

Republic of Vietnam's



National Police

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THE National Police organization of the Republic of Vietnam emerged by national decree in June 1962 from a conglomerate of smaller internal security agencies. Integral to the National Police are the National Police Field Force (NPFF), the Marine Police, and the Special Police Branch for civilian intelligence, in addition to the major component, the Uniform Police.

In their necessarily rapid expansion from a force of approximately 16,000 in 1963 to 90,000 today, the National Police, like other Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GRVN) security forces, have undergone major transitions and encountered unavoidable problems in training, leadership

Title photo courtesy Military Police Journal.

development, and over-all management. In general, however, their improvement has been positive and holds considerable promise if provided with continued support at required levels.

Operational Control

Although centrally organized under the Ministry of Interior (see chart), the National Police are operationally decentralized to the 44 provinces, 250 districts, and six autonomous cities. Operational control is vested in the province and district chiefs, as well as the mayors of the autonomous cities. All of the province chiefs and most of the district chiefs are military officers at present.

Internal support for logistics, finance, personnel, and matters of police management and policy emanate centrally from the Director General, National Police, to four regional police directors in the Military Regions, and the Director, Saigon Municipal Police; and thence to province, district, and city police chiefs, or, in the case of Saigon, the precinct police chiefs.

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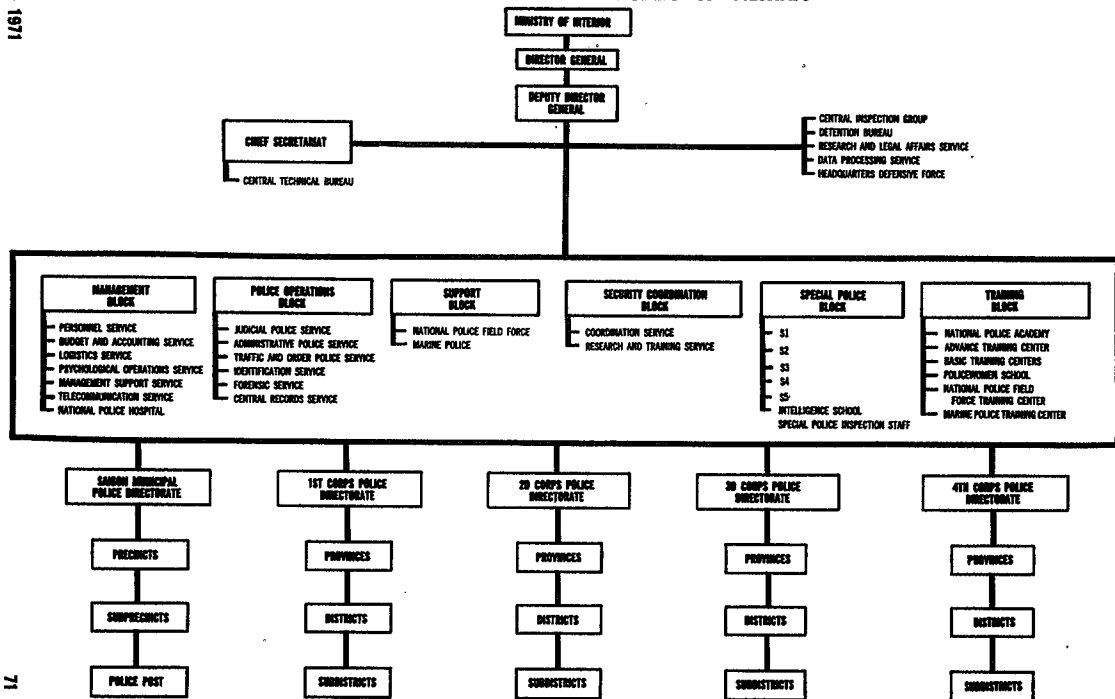
The National Police are responsible for the maintenance of law and order, the performance of normal police functions, the conduct of security control, and the performance of civil tasks required in connection with counterinsurgency activities. In the latter area of responsibility—with which this article deals primarily—are the efforts of the National Police Field Force, the Special Police Branch, the Marine Police, and those police assigned to the villages.

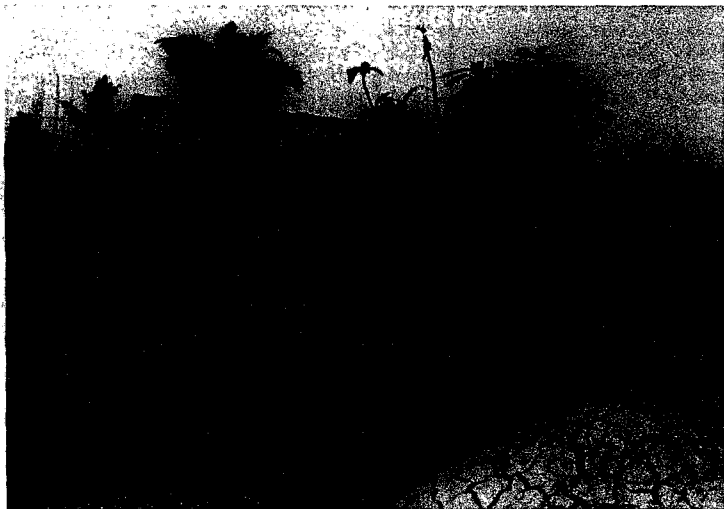
In nationbuilding, the National Police aim at extending and improving the legal influences and services of a civil police body oriented toward constitutional processes of law enforcement in a civil administration. In this function, it is most active in the relatively secure areas which are the areas of highest population density. Below the provincial level, National Police operations are centered in the district towns. During 1969, police services were extended to the villages. Originally confined to the urban areas, the National Police have, since 1969, extended their services into the rural areas and provided services to villages.

Force Levels and Objectives

Studies conducted since 1962 have concluded that there will be a requirement for many more National Police by 1973 for pacification and law enforcement in the Republic of Vietnam. In 1968, the National Police were unable to exceed the strength of 80,000 men due to attrition—during the Tet offensives of 1968, the National Police sustained 818 killed and 1,620 wounded in combat actions, mobilization restrictions, and restricted GRVN funding. This was particularly detrimental to the required development of the Marine Police, the Special

NATIONAL POLICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM





National Police Field Force positions near Saigon are the first to report and engage enemy forces attempting to enter the capital

Police Branch, and the National Police Field Force, those elements most directly involved in anti-Viet Cong infrastructure activities.

In order to alleviate the situation, President Nguyen van Thieu, in mid-1969, directed the Army Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to transfer 13,000 men from the military forces to the National Police. The planned force level objective for the end of calendar year 1970 was for a total force strength of 105,000, with recruitment from the Rural Development Cadre, category II military personnel, and certain military draft eligibles authorized.

As the level of violence diminishes in the Republic of Vietnam, and the mission and tasks assigned to the police expand, the requirement in terms of both numbers and capability will

increase. With the trend toward civilianization of the government, along with the law enforcement problems which are the normal aftermath of any war, the role of the police in the Republic of Vietnam will continue to grow in importance.

The Marine Police were established in 1965 to provide a waterborne law enforcement capability to assist in countering Viet Cong activity on the more than 3,000 miles of navigable inland waterway. This effort was directed primarily at the delta area. The Marine Police have responsibility for control and maintenance of security on navigable waterways and ports in the Republic of Vietnam, the support of resources control, the enforcement of civil and maritime law, and assistance in other police activities.

The force strength has been in-

creased from 350 men operating three bases in the delta and patrolling 40 miles of waterways in 100 boats at the end of calendar year 1966, to a force of 2,404 men and 23 bases in all of the four Military Regions patrolling 440 miles in 380 boats last year.

NPFF Mission

The National Police Field Force was created in January 1965, with the mission of providing the National Police with an arm capable of extending GRVN civil presence into the turbulent rural areas of the countryside. It is highly mobile and lightly armed, with both civil police and paramilitary capability for maintaining security in recently liberated rural areas. The National Police Field Force also supports the resources control program and the pacification and development programs. It serves as the primary riot-control organization of the National Police.

The provincial NPFF units have one company headquarters of 24 men in each of the 44 provinces of Vietnam. Each of these provincial companies has a number of 40-man platoons corresponding to the number of districts in the province. These vary from two to 13. Two autonomous cities, Da Nang and Vung Tau, which have police services separate from the province in which they are located, are provided with an NPFF company of four platoons. To provide supervision and support to these provincial and city NPFF companies, an NPFF Regional Headquarters and Service Company is located at each of the Military Regions.

In addition, the 5th NPFF Battalion is assigned to the Saigon Municipal Police Directorate which is now charged with the internal security and

internal defense of the nation's capital city. The 5th NPFF Battalion has, in addition to its headquarters, 14 companies of four platoons each. The 222d NPFF Battalion, based in Saigon, with six companies is the National Reserve of the NPFF. During



National Police perform civil tasks in connection with counterinsurgency activities

the last five years, its units have been employed at various times in Hue, Da Nang, Binh Dinh, Tuyen Duc, Gia Dinh, Long An, Bien Hoa, and Phu-Quoc Island.

As of 1 August 1970, the assigned strength of the National Police Field Force was 16,000 men. It is lightly armed by military standards, but heavily armed by conventional police standards. Its primary weapon is the *M16* rifle. In addition, each platoon has an *M79* grenade launcher and a caliber .30 machinegun. Twenty-four shotguns are available in the company weapons pool. The NPFF has no mortars or other indirect fire weapons.

The National Police Field Force receives both police and paramilitary

training. Each man receives the 12-week basic training of a National Policeman. Following this, he receives eight weeks' NPFF paramilitary training. Platoons are returned periodically to the NPFF Training Center for six weeks of unit retraining.

Specialists such as drivers, radio operators, medics, mechanics, and clerks are trained in various National Police and Army Republic of Vietnam schools. Leaders receive special training at the NPFF Training Center, the ARVN Infantry School, and the ARVN Noncommissioned Officer Academy. Many leaders are graduates of the Malaysian Police Field Force Training Center.

Command of the NPFF company is held by an inspector who comes under the operational command of the province chief of police. The NPFF units are under the operational control of the chief of the police service to which assigned. For example, the NPFF platoon assigned to a district is under full operational control of the district chief of police who, in turn, is under the full operational control of the district chief. These officials employ them, according to the situation, on these types of missions:

- Operations against the local Viet Cong in reaction to intelligence and targeting of the Special Police Branch.

- Resources control operations.

- Operations in support of the pacification program which includes any type of police operation appropriate to the capability, training, and firepower of the National Police Field Force.

- Operations to control riots and other civil disturbances.

In the past, a fairly high percentage of NPFF operations were com-

bined with United States, Free World, and Army Republic of Vietnam military forces. However, with the improved security situation, at present about one-half of the NPFF operations are independent and the remainder primarily combined with the Regional and Popular Forces.

When on combined operations with military forces, the NPFF unit is placed in support of the force by the appropriate chief of police. It provides knowledge of local conditions, habits, and culture which greatly increases the search capability and effectiveness of the force. Military units needing NPFF support request it from the appropriate local chief of police.

Considering that the nation is at war, and that the National Police have only an eight-year history, a great deal has been accomplished. The future of the National Police is bound to the struggle of the nation in seeking a national identity and overcoming a history of war and outside domination of its peoples.

Elements of the struggle include the uniting of population components, divided by religious, ethnic, and regional differences; personal values strongly influenced by the rapidly changing fortunes of war that have divided family loyalties; and the massive input of technology, commodities, and finances from abroad. All of these have contributed to the disruption of the old standards and realities.

In many ways, the National Police are a microcosm reflecting the turmoil of modern life in Vietnam. The answer to the future must come from the people themselves. There are indications that the impact of the collective voice in the streets has not been lost on the populace, regardless of the contemporary issues.