

UNITED STATES ARMY INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia
8 April 1968

LOGISTIC OPERATIONS WITHIN TAY NINH SECTOR, TAY NINH PROVINCE,
RVN, IN SUPPORT OF REGIONAL AND POPULAR FORCES FROM 6 JUNE 1965 TO
20 NOVEMBER 1965. (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SECTOR REGIONAL FORCE/
POPULAR FORCE ADVISOR.)

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REPUBLIC OF
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I. INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Sector Advisory Team

The sector advisor is normally the rank of major or lieutenant colonel. He handles most advisory duties directly, with special assistants for intelligence and Popular/Regional Forces training, plus a radio operator and office personnel. His role is to foster the improvement of training and effectiveness of province armed forces and the intelligence and pacification activities as a whole. As his own staff increased, (addition of an S5, Sub-Sector Advisors, Engineer Advisors, and an Artillery Advisor in 1964) supervision of his subordinates became a major responsibility. In 1964, the creation of sub-sector advisory teams - attached to each district headquarters - brought the advisory role into more direct, daily contact with the sector processes. The sub-sector teams consisted of five men who were responsible for training, operations, and pacification programs within their districts.

Tay Ninh Province did not have the luxury of a sector advisory team as the Military Advisory Command - Vietnam (MACV) designed (figure 2). As a result of a study by Headquarters, United States Army Special Forces, Vietnam, the Special Forces B Detachment commander inherited sector advisory responsibilities. (Figure 3) The MACV sector advisory team was dissolved and the B detachment commander was authorized one O3 as a Regional Force/Popular Force (RF/PF) advisor. The RF/PF advisor was responsible for supervising all RF/PF activities and for establishing liaison with the sub-sector advisors. In addition, the MACV sub-sector teams were reduced from five personnel to three personnel.

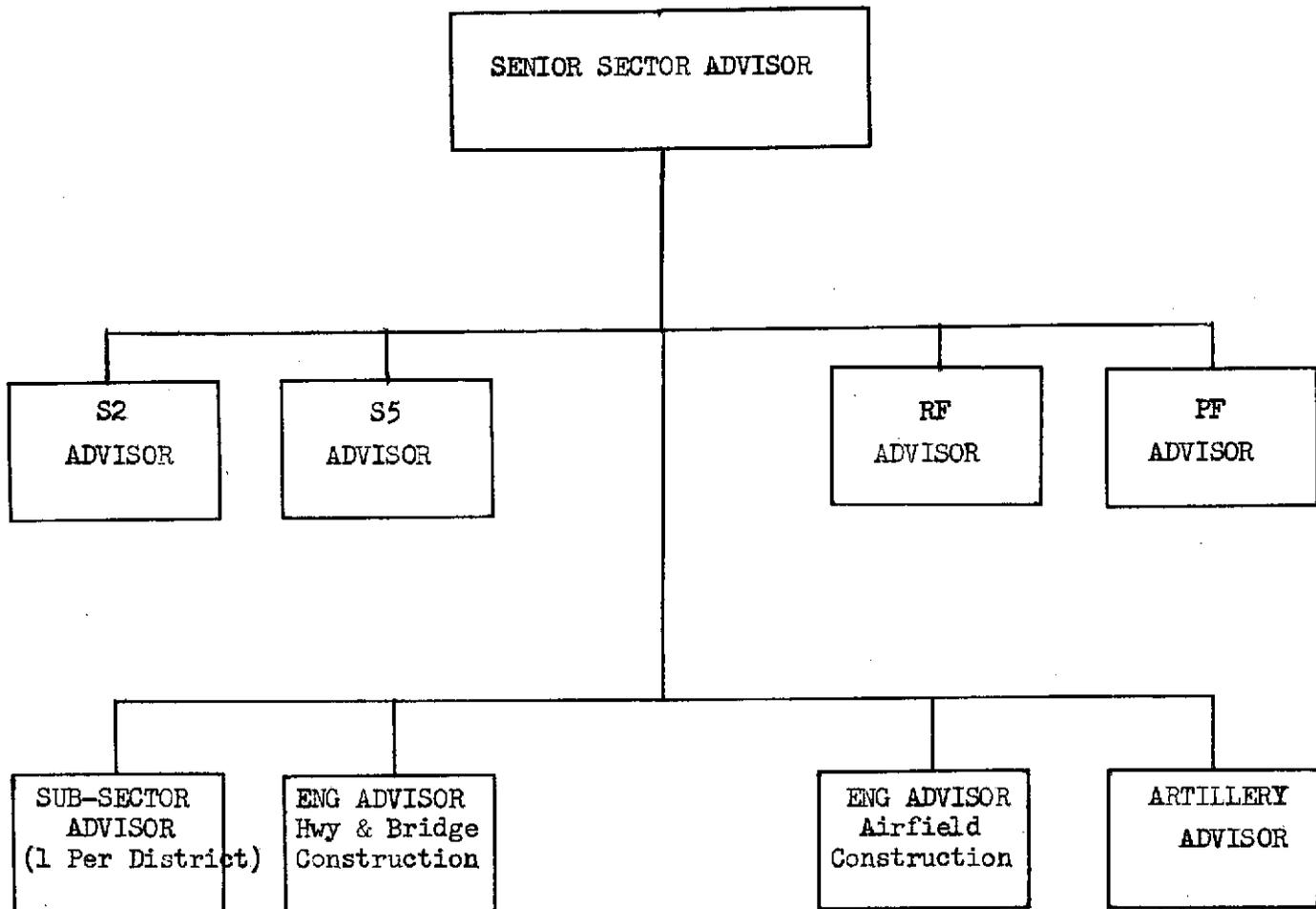
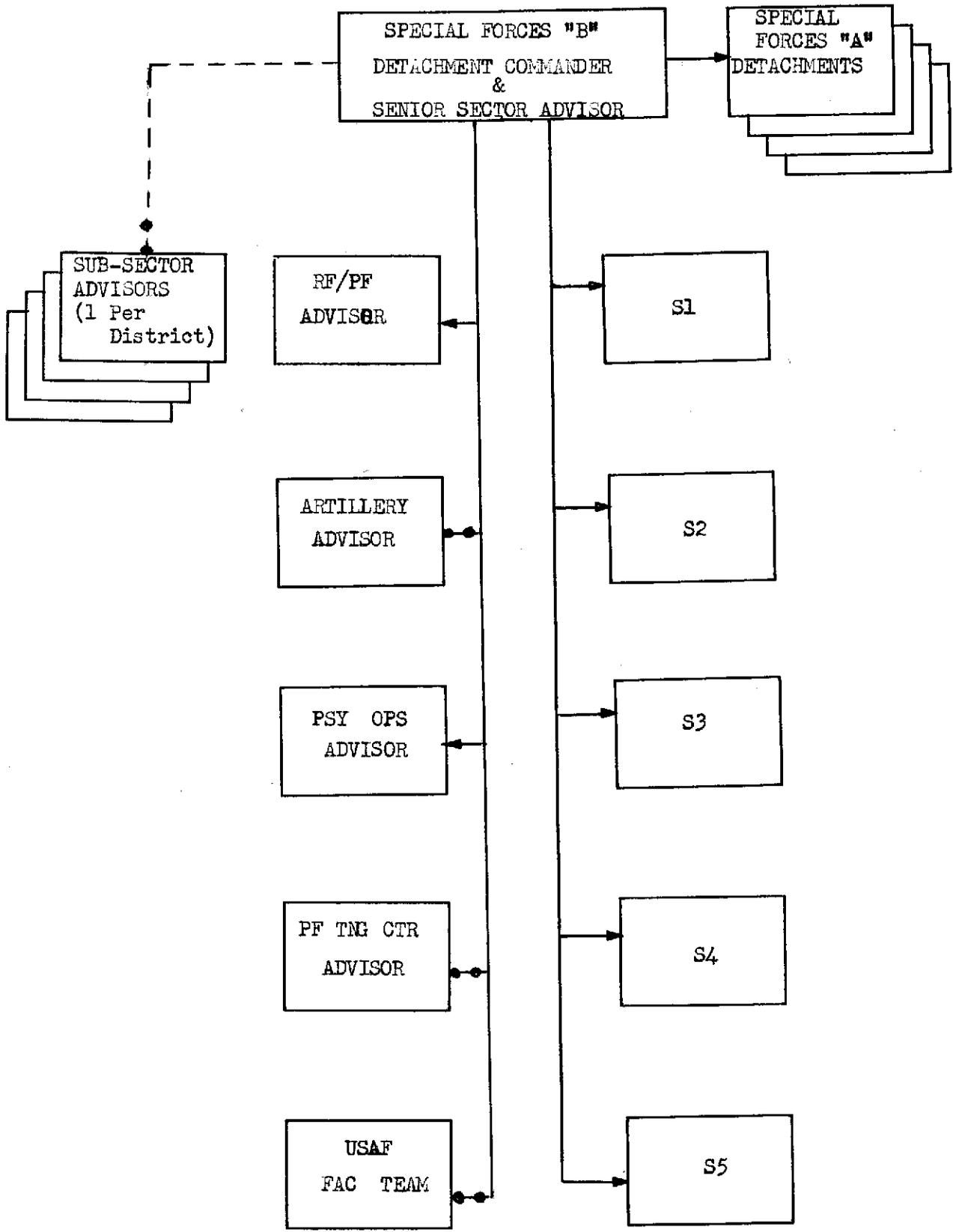


Figure 2

MACV Provincial Sector Advisory Team



- Direct Control
- - - - Operational Control Only
- > Special Forces Personnel
- MACV Personnel

Figure 3
Tay Ninh Sector Advisory Team

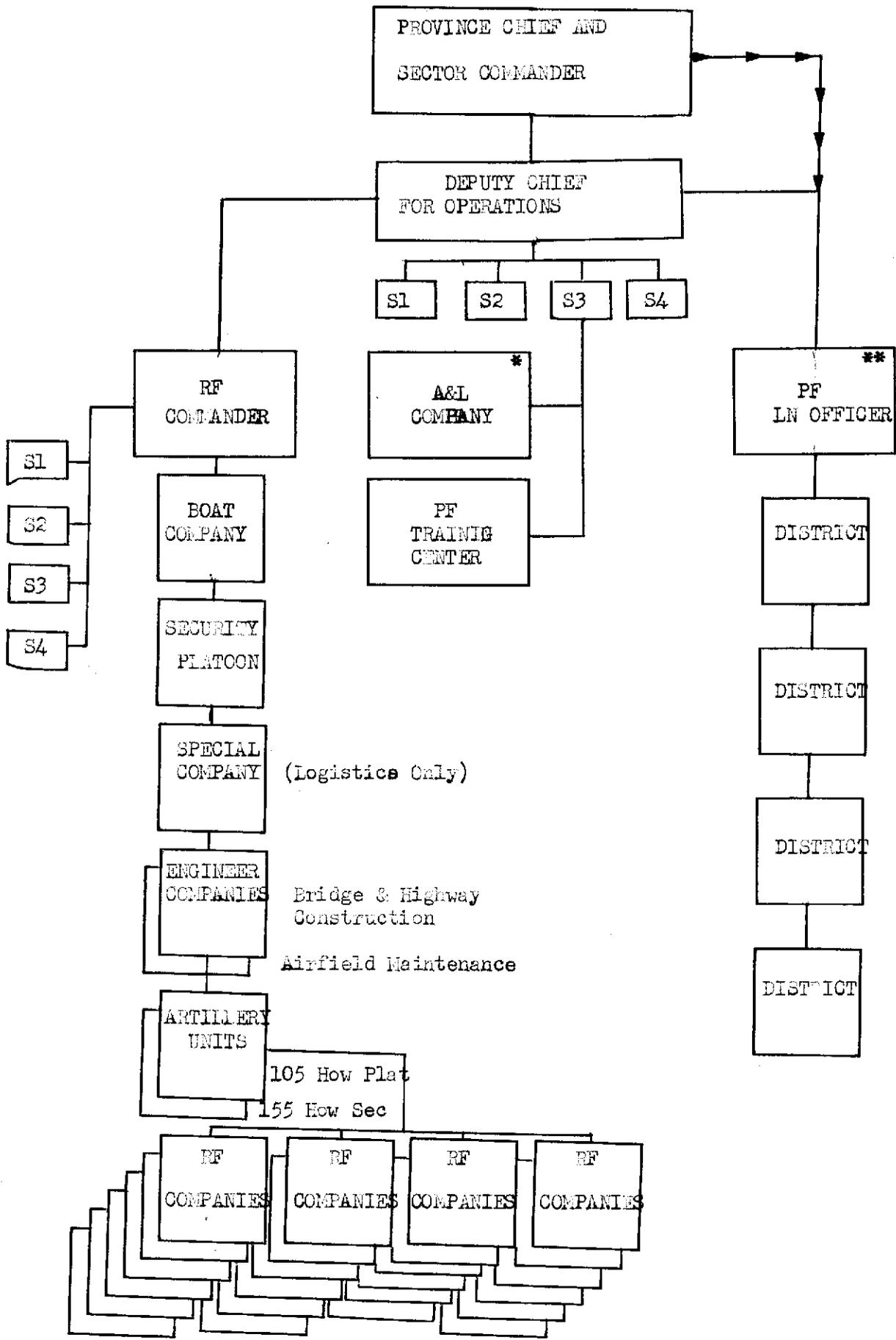
Organization of Sector Regional/Popular Forces

Regional and Popular Forces within Tay Ninh Sector were organized into three separate type units with each having a separate mission. The organization of these forces was a complex, but effective structure. To better understand the Sector Regional and Popular Force set-up within Province the political relationship to the military element must first be explored. The boundary of the military sector normally coincide with the provincial boundary. The province is the primary political subdivision of the Republic of Vietnam and is normally governed by a RVNAF* major. Because of the coincidence of province with sector, the Province Chief commands all sector paramilitary forces. The district is the primary subdivision of province; is governed by a RVNAF Captain who commands all popular forces assigned to his district. The organization of Regional and Popular Forces parallel this political arrangement. (Figure 4)

Regional Forces: These forces are under the command and control of the province chief. They are composed of 132 man companies, the number of which is determined by the military situation, population density, and size of the province (1:). Regional Forces are sometimes attached to district as security forces, but the province chief retains operational control.

Popular Forces: These forces are under the command and control of the district chief. They are composed of either 40 man platoons or 16 man squads, the number of which is determined the same as for province. (1:)

*Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces



*See Figure 5

**Coordinates with 47 Platoons and 98 Squads through each District Chief

Figure 4

Sector Regional and Popular Force Organization

Organization of the Sector Administrative and Logistical Company
(A&L Company)

The Sector A&L Company is comparable to our Headquarters Company of Division Support Command except the A&L Company contains finance, personnel, medical, and signal support elements. (Figure 5). The company provides administrative, logistical and financial support to all RVNAF in sector. It has an organic first and second echelon maintenance capability in ordnance automotive and weapons, signal, and engineer items. If a maintenance float is attached from the Corps Area Logistical Command (CALC), the maintenance capability, in the aforementioned areas, is materially increased. The company maintains repair parts for all assigned materiel, for which they have a maintenance capability, and controls the stockage the same as American units. The A&L Company also maintains stores of ordnance ³ammunitions-weapons and vehicles, chemical items, quartermaster items (to include some rations), signal float items, medical supplies for the Sector Military Hospital and medical units, and petroleum-oil-and lubricants for the organic transportation platoon.

The company receives requests directly from all RF Companies, all districts, each special military organization and headquarters, and it provides services along the same lines. All records, regulations, and receipts for all materiel are maintained by the company supply section.

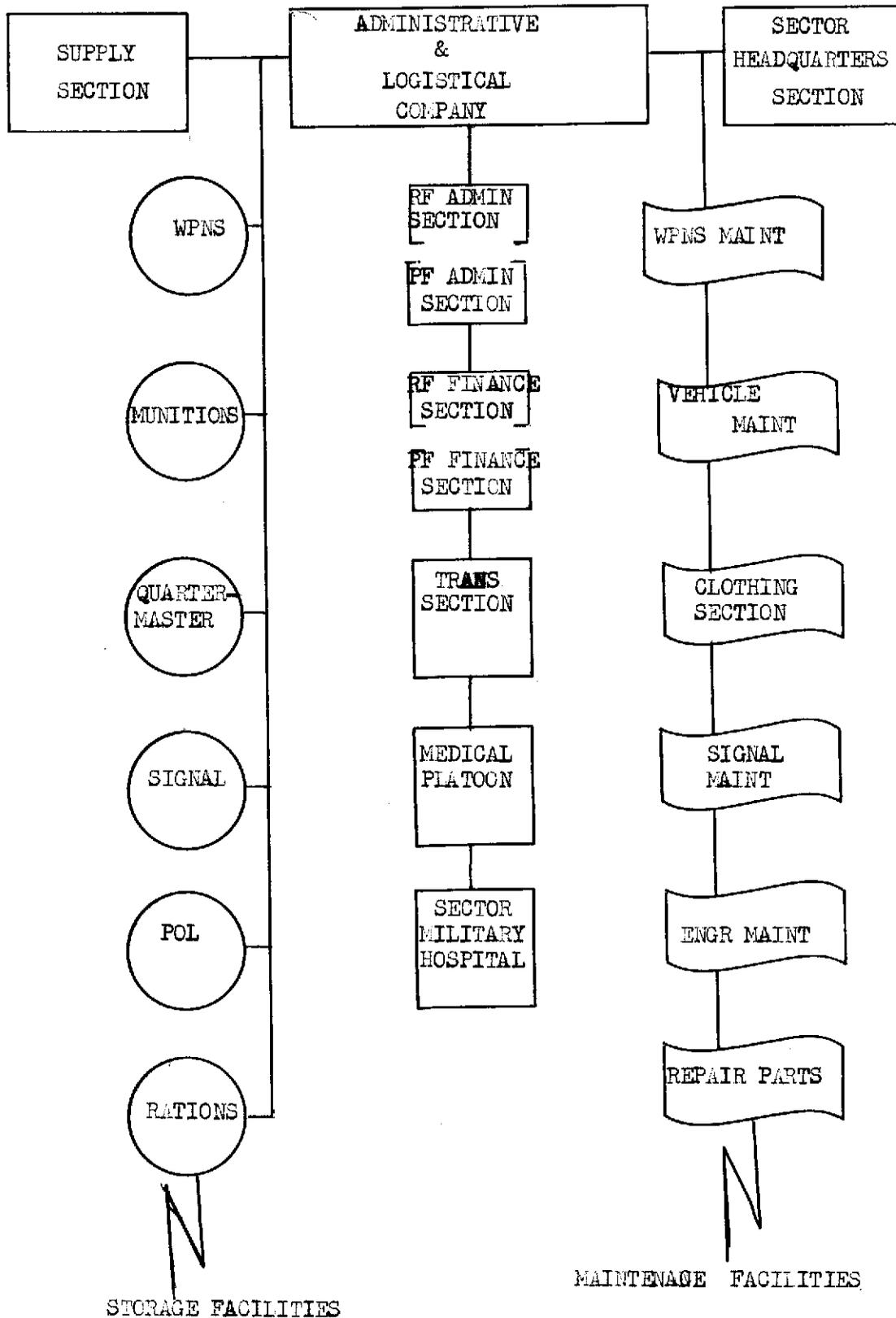


Figure 5
 Organization of Sector Administrative and Logistical Company

Logistical Requirements Within Sector

The requirement to logistically support eighteen RF Companies, forty-seven separate PF Platoons, ninety-eight separate PF Squads, one boat company, one 105 howitzer battery, one 155 howitzer section, provincial headquarters elements, and a PF Training Center was tremendous. The military personnel strength in sector was slightly over six-thousand. With this general picture in mind and realizing the equipment mortality rate in a combat atmosphere, coupled with excessive munitions expenditures, the logistical requirements increased.

If the flow of supplies remained steady and unit requisitions remained constant, the following would be considered a fifteen day resupply: (2:)

- 1) 1000 gallons gasoline (vehicle only).
- 2) 1080 rounds 105 howitzer HE.
- 3) 100 rounds 105 howitzer WP.
- 4) 500 rounds 155 howitzer HE.
- 5) 150 rounds 155 howitzer WP.
- 6) 10 tons small arms ammunition.
- 7) 15 tons rice.
- 8) Miscellaneous organizational equipment items.
- 9) Construction and defensive materials varying from two to five tons.
- 10) Medical supplies varying from one hundred to five hundred pounds.

To further complicate matters, all supplies were trucked, by convoy, from Saigon. This necessitated preparing a major operation to convoy from Tay Minh City to Saigon on an average of every fifteen days. Occasionally C-123 Providers were used when priorities dictated a need for immediate resupply or a contact team was required to

change a howitzer case. However, normal resupply was by road.

This procedure satisfied sector supply requirements, but subordinate elements also needed resupply. The necessity to also satisfy all subordinate logistical demands constantly exhausted every transportation means within sector and made supply activities in province the most prodigious of all activities.

II. NARRATION

Assumption of Duties

In May 1965 I was summoned to Nha Trang, Vietnam to see the group adjutant concerning reassignment. After reporting, I was informed that I would be assigned to Tay Ninh Province as Tay Ninh Sector, Regional and Popular Force Advisor. I had no idea what this new duty entailed and, in addition, had never even heard of Regional and Popular Forces. After quite a bit of arguing against my new assignment, I packed and prepared for the adventure.

On 4 June 1965, I arrived at the Tay Ninh airstrip, reported to the B Detachment Commander (Major Galen E. Radke) and was allowed one day to organize my personal items. On 6 June 1965 I assumed my duties as RF/PF Advisor. In a matter of a few hours I realized I was as prepared for this job as a turtle, without his shell, is prepared for the world.

During the next few days each detachment staff member provided a general briefing concerning his area of responsibility within the province. Frequent visits to district headquarters, sector staffs and units, special units and civilian agencies were very informative. A complete tour of the sector hospital and training center supported my initial assessment of sectors situation. Everything and everyone was operating at less than fifty percent efficiency. The reason was very obvious:

- 1) Shortage of major items of equipment.
- 2) Repair parts shortages that adversely affected the sector maintenance capability.
- 3) Weapons in an extremely poor state of maintenance due mainly to a lack of cleaning equipment.

- 4) Complete units without uniforms or field equipment.
- 5) Improper storage of ammunition had rendered much of it unserviceable.
- 6) Shortage of trained personnel.
- 7) Shortage of publications.
- 8) Poor office facilities, files, and records.

The apparent deficiencies and the apathetic attitude was obviously why everything was running in low gear. However, I needed to know why the deficiencies and apathy. I knew that if this province was to regain military propriety, the problem had to be identified, isolated, and solved.

Identifying the Problem

It was perceptible that the problem lay somewhere between the "user need" and the support facility in Saigon. To isolate the issue I would have to probe every area from the individual to the CALC. Before I could effectively explore the system I had to learn how that system worked. My counterpart informed me that RVNAF maintains a logistical command in each of the four corps areas, which supports all facilities throughout the corps area. Each logistical command operates a number of field depots from which supplies are distributed to using units. The five technical services (Signal, Ordnance, Chemical/Quartermaster, Engineer and Medical) operate base depots which serve as central distribution points for issue of technical service items to field depots. Because of my complete lack of knowledge of the RVNAF logistical system I decided to start with the III Corps Area Logistical Command (III CALC) and work down. After one week of scrounging bilingual Technical Manuals, Supply Bulletins, and other logistical references; talking to every person in every warehouse I could get into; visiting every technical service facility, and querying every records or supply clerk I could find - I felt I had sufficient background to return to province. The week of digging only told me how the system was supposed to work and that it wasn't working. I now felt that I should start at the bottom and work up. My week in Saigon began to immediately prove its worth. By knowing what forms to look for and how they should be prepared, the picture began to slowly take form. By carrying the bilingual references to each location I visited, I was able to point out errors to both the RVNAF Commander and the U. S. Advisor. In three weeks I had visited everything either connected to or associated with the sector logistical system. I was convinced that those existing shortages were available for issue and some of them had been requested. However, many requisitions were submitted either incorrectly or to the wrong person and the result was that the requests were returned and no supplies issued. In addition, the U. S. Advisors knew so little about the

RVNAF logistical system that they never offered any assistance in this area. When a requisition was returned to the Vietnamese Commander he would show it to his U. S. Advisor and state the item cannot be obtained. The U. S. Advisor, who did not understand the system, meerly accepted this and procured the item either through U. S. channels or did without. In most cases the unit had to do without the item. The problem was now clearly evident - the Vietnamese did not have enough confidence in their system to assume the initiative and make it work. Also, the U. S. Advisor did not know enough about it to make it work.

I, now, was able to initiate a plan of action. I had to make the Vietnamese respect their system so as to instill confidence in it plus establish a program to educate the U. S. Advisor.

The Temporary Solution

Any solution to the logistics problem would require a time consuming program to resubmit old requisitions and submit new ones. Each requisition from each district or separate company would have to be checked for correctness when it was received at the A&L Company then consolidated into a sector requisition (if the item was not available for issue at sector) and forwarded to either a field depot, base depot, or III CALC. Inventories had to be conducted to determine losses and inspections to uncover shortages and maintenance requirements. Standard procedures would be too time consuming, therefore, a short cut had to be devised. I outlined a plan to provide a temporary solution as follows:

- 1) U. S. Advisors were to conduct inventories and list all losses and shortages.
- 2) Each district or subsector was to have this list brought to the A&L Company supply officer by the district or subsector supply clerk.
- 3) A&L Company would consolidate all lists into requisitions and send them to the appropriate supply agency accompanied by a letter establishing a priority.
- 4) I would duplicate the list, include the requisition number and date, attach the Vietnamese letter, write my letter explaining the reason for the action, and forward this to the U. S. Advisor with the supply agency.
- 5) Establish a suspense system to insure immediate follow-ups of all requests after thirty days.
- 6) Conduct inspections of each district or subsector (during the same week) and receipt for all equipment in need of repair.

7) Request maintenance floats through both Vietnamese and U. S. channels to effect rapid repair of all major end items and either direct exchange or cause immediate evacuation of unserviceable items.

8) Request each technical service advisor and his counterpart visit sector within the month to inspect and ^{to} look at the present situation so as to instill a sense of urgency and desire to help at III CALC.

9) Inform U. S. Advisors of subordinate units when supplies are shipped, what they are, and what action he should take.

It worked! Within thirty days the system was functioning. The constant influx of supplies, equipment and Technical Service Advisors had put new life in the system. The favorable effects could be felt throughout sector. The maintenance floats had done an outstanding job. Maintenance requirements were now within our capabilities. New uniforms and weapons were rapidly fed into the system and tactical operations increased. Reports of surveys were quickly processed and lost items immediately replaced. It was apparent that the Vietnamese now realized their system would work and the U. S. Advisors were taking an interest.

However, this was not how the system was designed to work. Plus, U. S. Advisors needed more assistance to completely understand the system. In this connection, there were two objectives still unattained:

1) Devise a way to give permanence to the present logistical operation.

2) Educate the U. S. Advisor so that he can check the system and advise his counterpart on its operation.

Education of Sub-Sector Advisors

Each sub-sector advisor now displayed an interest in their districts logistical program. Regularly, I received duplicate copies of requisitions and followup actions. These records were immediately checked against those in the A&L Company and then consolidated and forwarded to the appropriate supply agency advisor. This system proved very effective because it placed the U. S. Advisor in the logistical program and established a method to control requests and materiel. As the U. S. Advisors began to better understand the system, the system began to operate better. However, it was conceivable that as soon as emphases was removed from logistics all programs would deteriorate. It was necessary, therefore, to provide a method that would provide continued supervision of the system without subordinating other functional areas^{and} (i.e. - tactical operations, psychological operations and civic action, training, etc.) to provide a reporting system that would cover all areas within the system so as to keep all levels of the sector command and advisor chain informed of maintenance standards, supply activities, and records management. The emphasis would be on district or sub-sector from sector and reports would be generated at district or sub-sector to sector.

An inspection team comprised of at least one Vietnamese Officer, one member from each sector technical service, and the RF/PF Advisor, was required to visit each sub-sector once a month. This required the sector team to schedule visits to one district each week. The results of these visits were recorded, formed into a report, and forwarded to the sector commander and sector advisor. They were then returned to the district commander and sub-sector advisor for corrective action. These visits also allowed the RF/PF Advisor to provide the sub-sector advisor with pertinent memoranda and information received from higher

headquarters, and also to uncover problems within their realm of responsibility. Additionally, the sub-sectors were required to submit a monthly report to sector concerning the maintenance status, outstanding requisitions and equipment shortages. The U. S. Advisors were required to parallel this report and attach a copy of the Vietnamese report as an inclosure. These requirements proved educational to both the district personnel and sub-sector advisors, plus established a system to aid new U. S. Advisors in learning the system. This procedure gave permanence to the system and gradually precipitated an effective logistical check and balance that satisfied the needs of the province as a whole.

The Final Solution

The sector logistical system was now effectively supporting the provincial mission. My primary concern now was to finalize all programs and give credence to all logistical operations. This was done through a variety of means:

- 1) Publish weekly newsletters containing information gleaned from every source and distributing these newsletters to all sector logistical elements and sub-sector advisors.
- 2) Procuring for subsector advisors, bilingual copies of Vietnamese supply references.
- 3) Directing immediate follow-up action on all shortcomings and deficiencies.
- 4) Continued communication with higher supporting agencies to keep these elements informed of sector problem areas.
- 5) Monthly briefing of all sub-sector advisors by sector U. S. personnel to denote progress, influence training, and project further programs.

The end result was a smooth system that eliminated close and constant supervision and allowed the advisor to give rise to other tasks and still provide a productive sector logistical operation.

III. ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The make-up of the Sector Regional and Popular Forces is such that complexity of organization precludes simplicity of operation. In addition, by virtue of being a paramilitary element of the RVNAF, the RF/PF units receive a lower priority for major items of equipment and materiel. This precedence is accepted by the key personnel in the sector chain of command and accordingly supported by U. S. Advisors. However, this attitude of "less important than" should not be. The Regional and Popular Forces make up over 50% of Vietnam's fighting force. Also, its role in the national pacification program is dominant. In this connection, they should at least have a priority equal to regular forces, if not a priority slightly higher. Every CALC maintains stores of materiel that are ready for issue, provided that:

- 1) It is correctly requested.
- 2) Authorized for issue.
- 3) Necessary for operations.
- 4) Fully justified if not a normal organizational item.

In addition the U. S. Advisors must realize that their system is effective and American sources of supply should not - under any circumstances - be used in lieu of the RVNAF sources. CALC should make necessary adjustments to the system to procure items from U. S. supply channels, if the item is not within the RVNAF system, not sector or sub-sector. The RVNAF logistical system does work and can provide adequate support to all field units. However, the U. S. Advisor must assume the responsibility for learning their system, supervising its operation, and persuading his counterpart to confide in it and use it.

IV. TRAINING IMPLICATIONS

The training required to prepare an officer to assume duties as sector or sub-sector advisor is more than this brief could disclose. Mainly because logistics is only a small part of his overall area of responsibility. However, this part has often been overlooked or completely ignored. The only opportunity an officer has to receive any training in this area is in the MATA Course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, however, this course offers only one hour (3:) on the subject of logistics. The course is a conference on "Logistical Support in RVNAF" the scope of which is the logistical support system utilized in Vietnam with emphasis on the mission and functions of the Army of Vietnam Corps Area Logistical Command. The reference is listed as "Special Material". Prior to this hour no instruction was presented (4:) In this connection, I recommend that the following be presented to U. S. Officers preparing for assignment to MACV as sector or unit advisors:

- 1) Bilingual copies of appropriate supply references.
- 2) Eight hours of instruction which would include:
 - a) Composition of the sector A&L Company and its mission.
 - b) Vietnamese supply procedures to include preparation of a requisition, submission, and follow-up procedures.
 - c) Capabilities of the CALC and the technical service field depots.
 - d) District supply system and its mission, capabilities, and limitations.

Only too often do U. S. Advisors enter the same statement in briefs and narratives published through different media-"We have distilled certain conclusions from our experiences. The first concerns specialized training to be given district advisory personnel." (5:7)

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