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**FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME VI, VIETNAM, JANUARY 1969
–JULY 1970**

1. Special National Intelligence Estimate¹

Washington, January 16, 1969.

SNIE 14–69

THE PACIFICATION EFFORT IN VIETNAM

Conclusions

- A. The pacification program as a whole has made a significant contribution to the prosecution of the war and strengthened the political position of the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) vis-à-vis the Communists. Thus far the GVN's principal success has been in expanding its presence into the countryside. Providing permanent security for these gains has been more difficult. Security conditions continue to fluctuate with the intensity of combat. Low level terrorism, political agitation, and propaganda efforts by the Viet Cong (VC) continue to hamper progress, particularly since no more than a promising start has been made in reducing the effectiveness of the VC infrastructure. A large part of the countryside is still contested and subject to the continuing control of neither side.
- B. As for gaining the allegiance of the people, this is almost impossible to measure. The turnout in the 1967 elections and the failure of the Communists to gain popular support at Tet suggest progress. Apprehension over the settlement of the war and the firmness of the American commitment tends to reduce popular confidence. The most common attitude among the peasants, however, continues to be one of war-weariness and apathy.
- C. Saigon now seems finally to have accepted the need for a vigorous pacification effort. However, progress may still be hampered by the political situation in Saigon, continuing inefficiency, corruption, and the parochial concerns of the GVN.
- D. Another major uncertainty is how much time is left to make up past deficiencies and consolidate current gains. Over the next several months, further progress in pacification will almost certainly not make the GVN much more able to cope with the VC, given peacetime conditions, than it would be today; a significant advance in this respect would probably require at least a year.
- E. Finally, there is the question of how the Communists will react to the growing pressures on them. Despite improvements in the overall security situation, gains in pacification are still vulnerable to adverse military developments. The chances are good that the Communists will attempt to make an

intensified effort to counter the gains in pacification and they will probably have some success. Thus, consolidation of gains is likely to continue to be a very slow and uncertain process.²

[Omitted here is the 5-page Discussion section of the estimate.]

1. Source: Central Intelligence Agency, NIC Files, Job 74-R1012A, NIEs and SNIEs. Secret; Sensitive; Limdis; Controlled Dissem. Prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency and intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency. On January 16 Helms sent this SNIE to the United States Intelligence Board, which concurred with its release. 
2. In the Discussion section, the estimate concluded that “the overall situation in Vietnam is such that pacification was less vulnerable to Communist counterefforts than in 1967.” In a footnote dissent, Thomas L. Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, argued “that the estimate does not support the conclusion that the pacification situation is less vulnerable than it was in 1967, but rather that it is essentially as vulnerable now as it was then.” 