Vietnam: The Signs of Stalemate: Vietnam War Shows Signs of a ... By R.W. APPLE Jr. Special to The New York Times New York Times (1923-Current file); Aug 7, 1967;

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ietnam: The Signs of Stalemate



U.S. marine wades through morass of Mekong River delta

By R. W. APPLE Jr. Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 6-A little more than two years ago, on July 28, 1965, President Johnson committed the United States more decisively than ever to the war in Vietnam by announcing the deployment of 50,000 more American troops this stricken corner of Southeast Asia.

Last Thursday, in response to the urgent entreaties of his commanders, Mr. Johnson disclosed that he would send 45,000 to 50,000 more men, for a total of 525,000, by next June 30.

Between these two bench marks of the most frustrating conflict in American history, the fighting has careened along, week by bloody week, through wet seasons and dry, through Christmas cease - fires, through peace feelers and escalations.

weekend. Βy this Americans had been listed as killed and 74,818 as injured, millions of artillery shells and billions of rifle bullets had been fired, and 833 airplanes had fallen to enemy gunners.

The war costs the United States more than \$2-billion each month.

And yet, in the opinion of most disinterested observers. the war is not going well. Victory is not close at hand. It may be beyond reach. It is clearly unlikely in the next year or even the next two years, and American officers talk somberly about fighting here for decades.

The official statements from Washington and Salgon seem optimistic, as they have been

Continued on Page 14, Column 1

Vietnam War Shows Signs of a Stalemate Despite Increasing U.S. Commitment

American Deaths Reach 12,269; Enemy's Tenacity Undiminished

nam, said recently that his men ated in an instant. had made "tremendous prog- The most damaging fact is ress." Secretary of State Dean this: Behind these dikes that Rusk said the enemy was have been manned at the cost "hurting very badly."

word in Washington. President The North Vietnamese have Johnson rejects it as a description of the situation in Viet-lairs, away from the hamlets nam. But it is the word used by and villages, but security in almost all Americans here, ex- the countryside is as bad as cept the top officials, to char- ever. acterize what is happening.

allies, having killed by their the impact was zilch: It meant own count 200,000 enemy nothing to the people." troops, now face the largest So now the Americans. imenemy force they have ever plicitly admitting that they defaced: 297,000 men, again by spair of results from the South

supplies to rockets, artillery, heavy mortars, a family of automatic infantry weapons and flame throwers, most of which has been brought into South Wietnam, 14 are committed to the grisly business of diagring out the mines in roods.

q1.2 million allied troops have been able to secure only a fraction of a country less than one and a half times the size of

power pool, while the North Where Big Units Manage, Vietnamese have committed Smaller Ones Fail only one-fifth of their regular

GAbove all, if the North Viet-namese and American troops mobile) on the Bongson plain were magically whisked away, and the South Koreans in the South Vietnamese regime Phuyen Province-progress has would almost certainly crumble been made. within months, so little have the root problems been touched. Where the same tactic has been tried with smaller units,

Enemy's Tenacity Defies Awesome U.S. Effort

It is true, as General West-

or military shields, around criti- hamlet, a 30-man platoon for cal areas, so that the South each village, an 80-man com-Vietnamese, sheltered from pany for each district, and at North Vietnam's regulars, could regroup and build.

pany for each district, and at the top a 350-man company for each of 12 provinces.

or wounded since Jan. 1; of the attacking and falling back. Fourth Infantry Division, along For a Complete Shield, the Cambodian border, and of other divisions that mount Eight Million Troops search-and-destroy operations in enemy base areas.

Americans Frustrated by Hit-and-Run Assaults

It is galling work. Because It is galling work. Because the enemy can fade into redoubts or across borders where the Americans cannot follow him, the same unit must be smashed again and again. General Westmoreland once content was unable to burt any unit so hadly that it. Would require eight million men. Even then, as General Westmoreland has acknowledged, the problem would not immediately be solved because if the Americans pulled back, the enemy would filter down from the hills. hurt any unit so badly that it more than one American in

of artillery and airpower to hurt the enemy, substituting Do you suppose," the Walrus said, "That they could get it clear?" doubt it," said the Carpenter, And shed a bitter tear. The answer to the seeming a technological society is to men. The natural tendency of a technological society is to impasse is pacification—respend its steel and its inven-tiveness rather than its men. establishing the Government

at night; patrolling does. The United States has built schools, artillery, in fact, often hurts pigpens and marketplaces; the more than it helps. When a South Vietnamese have con-



PREMIER: Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky heads military junta that scems determined to retain power.

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8 155-mm. shell, aimed almost at for almost five years. Gen. random into the gloom, crashes William C. Westmoreland, the onto a sleeping hamlet, po-American commander in Viet- tential Vietcong are often cre-

of so much blood and treasure, "Stalemate" is a fighting almost nothing has improved.

"I've destroyed the They use the word for many Division three times," a senior reasons, including the follow- American general said the other day. "I've chased main-force The Americans and their units all over the country, and

Vietnamese themselves, are The enemy has progressed moving into action against the from captured rifles and skimpy guerrillas, while trying at the

Vietnam in the face of Ameri-digging out the mines in roads and defending tiny hamlets.
"We are on the way to a

mous numbers of our own The allies are reaching the bottom of their ready manthe thing doesn't go."

Where large units have been committed - for example, the

it has not worked. The Marines, stretched thin, have been try ing to pacify the area around the Danang air base for two moreland has often said, that the United States has built an awesome logistical empire in 15 that took a heavy toll in

the United States has built an awesome logistical empire in Vietnam, that the enemy seldom wins a major battle, that more highways are open than before, that American bombers have severely hampered Hanoi's war effort, that the Vietcong are suffering.

But the enemy continues to fight with tenacity, imagination and courage, and no one knows when he will stop.

Prevent the Pocket that 15 that took a heavy toll in men and machines.

Army units have been engaged for months in Operation Rang Dong, the struggle to secure the approaches to Saigon, but during the last two weeks the guerrillas have mined Route 4, the main road to the Mekong Delta, have struck with mortars at the Nhabe naval complex within sight of the lights of Saigon, and have fired the United States has built at took a heavy toll in men and machines.

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when he will stop.

The goal of American policy, simply stated, is to defeat, together with the other allies, the Vietcong guerrillas and their backers, the North Vietnamese, so that South Vietnam's nationalists can transform their society into something strong and durable.

Complete within and have fired their rockets into key American bases.

In all 53 districts of the III Corps—the sector around Saigon where the earth has been scorched in Operations Junction City, Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction of the art. Of the 44 provinces, are behind schedule. American bases.

The modest goal for this year is the vietcong have sometimes shown.

The modest goal for this year is the pacification of 1,100 hamlets, most of them in 26 found in Saigon.

Unless a theme more positive and more stirring than simple and their corps—the sector around Saigon where the earth has been scorched in Operations Junction City, Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a virtually complete guerrilla struction City. Cedar Falls and Manhattan—there remains a hattan—there remains a virof the art. Of the 44 provinces, the war appears likely to go on
ture: a 10-man squad for each

26 are behind schedule. Ameriuntil someone gets tired and

regroup and build.

This is still the role of the gallant marines along the demilitarized zone, facing the North Vietnamese homeland, who have lost 10,000 men killed who have lost 10,000 men killed attacking and falling back.

To repeat the pattern of Phuyen and Binhdinh in all the populous areas of South Vietnam, one ranking American official has estimated, the allies would require eight million

hurt any unit so badiy that it more than one American in could not be refitted in 90 days. South Vietnam of these lines Frustrated, the allies have by Lewis Carroll: turned increasingly to the use "If seven maids with seven mops"

But in Vietnam, technology is presence in the hamlets so that o substitute for the man on the peasants will want to deno substitute for the man on fend themselves and will have the ground. Artillery does not the means to do so.

> outh Vietnamese have conducted village and hamlet elections; a total of 315,000 pacification workers, American and South Victnamese soldiers and civil servants have been committed; the American command structure has been reorganized and enormous sums are being spent this year: \$400-million by the Americans, \$135-million by the South Vietnamese Some American officials ar-

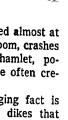
gue that progress is inevitable because of the resources in-volved, that if enough manpower and money are poured

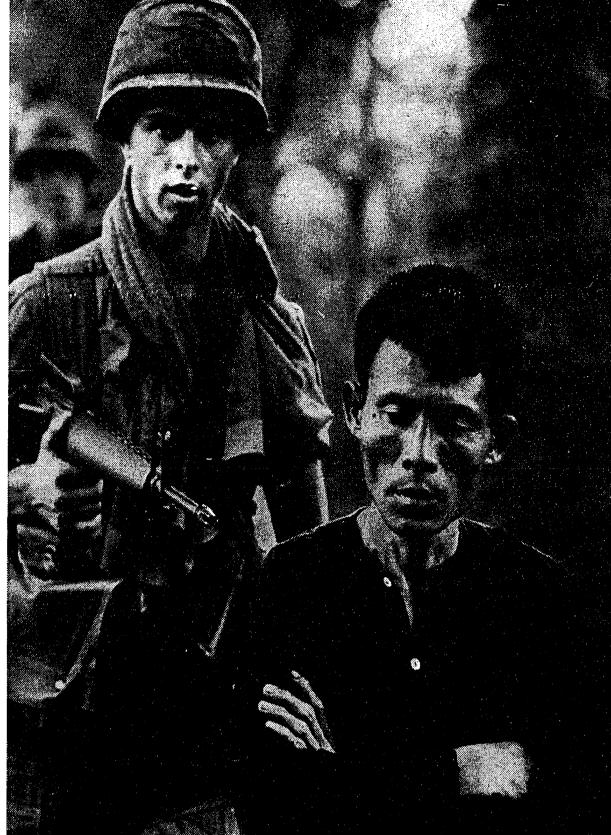
out of Saigon, some of it, somehow, will have an impact on the faraway peasant.

But the ground to be covered is enormous. According to the new system for evaluating hamlets, a total of 1,944 out of 12,537 are controlled by the Government-a figure amount-

ing to fewer than one in six. The rest are contested or, to some degree, controlled by the Some of the most experienced Americans here consider

a hamlet secure when its chief





can officials concede that paci- quits, which could take generafication is at best creeping tions. ahead in three-quarters of the Central Fact in South: country and stopped cold in the Lack of Commitment

harder to recruit; the goal of 41,000 by the end of 1967 will not be reached, and those already at work are being killed at a rate near 15 a week. The 53 South Vietnamese Army battalions supposedly protecting the workers are not doing so. Morale is so bad that 13 of every 100 workers are expected. every 100 workers are expected given relatively little thought Considered Inept

TROOP STRENGTH

harder to recruit; the goal of Vietnamese society to work for with its magnificent Soviet-measure of our failure with the and signatures are required on one car-ownership document—

COMBAT DEATHS

60 [(In Thousands)

the revolution, however bogus, that the Vietcong have promised for more than a decade.

The peasants, by and large, and watch as they are buffeted the revolution, however bogus, that the Vietcong have promised for more than a decade.

The peasants, by and large, and watch as they are buffeted to more equipment, better are often unable to rally their say when they know that they troops. South Vietnamese units will not be quoted by name, broke and ran during the early the trouble with the South dagain during recent fighting in leadership. The fighting men again during recent fighting in leadership. The fighting men again during recent instance of inactive pation with the material, The soldiers every.

The Vietcong overran a bat-talion command post in the Most Talented Men Are delta, killing three American Lost to the Cause advisers and 29 South Vietadvisers and 29 South Vietnamese. One enemy body was found after the attack. Three breaking to those who would fect. Since then, the subject those things. I shall just have to wait longer."

Lost to the Cause of a campaign to persuade Go to France or America? "You know I can't do any of those things. I shall just have to wait longer." 'Need for Reinforcements

A Measure of Our Failure'

After years of cajolery by their advisers, Government units still operate ineffectively at night (as, indeed, some recently inspected three "night patrols" in three parts of the country. One was walking down a highway with transistor radios blaring, one was asleep in a house and the third was hiding in a cave. The American advisers whose superiors, including Gen-

eral Westmoreland, have refused to demand the removal of incompetent leaders—have had little impact. One former adviser described his role as that of "a glorified radio operator, tolerated only because could call in air strikes."

"Every time Westy makes a

Competent pacification workers are becoming harder and lack of commitment of South fate of the Egyptian Army, need for reinforcements is a French techniques—18 seals are required on

United Press International

Operation Cedar Falls. Inhabitants, mostly women and

children, were evacuated to a tent city 19 miles away.

every 100 workers are expected to desert during 1967.

A senior American said recently, "There is at least a the reality that the people they cause it drives them up against the reality that the people they tonal units as the marines, the received the momentum of pacification over the next 12 or 18 months."

But nothing better than this can be hoped for, in the opinion of many observers, without a thorough overhaul of South Vietnamese society—without a second revolution to counter the revolution, however bogus, the cause it drives them up against the tothis problem, perhaps because it drives them up against the tothis problem, perhaps because it drives them up against the reality that the people they tional units as the marines, the are fighting for are none too eager to fight for themselves. Consider, for example, General Westmoreland's program for improving the South Vietnamese hoped for, in the opinion of many observers, without a second revolution to counter the revolution, however bogus, the momentum of pacification over the next 12 or 18 months."

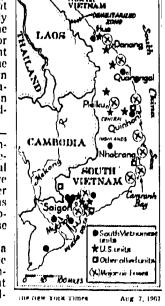
Considered Inept

Allowing for such exceptional units as the marines, the are fighting for are none too eager to fight for themselves. Consider, for example, General Westmoreland's program ingly bad, in the opinion of commanders only reluctantly and ordered his men to move out. When the American suggested that a less bunched-up formation might be better, the commander coldly ignored him.

At bottom, American officers and the people must are fighting for are none too eager to fight for themselves. Consider, for example, General Westmoreland's program ingly bad, in the opinion of or improving the South Vietnamese only reluctantly the commanders only reluctantly with the people and Government battalion in a ferocious all-night battle while its commander hid in a foxhole. The next morning, the commander of which is commander only in the opinion of ordered his men to move out. When the American suggested that a less bunched-up formation might be cause they are afraid

One recent instance of inac-tion by Government troops oc-tion by Government troops oc-curred in the middle of May.

sands of men who might be Four men who know Viet-leading South Vietnamese nam well have also watched.



lieutenant colonel or higher only two fought on the side of the Vietminh in the war against the French. Some potential leaders are

troops in combat are serving

with the North Vietnamese or the Vietcong, heirs to the country's nationalist revolution

against the French. Of all the Government officers serving as

languishing in exile as a result of the purges of the last decade. Countless others have been killed in battle. In their place stands a corps of young officers, often incom-

petent and more often corrupt. Weary of the war and cynical toward it, many of them work four-and-a-half-day week, leaving their troops at noon Friday and repairing to Cantho or Danang or Saigon in search of diversion. It is not uncommon to see two dozen off-duty situation does not change. This of a Saturday night in Maxim's, of the population's indifference, a frightfully expensive Saigon or even hostility, to Saigon."

litical arm of the Vietcong. Saigon's army hardly seems pilot.

a likely force to lead a revolu-tion, and whatever can be said of the army can be said of the Government as well, for the army is the Government. If the villagers resent sol-

diers who steal their rice and ince officials, nearly all of them military men. They resent, for example, the delta province cal lift, to dash the claims of the Vietcong to legitimacy and the corrupt district and provelectrical plant serve his headquarters and his house but not Habits of Dominance a single peasant hut; and they resent the highlands province chief who sold them diseased pigs, bought with American aid persist; it would be unrealistic Tales of Corruption

Abound in Saigon

the stories that float through the city's cafes are no doubt false; but in a sense, that does not matter because most of the people believe them.

Despite action, area's guerrilla structure remains intact.

able to locate the papers porters concede that he is not needed to clear a shipment the vibrant national leader the through customs, suddenly find country needs. them when \$10 passes across Outlook After the Voting:

the chief of state, say all the ficials in the provinces, the right words, promising social same dispirited army, more justice, an end to corruption war. and a liberal revolution that will make the task of the ing to Americans, but it is far But Premier Ky also once ese.

advised Western journalists to "watch what I do, not what I businessman asked a friend not say"—and watching is not long ago. "Vote for Thieu and often encouraging. Ky, and watch my country get
After months of American torn apart for four more years?

mation of national reconcilia they can't provide any real tion," supposedly the beginning leadership? Join the Vietcong?

They recently said the same thing in different ways. A former Premier com-mented: "The problem isn't the

North Vietnamese Army. It's the South Vietnamese Govern-American who has worked in the provinces for

more than five years: "Nobody considers the Victoria Robin Hood any more. But the Gov ernment and the army are still the Sheriff of Nottingham, and you'll never sell that."

A Saigon editor: "What is

needed is someone who can seriously make the same claim on the loyalty of the people as Ho Chi Minh does in the North Without that, there can be nothing. The Americans will never understand, but it is ob vious that the problem is not military but political, not American but Vietnamese. have more of everything milltary - more bombing, more troops, more money-yet the

army officers taking their ease can be explained only in terms

nightclub.

Watching one such group drive through town in a long black car recently, a Vietnamese whose career black car recently, a Vietnamese student commented, "Nguren Huu Tho doesn't live like that."

A young army officer: "No South Vietnamese whose career or pocketbook isn't involved really looks up to or respects Ky. He could never be our Mr. Tho is chairman of the national hero-too young, too National Liberation Front, po. flashy, too American, too much the playboy, too much the

Confronted with these attitudes, and with open insurrection by militant Buddhists, the Government consented to national elections this fall. They offer an enormous opportunity chickens, they resent far more the people behind Saigon, to everyone here agrees, to rally chief whose waterworks and to peace negotiations.

Persist in Military

But the military's old habits funds, at enormous profit to not to expect them to. At the generals' insistence, the only serious peace candidate, Au Truong Thanh, was ruled off the ballot, and the only nomi-The corruption—the sense of nee even remotely identifiable a diseased society—is most as a national hero, Maj. Gen. pervasive in Saigon. Many of Duong Van Minh, was refused permission to return to the country.

Several left-wing candidates for the Senate were also denied the right to run.

This belief is a major political fact, contributing to cynifor most of the country's intelcism and noncommitment. Con- ligentsia and most civilian policeivably General X's wife did ticians when it said: "This may not buy and sell draft defer-succeed in keeping out [of ments; but everyone said she officel the people dedicated to did. The question has been radical social changes and reasked: Is it reasonable to ex- forms, and to ridding our people to the people dedicated to did. pect young men to volunteer ple of inequalities and injus-eagerly to fight for their tices with the perpetuation of country in this kind of atmosover Communism."

La Thanh Nghe, a former The remaining candidates—a Cabinet minister, is accused of collection of middle-aged and having sold antibiotics to the middle-class conservatives— Vietcong and, at the same seem to offer no real alternatime, of having earned almost tives. The most prominent of a million dollars in kickbacks these, Tran Van Huong, is confrom American drug suppliers, sidered an elderly, kindly and Policemen on duty at night thoroughly honest retired along Tu Do Street tell a journalist that they will need \$3 to be sure his car is not towed characterized chiefly by his away. Clerks on the piers, un-stubbornness. Even his sup-

No Basic Changes

Neither Mr. Huong nor any of the nine other civilian candi dates is given more than a slight chance of winning, even if the balloting is scrupulously honest, which few expect it to be. The built-in advantages of incumbents, here as elsewhere, are so great that only a figure of great charisma can over-come them.

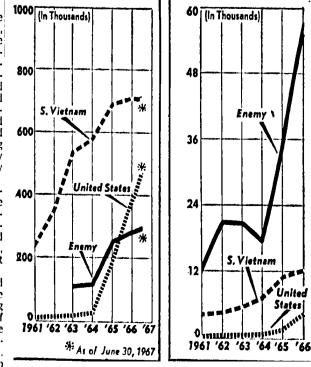
So the outlook, four weeks before election day, is for a ratification of the Thieu-Ky regime, with all that would mean: a "legitimized" but es-Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and heavy-handed police tactics, Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, the same generally corrupt of the chief of state Say all Ab. sentially unchanged central

> The prospect may be agonizworse for the South Vietnam-

"What am I to do?" a young prodding, for instance, the Vote for one of the civilians, Government issued its "procla- when you and I both know



llam C. Westmoreland remains an optimist despite the long ordeal of war.



GROWTH OF A WAR: Charts show increases in allied and enemy forces and deaths in fighting since 1961. For the first six months of this year, U.S. combat deaths totaled 4,378, South Vietnam's 6,735 and enemy's 46,731.

sat out the action only 300 ent in the current generation field-grade enemy officer has yards away. has long since been lost: Thou-turned himself in.

American units do). A visitor

speech about how good the South Vietnam Army is," another general has said, "I want to ask him why he keeps call-

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