenable in the face of a determined attack. A strategy of territorial consolidation, therefore, was mandatory. Its effects began to be felt with the onset of the 1973-1974 dry season.

What one would expect and what the April 1974 survey confirms is that "liberated" areas are being propagated along traditional infiltration corridors and merged into blocs. The first phase, best exemplified by Areas 6, 7, 8, 9, 24, 25 and 26 in Chuong Thien and Phong Dinh Provinces, involves populating and creating People's Councils in established base areas. It is an internal process, evident mostly through the accounts of persons who have access to or have defected from the communities. The second phase, illustrated in the An Xuyen-Chuong Thien-Kien Giang complex (Areas 1, 2, 3 and to a lesser degree, 4 and 15), involves driving GVN presence out of the spaces between upgraded areas by armed force-- VC political proselyting alone having proven unsuccessful. In VC MR3 this task is being pressed vigorously and with complete disregard for the legality or illegality of GVN presence as determined by positions held at the time of the Paris agreements. Daily military statistics chart the results, but the specific purpose of this aggression is conjectural. Intelligence Report DAOIR-2-724-4009-74 suggests that the VC/NVA may be aiming to forge a "PRG" province out of Areas 1-3 by the end of the year.

b. The second distinctive feature of the period following September 1973 has been a population shift into contested rural areas. Unlike the initial post-ceasefire shift into VC-controlled areas, this later movement represents a trend toward political depolarization. Three forces combine to produce the shift--VC/NVA policy, inflation, and individual opportunism.

(1) FVA 4874 reports a Viet Cong Military Resolution captured in mid-February which states, "The population centers will be attacked and those people who have moved to enemy-controlled areas will be returned to their farms and homes."

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VC/NVA awareness that a de-populated countryside hinders their revolution is well-documented. What is perhaps significant in view of the ceasefire is the admission in this Resolution that civilian proselyting has generated an inadequate population reflux, and that therefore armed violence will be used to flush people out of GVN-controlled towns.

We cannot assess the efficacy of this policy. Where VC/NVA aggression has been most intense, namely in villages located between "liberated" areas or on their fringes, the policy has been counter-productive. Populations have not sought refuge with the attackers. In Kien Binh District, Kien Giang, VC/NVA artillery has rendered certain areas uninhabitable for periods extending to months; yet the refugees from this district (who number about 9000 in July 1974) are nearly all in GVN areas. The same is true of lower Phong Dinh Province, where since March some 5100 people have moved to the relative safety of Phung Hiep District town to escape fighting rather than move south into VC-controlled areas.

Where VC/NVA aggression has limited itself to sporadic shelling and terrorism, refugees have not evacuated rapidly to safer GVN areas. Instead, there has been some movement outward from GVN administrative and military centers toward areas less subject to attack. We have no data to indicate how much of this movement should be attributed to factors such as security or fear of terrorism and how much to other causes. In the absence of opinion surveys, our inclination is toward the view that, sporadic terrorism being nothing new to a population which for years has coped with sufferings randomly inflicted, movements away from crowded areas have their origin in more generalized problems, especially economic problems. Particularly in the case of cities and the larger district towns, we believe terrorism which strikes relatively few people is less compelling than economic factors affecting town dwellers as a class.

(2) Inflation is the second motivating force. Reports from Sa Dec and other provinces say that living costs in cities are compelling poorer elements of the urban population, primarily refugees, to return to rural areas. Although we lack census figures and opinion polls to document these reports, their plausibility is supported by the widely-acknowledged gap between wages and living costs, and the conduct of territorial force troops whose absenteeism appears increasingly related to the need to supplement incomes by agricultural and other work. It goes without saying that the rising price of the country's staple food radically favors the grower over the urban consumer and by itself constitutes an incentive to return to productive activity in the countryside.

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(3) Opportunism is the third and most obscure factor. The Delta contains large tracts of abandoned riceland that are only sporadically patrolled by either side. Small population movements into these areas have been noted in various parts of MR4. As described by the USAID Representative in Chuong Thien, the initial voluntary shift of households--presumably VC-related families--into VC-controlled zones just following the ceasefire has given way to a generalized, gradual drifting of people into areas between the zones firmly controlled by either side. Wherever troops from both sides have learned to avoid one another, "political fence-sitting" allows farmers to live with a minimum of interference from GVN as well as VC administrative and military cadre. Yet the result is a gradual net loss in GVN control. Granted such people are rejecting the option to live in "liberated" areas, they make themselves relatively more accessible than before to VC taxation and proselytizing. In the words of the report, the drift into no-man's lands places them on farms "in such a dispersed fashion that the GVN cannot effectively control or protect them--offering the VC the opportunity to widen the 'liberated' areas across a naturally-populated landscape."

The phrase "naturally-populated landscape" recalls the Viet Cong Military Resolution cited earlier which called for attacks aimed at returning GVN-controlled populations not to "liberated" areas but simply "to their farms and homes." VC/NVA terrorism aims explicitly, therefore, to produce the drift toward no-man's lands. "Return to Village" is also a stated policy objective of the GVN; a more evenly distributed population responds to the urban overcrowding and unemployment problems of the government no less than to the underpopulation and scarcity-of-resources problems of the "PRC".

Supported by both sides, therefore, redistribution is certain to occur. Further, the leopard spot division of Delta territory makes the manner in which it occurs (whether as random drift or programmed resettlement) vital to the future posture of the sides. In MR4, population movements rank in importance with the relative military capacity of the two adversaries and the financial position of the GVN as a determinant of the war's outcome. Their role is underrated at present because they have been unanalyzed and unreported.

#### 7. Conclusions

This paper has treated three subjects--the "liberated" areas, communist military activities, and population movements. We see their relation as follows. The slow growth rate, military

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vulnerability, and unconvincing "national" aspect of the "liberated" areas constitute a predicament resolvable only by a program of territorial expansion and consolidation. Such a program requires military action. As communist aggression has afflicted GVN-controlled areas and achieved some territorial gains, it has abetted a population movement already underway for other reasons. GVN-controlled people are gravitating slowly into contested lands, closer to VC/NVA-controlled communities. In such locations they become accessible to the VC/NVA military and proselyting activity at a time when the perimeter of GVN activity in these rural areas, symbolized by the operating base/outpost network, is shrinking.

Because the VC/NVA cannot achieve the takeover of South Vietnam within their present holdings, but must increase them, we conclude that--in the absence of unforeseen diplomatic developments--1974 and 1975 will be years of sustained and probably accelerating conflict in MR4. Addressing the possible scope of VC/NVA attacks, we face imponderables including communist preferences for different levels of warfare and their timetable for securing specific gains. Land grabbing tactics in Kien Giang and An Xuyen have been successful enough since January to make the takeover of three GVN districts around the U Minh "liberated" complex (Hieu Le, Kien An and western Thoi Binh) feasible by the end of this year provided the VC/NVA are willing to escalate current levels of fighting in the area.

Elsewhere in MR4, a similar offensive effort would make fewer permanent gains at the cost of far greater casualties. The effort could not produce any semblance of a "PRG" province. Yet escalation is more necessary there because the "liberated" zones are widely separated and growing slowly. Land grabbing tactics since the ceasefire have not supported them well, or well enough.

Taking into account the numerous political frustrations of the communist side, their strong local finances, and their recent military progress in VC MR3, we see grounds for expecting a major VC/NVA push in the lower Delta sometime between November 1974 and May 1975. Whether it would occur in the context of a Corps-wide or nationwide attack is unpredictable. Success in MR4 attempts to bring its territorial forces up to strength by the end of the year would, of course, reduce the chances of such a drive. If such a push fails to materialize, and GVN territorial forces remain at current levels of performance, we would expect the "liberated" areas to survive and grow to include by January 1976 between 3% and 6% of the Delta population. Again, if MR4 is successful in present efforts to improve its defensive posture and bring RF/FF units up to strength, the expansion of communist holdings will be correspondingly slowed.

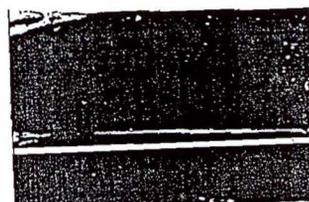
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Appendix B

"Liberated" Areas

The following descriptions owe much to the experience and cooperation of the USAID Provincial Representatives whose survey in April provided the basis for this report. The contributors were: Mr. Walters (An Giang), Mr. Kassebaum (An Xuyen), Mr. Petersen (Ba Xuyen), Mr. O'Rourke (Bac Lieu), Mr. Flaspohler (Chau Doc), Mr. Barker (Chuong Thien), Mr. Cushing (Dinh Tuong-Co Cong), Mr. Coles (Kien Giang), Mr. Parker (Kien Hoa), Mr. O'Dell (Kien Phong), Mr. Saulters (Kien Tuong), Mr. Knowles (Phong Dinh), Mr. Tennant (Vinh Binh), and Mr. Gilson (Vinh Long-Sa Dec).

Area 1 - An Xuyen-Kien Giang Coast

The most important of the "PRG" holdings, this area extends approximately 90 kilometers along the western seacoast of MR4 from a point five kilometers north of the (Song) Ong Doc River in An Xuyen to the coasts of Dong Thai and Tay Yen Villages in Kien An District, Kien Giang. The arable strip is two to five kilometers wide for most of its length, being hemmed by the U Minh Forest on the east. The forest curves away from the coast and is marked by large clearings in the north, where cultivation extends inland up to eight kilometers. An indentation reaching 12 kilometers inland occurs near the center of the area at VR860370. On the southern end, the cultivable land curves around the U Minh Forest, running inland 24 kilometers before reaching the area of GVN control.

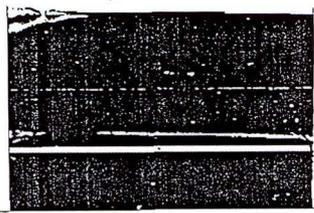
Area 1 has not been entered by GVN forces since the ceasefire. The level of development described in A-116 has therefore increased. Of more importance, however, are population and territorial increases, for this area if consolidated with Area 2 would amount to a "PRG"-controlled province-size entity with the U Minh Forest base area as its core. A-116 estimated Area 1 to contain 25,000 persons in August 1973. It now contains approximately 35,000 in an area 15% larger than before.

In the south, VC/NVA aggression has centered on Song Ong Doc District, where GVN positions guard the Song Ong Doc River and where outposts at one time extended north to the fringes of the U Minh. VC/NVA attacks in April and May 1974 forced abandonment of eight of the outposts. None presently remain more than four kilometers north of the river, and a proposed GVN consolidation program may withdraw those to create larger garrisons on the river itself. In mid-June, sweeps by the 31st Regiment/21st ARVN Division attempted to check VC/NVA expansion into the vacated land but did not re-establish the original GVN perimeter. Four "D"-rated hamlets with an officially acknowledged population of 11,512 occupy the center of the contested area. ConGen

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officers making an aerial survey in late April found extensive cultivation on the fringes of the U-Minh, an uncontested area not entered by GVN census-takers. We estimate the VC/NVA control 6000 persons in northern Song Ong Doc District and have succeeded in weakening GVN control over another 7000 in the "D"-rated hamlets.

On the central coast, the Khanh Lam indentation comprises 11 hamlets of which two are acknowledged by the GVN to have populations. Aerial observation reveals that the entire cleared area is inhabited more or less uniformly. Judging by the Bien Nhi Canal, where 65 houses appear along a seven kilometer stretch, we estimate a minimum of 4000 persons live in this sector.

North of An Xuyen-Kien Giang border, the coastal strip enters Hieu Le District. The American Province Representative in Kien Giang reports 25,000 people now live under "PRC" control in coastal Hieu Le. The area is fertile and has sufficient fishing and timber resources to permit a comfortable existence. Settlers are allotted four hectares but are required to cultivate all of it. Necessities such as salt, sugar, fuels, medicines and cloth are available via sea or inland waterways from GVN areas. At least three Japanese rice mills are visible from the air; there are reports of as many as ten installed along the coast. Schools have been established, two dispensary/hospitals are known to exist, and there is a system of People's Councils. Reportedly, these were elected except for the chairmen, who were appointed by district-level cadre. A committee of several "commissioners" administers the VC/NVA area in Hieu Le, but whether these district-level authorities constitute a People's Council, a Current Affairs Committee, or some third body was not known to the source of the information.

Area 1 terminates in Kien An District north of Hieu Le, but precisely where is not clear. Coastal Kien An is heavily-contested as far north as WR060960. Fishermen report they are forbidden to use the coast in the area of WR900862 because the fishing grounds have been reserved for VC cadre. Intelligence reports indicate that ocean-borne resupply of VC/NVA forces via the mouths of the small rivers known as "8", "9" and "10" is a more likely reason for such a ban. All population west of the forest patches in Kien An is under uncontested VC/NVA control, but, lacking indications to confirm the northern limit of People's Councils, we count none of this population as "liberated".

Area 2 - Eastern U Minh

Area 2 embraces the ricolands and canals flanking the eastern edge of the U Minh Forest. It begins east of Kien An District town, runs southeast through Kien Long District, Chwong Thien, and curves

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west into the forested portion of Hieu Le District. It is not one community but, like Area 1, a combination of many whose common asset is the U Minh sanctuary. Overall, the area has changed little since last August. There has been pressure against the line of GVN outposts on the Trem Trem River, but no real growth effort in the south. Similarly, on the southeastern flank in Chuong Thien, activity has been modest as the VC/NVA have preferred to expand "liberated" zones elsewhere in the province. The changes in Area 2 have occurred in the north, where the VC/NVA have two strategic possibilities--to link through to Area 1 on the coast by overrunning the GVN-controlled center of Kien An District, or to form a link with Area 10 across Kien Binh District to the east.

Looking first at the southern flank, Hieu Le District authorities estimate 5000 persons live outside GVN control in eastern Tan Bang Village (WRO40550-WRO55530-NR1204590NR090410). Here the VC/NVA have cleared some canals, the rice area has broadened, and two rice mills are visible from the air. Most of the land, however, is employed in pineapple cultivation. The area borders and is secured by a Viet Cong main force base in the U Minh.

In Chuong Thien, Area 2 includes portions of Vinh Thuan, Vinh Binh and Vinh Hoa Villages. Western Vinh Thuan contains a purportedly uninhabited section of the U Minh. DAO Report 2-724-1511-74 describes a 400-bed VC/NVA rest camp in the forest just north of the village line at WRI40630. The terrain becomes riceland in western Vinh Binh, where three "V"-rated hamlets contain 1600 persons. A fourth hamlet, Ke Mot, does not appear on the HES but reportedly has a "liberated" population of 6000 (FVA 4892).

The northernmost village, Vinh Hoa, contains an estimated 15000 persons under "PRG" control. Before the U Minh campaign of 1971, Vinh Hoa reported a population of 8667. Operations by the 21st ARVN Division in the forest resulted in an outflux of refugees, swelling the village to 18,950 persons. This has remained the official HES figure since. In April 1974, the American Province Representative in Chuong Thien visited Vinh Hoa and discovered that most of its people live in areas entered by GVN troops only in company strength or more. In the six months preceding his visit, GVN administrators had rarely moved outside a 300-meter triangle delineating the secure center of the village. About 1000 people resided in the secure zone; others had moved outwards because of VC/NVA shelling. Village RD Cadre estimated that "over 10,000" of the 18,950 inhabitants lived under VC/NVA control within the village boundaries; the remaining unaccounted for were thought to have returned to the U Minh at the close of the ARVN campaign. GVN troops outside the secure triangle of Vinh Hoa manned five outposts and the Binh Minh fire base. The two

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northernmost outposts were overrun in late April. On May 24, VC/NVA forces overran the fire base and the last three outposts, ending GVN military presence outside the village headquarters.

Area 2 crosses the Kien Giang border, flanking another section of the U Minh in Dong Yen and Tay Yen Villages. This wooded area has long been a haven for Viet Cong province and district officials. Since the ceasefire, the Viet Cong community with the help of resettlers from outside the area has begun cultivating the large clearing centered on WR100720. Kien An District farmers who have entered the area report the VC/NVA welcomed them but would not allow them to work the land until they had moved house and family into the VC-controlled zone. Two DAO reports describe installations in the vicinity. DAO Report 2-724-1512-74 reports the existence of a VC detention camp, with facilities for 100 POWs, at WR118688. DAO Report 2-724-1619-74 as the "Lien Hiep" area, featuring convalescent camps, health facilities, a conference room, and a heliport to facilitate visits by the Joint Military Commission and possibly other international agencies. It is worth noting that one of the sites selected by the "PRG" and accepted by the GVN for the prisoner release of March 2, 1974, was within the proposed "Lien Hiep" development (Axis WR081728-WR156667).

The Kien Giang Province Representative estimates that the VC/NVA control 3000 people in the forest clearings. An additional 12,000 people inhabiting "D"-rated Lam Yen Village (WR0278), were prohibited from moving when VC/NVA forces took over the village early this year. In the absence of direct aerial count, but considering GVN failure to re-establish itself in Lam Yen, we estimate 6000 of the "D"-rated population is by now in the "liberated" category, making a total of 9000 in eastern Kien An District.

The total for Area 2 is therefore 36,600, a negligible increase above the 35,000 estimated last August.

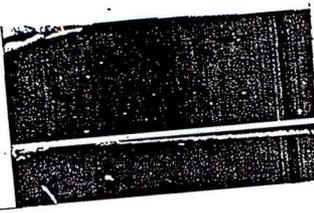
Area 3 - "VC Lake"

Area 3 lies on the border of GVN Hai Yen and Song Ong Doc Districts in An Xuyen around Dong Cung Lake, known to most Americans as "VC Lake". ConGen officers flew over the area in April and found no evidence that the community bordering the lake has expanded since it was estimated in A-116 to number 5000 persons. The area is thoroughly cultivated and there are no traces of military interference.

The important changes in Area 3 have occurred on its fringes. "VC Lake" lies five kilometers south of the Song Ong Doc River, five kilometers north of which begins Area 1. The complaints map in the

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Region VII Indonesian delegation office shows a cluster of pins representing ceasefire violations which occurred during the second quarter in the GVN-controlled space between these "liberated" areas. Among the violations for May alone were nine GVN operating bases overrun and lost, three others overrun and reoccupied, and four GVN units effectively neutralized by casualties. The communist purpose is clearly to join Areas 1 and 3 across the river, if possible. VC/NVA attacks northward from Area 3 were a minor part of this action. The main thrust from the lake area was east into Hung My Village, which the communist occupied April 27. Seven GVN operating bases were overrun, and much of the village government killed or captured in the fighting. The village populace of 6490 did not flee. As a result, the fringe of Area 3 extends approximately 16 kilometers northeast along the southern bank of the Song Ong Doc, reaching to within seven kilometers of the province capital. To date, no GVN presence has been restored in Hung My.

Whether Area 3 can be linked to Area 1 depends on GVN tenacity in Song Ong Doc District town and along the river. Although the GVN-controlled area has been sharply reduced this year, we believe the district town cannot be taken without VC/NVA efforts tantamount to those of a general offensive.

Area 4 - Eastern Dam Doi, An Xuyen

Tan Thau and Tan Hoa, the two villages comprising eastern Dam Doi District, remain as described in A-116. ConGen officers overflying Area 4 found it virtually indistinguishable from the adjacent GVN-controlled village of Tan Duyet except for the absence of outposts. Its population has grown from the 7500 estimated in A-116 to 8220, according to official GVN data. A change of this magnitude is not verifiable by aerial house count.

Area 5 - Southwest Kien Thien/Bac Lieu Border

No population growth is reported in this area. Approximately 3500 persons inhabit the "liberated" zone. RD Cadre report a general decrease in security surrounding the area, indicating that the land surface under absolute VC control may have expanded. The commercial influence of the VC community, as highlighted in A-116, remains strong.

Concerning the zone's southern reaches, Bac Lieu officials claim that no "liberated" territories exist in their province. They concede that northern Phuoc Long District, which forms a salient jutting into the "liberated" zone, is a VC/NVA base area containing the VC MR3 Rear Services Section Headquarters and a sparse population. A-116 reported

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ten houses on the Bac Lieu side of the border. The Province Representative reports about 70 houses and 200 civilians farther south in the salient at WR3751-WR4151. These are described as not under GVN influence. We conclude that the salient presents a debatable case, perhaps falling short of "liberated" status.

Area 6 - Southern Xa Phien Village, Chuong Thien

VC control in Xa Phien expanded following an attack in February 1974 which saw the village center overrun and held for three days against a GVN recovery force of two battalions. Approximately 150 families inhabiting the secure area around the village office moved away after the attack, leaving behind approximately 5000 persons who were already living under VC domination in outlying hamlets. GVN presence today consists of two frequently mortared outposts manned by elements of the 532 RF Battalion.

The military outposts do not provide indoctrination, political organization, or government services to the local people. At the same time, a village People's Council has been confirmed in Xa Phien. In these circumstances we conclude that the observable population and territory of the "liberated" core mentioned in A-116 is less important than the fact, not observable from the air, that the population remaining in Xa Phien and adjacent hamlets is exposed to the politics of the core and that countervailing GVN influence has disappeared. We estimate the core population at 5780 persons. They inhabit portions of Giao Phai Hamlet in Xa Phien, Ninh An Hamlet of Ninh Hoa Village, and Ninh Dien Hamlet of Ninh Quoi Village. The population inhabiting "D", "E" and "V"-rated hamlets immediately adjoining the "liberated" core, hence subject to its influence, is another 5580 persons.

Area 7 - Long My and "New Saigon" 1

The eastern corner of Chuong Thien Province saw sharp clashes in 1973 as elements of the 9th ARVN Division supported local RF units against VC efforts to consolidate Long My District. The 9th was relieved by an inferior division, the 21st, after A-116 was written. Security gradually deteriorated. Recent GVN sweeps through the area are judged not to have changed the pro-VC sympathies of its residents or their willingness to farm lands that VC units regularly use for shelter.

Area 7 remains as described in A-116 with two exceptions. The principal VC community in Long Qui B Hamlet of Long Tri Village has been joined by another, called "New Saigon", slightly west in the adjoining village of Long Binh. Secondly, both zones now have People's Councils. According to BES population figures, Long Qui B Hamlet has a populace of 2630, all under VC control. "New Saigon" harbors an estimated 350 persons (RD Cadre and district officials do not enter it to make records). The total "liberated" population in Area 7 is therefore approximately 2980.

The number "1" applied to this "New Saigon" is arbitrary; there are several "New Saigons" in the Delta. This one is the first of a chain of four which make up an infiltration route eastward into Phong Dinh Province (Areas 24, 25 and 26).

Areas 8 and 9 - Vinh Vien Village

A-116 described Area 9 (Northeastern Kien Thien) as separated from Area 8 (Kien Thien/Long My Border) by "a narrow three-kilometer corridor of GVN presence." The situation today is somewhat different. The two areas are split by three GVN outposts located along an abandoned, unserviceable canal. Introduced after the January ceasefire, these outposts are resupplied by helicopter because they cannot be routinely approached by land. The fact they are never attacked suggests they have been compromised; their effective radius is thought by the US Province Representative to be 100 meters or less. In essence, they are islands in a "PRG"-administered sea.

Vinh Vien Village, a long-time VC stronghold, serves as the geographical and military center of the VC/NVA effort in Chuong Thien. Although the GVN has attempted several times to establish a village office on the edge of the area, it has never seriously challenged VC control. Major elements of the NVA 18-B and 95-A Regiments go undisturbed in the area. The larger of the village's two hamlets, Vinh Thanh, does not appear at all in the HES--it is in effect a hole in GVN reality. The smaller, Vinh Binh, is rated "D". Three hamlets in adjacent villages help make up the "liberated" zone--Ngan Vop ("V"-rated), Thuan An ("D"-rated), and eastern Thuan Binh A ("C"-rated). The four hamlets reflected in the HES census contain 4500 persons. Vinh Thanh holds an unknown number, but was estimated in A-116 to contain 500 houses or 2500 persons. We conclude that the population in the Vinh Vien "liberated" area is not less than 7050.

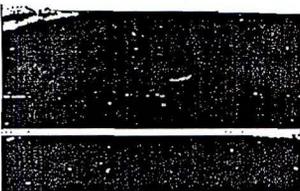
Area 10 - Chuong Thien/Kien Giang Border "New Saigon"

This area remains as described in A-116 except for an increase in VC efforts to expand the zone north of the Kien Giang border. In the southern or Chuong Thien portion, no territorial expansion has occurred; a two-kilometer buffer strip separates "New Saigon" from the nearest GVN outposts. Official statistics are dated because GVN census-takers do not enter the area, but the HES figure of 1657 accords closely with the 1750 estimated by aerial reconnaissance last August. ConGen officers overflying the area in March could not accurately count the thatch-roofed structures against the background of barren paddies. A second flight during the mid-May planting season yielded an estimate of 210-250 houses or at least 1100 persons living on the Chuong Thien side. GVN actions against the area in 1974 consisted of an armored sweep which, according to the sector S-2, disrupted the VC population temporarily. A rallier from the area on March 25 described it as "very crowded".

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To the north, in Kien Giang Province, VC/NVA efforts to extend the "New Saigon" area have been intense. The two villages of Kien Binh District which border Chuong Thien Province, Ngoc Chuc and Vinh Thanh, have taken heavy punishment. On January 17, the Ngoc Chuc Village office vicinity was struck by 93 rounds of mortar and recoilless rifle fire. Four hamlets of Vinh Thanh were overrun the week of February 20 and the village headquarters temporarily abandoned under fire March 17. By April 30, nine GVN outposts on the northern fringes of "New Saigon" had been abandoned temporarily or permanently, and VC/NVA artillery fire had produced 7760 refugees, including the government and virtually the entire population of Vinh Thanh. The empty village now is a buffer zone devoid of static GVN presence. ConGen officers overflying "New Saigon" estimated its northern limits to be WR370880-WR390900 and its population in Kien Giang to be approximately 600.

We believe Area 10 illustrates as clearly as any other case the worst implications of the "liberation" process in MR4. The core of the area, located in Chuong Thien, is physically isolated, secure, and prepared to assimilate newcomers from GVN territory. The northern reaches illustrate the front of violence which must ensue if a consolidated area is to expand and be linked to others. As "PRG" zones in MR4 mature, the onset of the growth-by-violence phase will appear in military statistics, chiefly in overruns of GVN outposts and shellings of populated areas. We conclude that no decrease in these indicators of violence is likely; on the contrary, they will rise.

Areas 11 and 12 - Eastern and Western Cang Long

The Vinh Binh Province Representative on the basis of interviews with Cang Long District officials, RD Cadre, ARVN officers, and local residents reports an increase in population in both these areas. The eastern area, located on the axis XS355085-XS355125, is estimated to contain 500 houses, a gain of 100 since A-116 was written. The western area (axis XS275072-XS315079) is estimated at 300 houses, also a gain of 100. Total population in the two areas is approximately 4000.

Information supplied by a rallier in February gave details of a third VC community in Cang Long District. Located in eastern Dai Phuoc Village in an area centered on XS430040, it reportedly contains the community headquarters and finance and administrative services for VC Tra Vinh Village. According to the rallier, 250 families or approximately 1250 people reside there under VC control. More information is needed, however, before this zone can be termed "liberated".

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Area 13 - Northwestern Hong Ngu

Little new information is available on this community, which straddles the Vietnamese-Cambodian border inside the Giong Bang base area. The province S-2 as well as the RD Cadre chief acknowledge the So Thuong Canal between WT285043 and WT322037 remains under VC control, but believe that the VC government may be located on the north bank, i.e., in Cambodia. While on purely technical grounds this would place the "liberated" status of the south bank in question, we think the distinction irrelevant. The community resides in a VC/NVA base area defended by an estimated 200 NVA troops and devoid of GVN static presence. Sector forces last entered the area in late February 1974, when an element of the 15th Regiment/9th ARVN Division conducted a sweep inflicting 20 casualties.

In the penumbra of the zone, reaching south and west to a point approximately two kilometers from the Nekong, a contested population of 1466 inhabits Thuong Trinh Hamlet, Thuong Phuoc Village. The province S-2 and RD Cadre chief estimate 90% of these people have reached accommodations with the VC/NVA in order to work or fish their lands.

Sector estimates the population of Area 13 is currently 250 inside Vietnam and 1000 in Cambodia.

Area 14 - Northern Tuyen Binh, Kien Tuong

No new information is available concerning this community, which straddles the Vietnamese-Khmer border (WT8017-WT8419) at the extreme northern tip of Kien Tuong Province. Located ten kilometers across swamplands from the nearest GVN outpost, it has not been attacked by GVN forces since the ceasefire. We believe its population has not decreased from the 2000 estimated in A-116; indeed, during the temporary VC/NVA capture of Long Khot Town in May 1974, insurgent forces were seen moving looted furniture and building materials northwards in the direction of Area 14. Direct aerial survey is the only reliable means of assessing its present size. Intense military activity around Long Khot and the presence of communist surface-to-air missiles in Cambodia, however, make the use of ConGen aircraft in the area inadvisable.

Area 15 - Nam Can, An Xuyen

The lower swamp of Nam Can District, An Xuyen Province, was termed a possible "liberated" area in A-116. New information from Police Special Branch sources in the province indicates that a VC government exists in the area but cannot yet be confirmed as civilian or military. Most identified VC officials function in both capacities.

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Several factors lead us to believe this area warrants inclusion in the "liberated" category. It is visibly better farmed, hence more populated, than before. An aerial survey in April revealed rice and vegetable plots in manually-cleared areas of the northeastern forest and in strips cleared by defoliation nearer the southern tip. Ralliers and escaped prisoners indicate the VC economy is based on exports of vegetables, fish and charcoal to GVN communities on the Cua Lon River. Civilian services reportedly include primary schools, a secondary school, and mobile medical teams. The area is secure enough to permit the operation of a retirement village for disabled VC/NVA veterans along the forest edge between WQ220780 and WQ260780.

Although the Vietnamese Navy patrols the Cua Lon River, GVN land operations do not contest the forest. Aerial observation showed the Tam Giang Outpost at WQ207722 to be completely isolated, with no surrounding structures such as normally appear near outposts in contested areas. The single GVN settlement of any size on the south bank of the river, Xoa Ong Trang, communicates across a broad swamp with the VC area farther south. A few sampan trails but no evidence of military patrolling could be seen reaching south of the settlement.

Aerial estimates of population are impossible in this case, houses being only occasionally visible at the forest edges. HES figures show 1031 persons in Tan An Hamlet ("D"-rated) and none in Vien An Hamlet ("N"-rated), although the latter was rated "E" with 1000 persons at the time of the ceasefire. We estimate the permanent "liberated" community at 2000 persons, with a transient population of perhaps 6000 subject to their influence.

Area 16 - Vinh Tuong/Vinh Thuan Dong Border, Chuong Thien

A relatively small area located within coordinates WR580730, WR590755, WR620750, WR615705, and WR590700, this zone straddles the boundary between Vinh Thanh B Hamlet in Vinh Tuong Village and Vinh Loc Hamlet in Vinh Thuan Dong Village, Duc Long District. It is the ninth "liberated" area to be confirmed in Chuong Thien Province. Information gained from the Deputy Village Chief for Administration in Vinh Thuan indicates that 100 families and a "large" guerrilla force make up the community. The same source reports a civilian government with a People's Council, various administrators, and evidence of development projects including a land distribution program and a school. Area 16 is separated from the much larger Vinh Vien "liberated" area by a single "C"-rated hamlet to the south and communicates across another "C"-rated hamlet with "New Saigon 1" to the east. We estimate its population, with allowances for a 40-man guerrilla unit, totals 540 of the 2100 persons known to reside in the two hamlets containing the zone.

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Area 17 - My Tho Village, Kien Phong

Located at NS794560, this community lies along the Rach Go stream in eastern My Dong Hamlet. Rallier Nguyen Van Thanh, formerly a VC proselyting and youth affairs cadre assigned to the area, described it as devoid of GVN presence. Security derived principally from the fact that every household had members serving in VC units, and secondarily from checkpoints. A Viet Cong District Committee headquarters, located in an area of dense brush 100 meters from the stream, administered the hamlet through a People's Council. Thanh stated that the community numbered 30-40 houses at the time of the ceasefire. "Economic pressures" in the cities and a VC land distribution program had raised this number to 95, or 500 persons, by the end of 1973.

According to Thanh, VC policy allowed returning landowners to repossess one-half their lands immediately, the second half being given to the family of a VC killed in action. After two years, the second half devolved to the landowner, by which time the temporary users were expected to have earned rights to permanent land by supporting the revolution. The VC finance section assisted all farmers in obtaining seed and in renting tractor services from GVN areas.

Thanh's proselyting work was made easier by the hamlet's remoteness. Without movie houses or television, the community depended solely on itinerant VC drama teams for public diversion. Their performances emphasized the freedoms of "PRG" life and the nearness of victory; but in fact, according to Thanh, life in the community was austere. The GVN economic blockade after August 1973 created severe shortages in sugar, salt and other commodities that could not be obtained from VC or Cambodian sources. In an effort to bolster morale, the People's Council oriented its 1974 self-development plan toward tangible attributes of "liberation" including "PRG" ID cards, an administrative office outside the heavily-guarded district headquarters, a school, and a dispensary. Thanh defected before any of these benefits had appeared.

Area 18 - Eastern Long Hiep Village, Kien Phong

Area 18, called by the VC "Ba-Du" after the small river on which it lies, includes the outlying territories of GVN My Dien Hamlet in eastern Long Hiep Village. According to information furnished by rallier Thanh, GVN control in My Dien ceases at a radius of 400 meters from the hamlet center (WS892425). Beyond the usual buffer zone, approximately 65% of the hamlet's land is under exclusive VC/NVA administration. Thanh reported that when he last visited the VC community in December 1973, it had a People's

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Council, a maternity/dispensary, and a school with two teachers. Its population was about 500. GVN outposts in My Dien had been educated to operate within perimeters set by the VC. According to Thanh, armed GVN patrols were restricted to a "safe" radius of 200-300 meters from the OB, depending on terrain features. Movement outside the perimeter drew VC fire. Likewise, outposts were warned not to interfere with civilian traffic to and from the "liberated" area or they would be attacked.

It has not been possible to confirm Thanh's population figure for Ba-Du from GVN data. My Dien does not appear in the HES, nor does any population center between WS875445 and the Kien Phong-Dinh Tuong border at WS910445.

Area 19 - Eastern Long Toan Seacoast, Vinh Binh

Hiep Thanh Hamlet, on the northeastern tip of Long Toan District, was considered a VC area until November 1972, when GVN forces relocated its outlying population into Hiep Thanh town and pacified the area. Since the ceasefire, the relocated population has returned to occupy uncontested territory stretching from KR720720 southward along the seacoast to KR685590 and inland two to four kilometers. Two communities in the zone are reported by the Long Toan District Chief and the District Police Chief as "liberated". Together they contain an estimated 2000 persons who subsist from fishing, woodcutting, gathering con duong (a type of edible beetle larva), and assembling roof thatch. Many salt-drying ponds are visible from the air. According to information from a merchant living in the VC-controlled area, its people sell fish products in Ngu Lac Village, Cau Ngang District, and in Don Chau Village of Tra Cu District. Both villages have large markets and are accessible by canal.

The merchant indicated that life under the VC was oppressive in that even well-to-do persons were required to live as though poor. Any display of wealth meant confiscation, so persons able to accumulate money were forced to hide it. The merchant cited his age, 60, and ancestral roots as the reasons he would nevertheless, continue to live in the VC area.

Area 20 - Southern Long Toan Seacoast, Vinh Binh

Little information is available about this zone, located on the southern tip of Long Toan District along the Bassac estuary (vicinity KR515525 to KR580560). The area has no road links to the rest of Vinh Binh, no GVN presence, and a history of providing shelter to the VC. Information from the sector S-2 and the province RD Cadre leader indicates it harbors a "liberated" community of 400-700 persons. Forests extending to the seacoast make an aerial house count unreliable.

Areas 21 and 22 - Tieu Can District, Vinh Binh

Tieu Can District in central Vinh Binh is an important rice-producing area, and a long-time target of VC expansionism. Battalion-sized battles have marked its post-ceasefire history. Section 7 of A-118 mentioned the struggle in Tap Ngai Village, which saw much of the fighting in 1973. By April 1974, control of the district had polarized, with the GVN dominant in the northwest and the VC/NVA in the southeast. Inside the VC-dominated sector are two bases areas, centered on XR352804 and XR380829, and two "liberated" areas. Area 21, at XR390818, reportedly contains the VC province capital, with the VC province military headquarters in an adjacent base area. Called "Chanh Hoi" by both sides, it harbors at least 1000 civilians and an infrastructure including schools and administrative offices. The battle of Tap Ngai succeeded in checking a VC attempt to expand "Chanh Hoi" but fell short of reclaiming it for the GVN. Area 22, also estimated to contain 1000 persons, lies seven kilometers southwest of Chanh Hoi at XR310792.

Area 23 - Cau Ke "Ring", Vinh Binh

According to the Chief of Cau Ke District, Vinh Binh, six confirmed "liberated" areas lie on or near his district borders. Cau Ke itself lies athwart the Viet Cong B-66 infiltration corridor which runs along the Vinh Long/Vinh Binh provincial border from the Bassac River to the Mekong (FVA 4982 describes the effect of the corridor on security in the border area). All but the center of the district is sharply contested. Monthly sitreps report two villages briefly seized by VC/NVA attacking forces (An Phu Tan on February 20, Phong Phu on March 19) and a third barely successful in defending itself (Phong Thanh on March 21) during the first quarter of 1974. Approximately 80% of the district border consists of "D" and "R"-rated hamlets in which VC shelter areas and the six "liberated" communities are found.

The areas and their reported populations are, clockwise from north: (a) northern Thanh Phu Village at XR225985 including small areas of Cang Long District and adjacent Vinh Long Province--2000 houses, 1000 people; (b) northeastern Phong Thanh Village between XR285906 and XR272880 including small areas of Tieu Can Village in the adjacent district--50 houses, 250 people; (c) western Long Nhoi Village, Tieu Can District along the Bassac River at XR180820 approximately one and one-half kilometers south of the Cau Ke border--50 houses, 250 people; (d) eastern An Phu Tan Village between XR140875 and XR160853 along the Bassac River--300 houses, 1500 people; (e) eastern Tam Ngai Village at XR145935

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approximately three kilometers northwest of Cau Ke District town-100 houses, 500 people; (f) northwestern Tam Ngai Village at XR120970 and westward into adjacent Vinh Long Province--200 houses, 1000 people. We estimate the total "liberated" population in Cau Ke at 4500 persons.

Area 24 - "New Saigon 2", Phong Dinh

Located in Hung Hiep District, Phong Dinh Province, this zone was mentioned in A-116 as an unsuccessful "liberation" attempt owing to the presence of elements of the 9th ARVN Division in the area. After the 9th was replaced by the 21st Division, GVN military presence in the Chuong Thien-Phong Dinh border area decreased in effectiveness, allowing the VC/NVA to recover and begin consolidation. Western Hoa My Village now contains a "New Saigon", which we have designated "2" to reflect its relation to a previously-established "New Saigon" (Area 7) ten kilometers to the west in Chuong Thien Province.

Area 24 is located along the Tam Ngan Canal marking the Phong Dinh-Chuong Thien border and extends northeast into a semi-abandoned lowland area. GVN influence along the waterway diminishes south of the Highway 31 crossing point. Houses under uncontested VC control begin at approximately WR7382. The community extends southeast along both sides of the waterway and includes dwellings on feeder canals in the area bounded by WR7482-WR7683-WR7782-WR7680. Aerial observation revealed not more than 25% of the lowland area under cultivation. ConGen officers estimated some 200 houses in the area, most of them along the main canal and recoverable by the GVN if the canal were to be cleared and outposted. The population of "New Saigon 2" is about 1000 persons.

Area 25 - "New Saigon 3", Phong Dinh

The third "New Saigon" is a northern metastasis of the second. Located along the Long Son, Xeo Non and Cai Tue Canals in the vicinity of WR785885, the community numbers an estimated 2000 people lodged in thatch huts. About 70 former ralliers are among this population which reportedly also includes bandits, deserters and fugitives from Can Tho city. A rallier from the area, Nguyen Van Chanh, reported that a man named Sau Cuu, Party Secretary of the Long Thanh Village Committee, directs the "liberated" zone.

In an interview May 6 with a ConGen officer, Chanh gave some history of the area. At one time a thinly-inhabited lowland known as the lung chuoí nuoc or "water bananas swamp", the zone was contested until the ceasefire, at which point a VC land grab cleared it of

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GVN outposts. During 1973 it was dormant and served mainly as a shelter for VC forces moving between eastern Chuong Thien and the Mekong crossing point in Phong Thuan District. In January 1974, the VC launched a re-population drive. Former residents drifted back to their lands and new settlers were issued abandoned acreage. In March, the 416th RF Battalion and a battalion of the 9th ARVN Division supported by APCs conducted a sweep of the area, capturing six inhabitants. The remainder evacuated in the direction of "New Saigon 2" a few kilometers south, returning when the operation was over. At present, the area has a buffer three to four kilometers wide protecting it on west, north and northeast and one kilometer wide along the Xang Moi Canal to the south, where the nearest GVN outpost is situated.

"New Saigon 3" appears to exemplify the phase of development in which proselyting outweighs security. Rallier Chanh reports the usual "fire fence" and checkpoint system, but also that the VC administration has emphasized the theme of open access and freedom of life by allowing outsiders to visit unhindered. The degree of free access reported by Chanh remains to be verified, but it would tend to accord with intelligence reports, such as EVA4913, which describe the communists' "national concord" proselyting theme and VC indoctrination sessions urging cadre to treat potential ralliers to the VC causa with warmth.

Area 26 - "New Saigon 4", Phong Dinh

The fourth "New Saigon" is located in Xuan Hoa Village, Phong Thuan District, Phong Dinh, in the vicinity HR995900-XR010910. The area lies between the so-called dam la toi troi, a thick water-palm plantation, and the border of Ke Sach District, Ba Xuyen. Access is provided by the Cai Tram Canal and river. Adjacent to the community is a VC mini-base area covering southern Xuan Hoa and parts of Ba Trinh, the northernmost village in Ke Sach District. Insurgent units regularly operating along the interprovincial border between these villages include the VC Tay Do I Battalion and the Ke Sach District Local Force numbering 30-40 guerrillas. Area 26 is one of the smallest and most vulnerable in HR4. Information from a defector indicates it contains approximately 100 families engaged in cultivating sweet potatoes and rice to become "self-sufficient" in food.

Area 27 - Eastern Tam Binh District, Vinh Long

This area forms the eastern edge of what is reportedly the strongest VC/NVA base area in Vinh Long. The military portion known as the Bung Xam Base Area curves through Hoa Binh and southern Xuan Hiep Villages (XS142120-XS185125-XS170085), protected by swamps, jungle,

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palm groves and orchards, as well as by Viet Cong bunkers and outposts. An arsenal has been reported at XS180105, a dispensary at XS145125, and a POW camp at XS180100. According to the province S-2, six or seven battalions would be required to enter this area.

The eastern flank bounded by XS180120-XS200120-XS190080-XS165085 has attracted VC-related families since the ceasefire. RD Cadre and area specialists report the VC have constructed approximately 200 houses at XS190095 and moved 1000 villagers in to clear the area for planting. Each household was issued land free of taxes for two rice seasons. Villagers have been allowed to elect certain officials and become members of VC committees, most likely "liberation" associations of minor administrative importance. A school for 200 students and a dispensary with a full-time North Vietnamese doctor are functioning in the community.

This is the third area in our listing for which we lack confirmation of a People's Council. Based on accounts of the area's internal development, however, we infer that it is more than just a populated military zone. GVN sources report that the VC label the community a "liberated village." We believe the probability of its containing a People's Council is high enough to warrant considering the area in the "liberated" category.

Tri Phap (Formerly Area 14)

Tri Phap, listed as Area 14 in A-116, was the most advanced "liberated" area in MR4 before it was dismantled by GVN forces beginning in February 1974. It is so far the unique case in which the GVN has reclaimed a well-established "liberated" zone. Details of the recovery operation are not publicized by the GVN inasmuch as its last claim to Tri Phap predates the ceasefire by ten months. FVA4893 is the most comprehensive of several intelligence reports on the subject. Another report, FVA4870, describes GVN plans to create a new district in the territories formerly comprising VC Base Area 470 and the southern portion of the "liberated" zone.

POW Diap Van Phe, interviewed in March 1974, described the extent of the Tri Phap area just prior to the attack. According to Phe, the VC divided Kien Tuong Province administratively into three sectors designed Areas 4, 6 and 8. Area 4 embraced Tri Phap, Nhon Ninh, and Tan Hoa Villages in the quadrilateral bounded by the Kien Phong and Dinh Tuong Province borders to west and south, LTL-29 on the east, and the Kinh Ky Huong Canal to the north. GVN influence in Area 4 ceased, according to Phe, one kilometer inside the highway and canal. The west flank was protected by Kinh 27 Base Area in Kien Phong. The southern flank was shielded by a

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buffer zone extending from the Dinh Tuong border to GVN-controlled Hau My Village, two and one-half kilometers south.

Area 4 was linked to the GVN economy by means of waterways traversing the buffer zone to Hau My and adjacent GVN-controlled My Thanh. Nhon Ninh Village (Phe's operating area) had Viet Cong elementary schools; older children cross the buffer zone daily to attend GVN high schools in Dinh Tuong. Trade was also routine. Nhon Ninh's six rice mills and several tractors were purchased in My Thanh. In large deals like these, the VC administration split costs fifty-fifty with the purchasing group, usually six to ten farmers, in return for half the group's profits at harvest until the advance was repaid. To pay for GVN supplies, the "liberated" area sold surplus rice both to GVN villages and to VC/NVA rear service units in Cambodia. According to Phe, Nhon Ninh's local storage facilities were sufficient to supply the rice needs of two regiments for six months.

A-116 estimated the population of the Tri Phap area at 5000 in July 1973. Phe estimated the "liberated" population of Nhon Ninh at 2000 and of Area 4 as a whole at about 10,000 at the time he was captured January 26, 1974. Since there are no reliable data on the number of refugees generated by the February campaign, the peak size of the Tri Phap complex is conjectural. We believe 8000 is a plausible figure.

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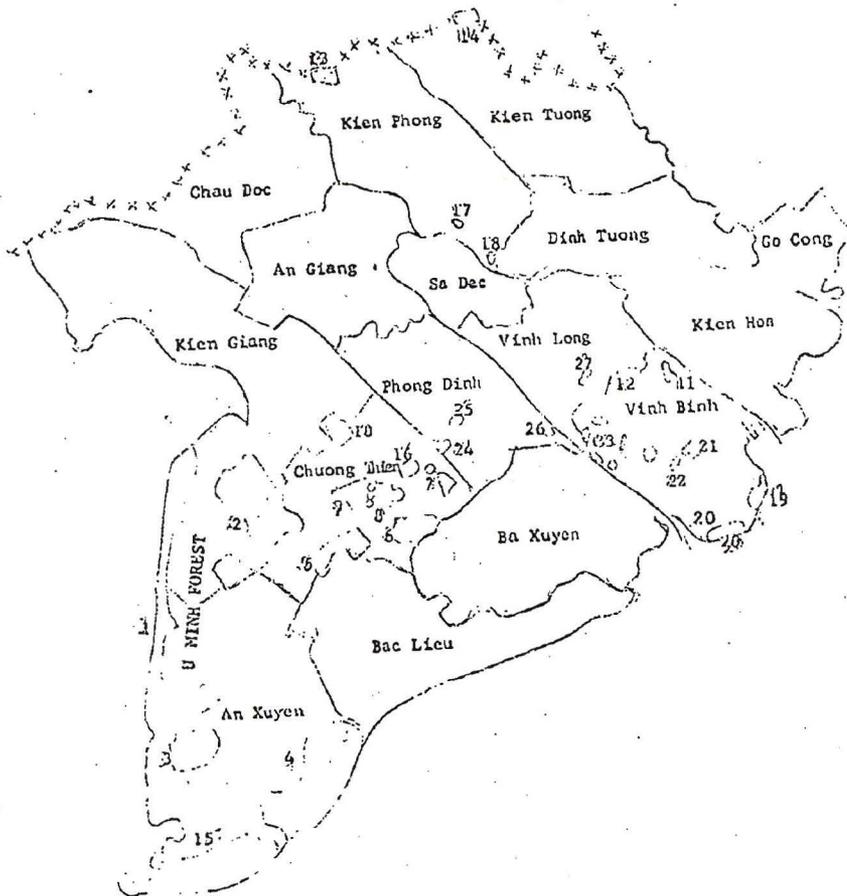
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APPENDIX A

"LIBERATED" AREAS IN MR4 APRIL 1974



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